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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 14 November 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 14 novembre 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE
CLASSROOMS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 POUR DES ÉCOLES SÛRES
ET AXÉES SUR LE SOUTIEN

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 13, 2018, on the motion for second 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler.

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to forewarn you a little bit, I do have quite the cold this morning so I will do my best to make it through the 20 minutes, but I may have to take some extra few breaks for water and that sort of thing during my 20 minutes. I'm certainly honoured, though, to get to rise this morning and speak to Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, especially as a former school board trustee. I'm also the daughter of a former kindergarten teacher and special education teacher.

I wholeheartedly support Minister Thompson's bill. While I applaud Minister Thompson's changes to protect students from teachers and early childhood educators who are found guilty of a sexual offence by having their licences revoked, and the requirements to best support new teachers around math, Mr. Speaker, this morning I am going to talk for most of my time about the proposed changes to the Education Act around policies and guidelines for the use of service animals in schools.

It's certainly been mentioned in this Legislature many times that I have been advocating, along with my son Kenner, for better, more equitable access for service animals in our schools. I first came to Queen's Park more than two years ago to start highlighting the need for provincial direction for the use of service animals in our classrooms, and on behalf of now-Premier Ford, during our campaign I made a promise to ensure adequate access to classrooms for children with service dogs.

I've lost count of how many people have approached me to say something along the lines of, "I can't believe what's happened to Kenner." I've also had numerous children with service dogs and their families reach out to me to express how their service animals support them, and this morning I'm going to share with you some of their words and stories to help you understand why clear and consistent policy guidelines around the use of service animals in our schools is so key.

First, I'd like to tell you about a young boy who I first heard about one Sunday in the winter of 2016. I met Jack Baldwin's grandmother at our church. She approached me to ask about my son Kenner and his service dog. You see, she was so excited for Jack's future as he was about to get his service dog from the Lions Foundation. She was hopeful that having a service dog would support Jack in making strong friendships, while helping him through his school day and helping him with his overall mental health. She asked me if Kenner's service dog at that time—it was his first dog, Ivy; he now has another dog, Rickman—was in school with him. I said we were working through a process and I wasn't sure if it was going to be accepted. Mr. Speaker, I will never forget the look that that grandmother had and the disappointment that I could see on her face that morning. She said she just assumed that schools were required to allow service dogs to attend class.

Now, fast-forward a few weeks and, in my role as a trustee, I found out about a family struggling to gain access to their son's school with a service dog for school pick-ups and drop-offs. The boy, who turned out to be Jack, that same boy I'd heard about at church, had just received his autism assistant service dog Jenson through the Lions Foundation of Canada Guide Dogs. At that time, Jack's mother, Ms. Donna Baldwin, approached the media to tell her story. This is from a Global News article: "As a first step, Jack's mom took Jenson inside the school to drop off Jack—just for a few minutes, to help with the transition."

The quote from Ms. Baldwin to Global News: "The next day I got a call saying that the dog was not allowed on school property." As a trustee for the board, this came as a shock to me, and I brought my concerns forward several times around the board's policy involving service dogs. The treatment of Jack also concerned me, knowing that children were not being treated equally, school by school, in that same board.

At that time, my son Kenner had already been having pick-ups and drop-offs, as well as visits during the day with his autism assistant service dog in the school, in that same board. While Kenner's service dog has never been allowed to stay with Kenner at school, at that time, in

2016, I could walk Kenner to his classroom door with Ivy, and we would plan visits to the school and we would sit for lunch hour, maybe in the school lobby or in the library. It was a way for Kenner to have time and get that benefit with his service dog while we were still waiting for the school administration to determine if Kenner needed Ivy in his classroom. I was also aware at that time of another boy, Brayden; I'll tell you a little bit more about him later. He, too, has a service dog, and that service dog, too, could go visit in the school lobby during the school day in that same school board.

Eventually, Ms. Baldwin was told that she could drop off her son with the service dog at a specific set of school doors and that Jack was permitted to have a visit outside of the school during the school day. As Ms. Baldwin described to me, those visits meant that her son could lie down on the concrete and have hugs with Jenson. I'm just going to explain that a little bit to you: "Hugs" is a command that autism service dogs can have, because a lot of children with autism need a kind of deep pressure. So that little boy would be outside of his school and ask his service dog to give him hugs while that boy was lying on the concrete with a dog on top of him, where my son and another boy in that same school board could have those visits inside their school. But for this young boy, he was told those visits had to be outside.

You may wonder what this mother tried to do to advocate for her child. She has certainly done a lot. She has reached out to many current and former members of this House. Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals were in power, she said she didn't even receive one response from the education ministry on the treatment of her son, but within days of this government's cabinet being sworn in, Minister Thompson personally called Ms. Baldwin to hear about her son's situation. Minister Thompson heard that at the end of the last school year, two years after Ms. Baldwin was first denied access to that school board property with her son's service dog, Jack was granted a trial with Jenson in the classroom: a trial to see if the school board's administration felt like Jack needed his service dog at school; this, even though medical professionals and Jack himself had told the board that he needed his service dog in school with him. At the end of that trial, the school board administration determined that Jack did not need his service dog with him at school.

0910

The stress for Jack to try to help the school board understand how much he needs his service dog at school with him was overwhelming. Over the summer break, Jack's mental health struggles, which had been progressively getting worse over the last two years, took an extreme turn. He had suicidal thoughts and even an attempt to end his own life. Now, this is coming from a boy who is 12 years old. It was then that Ms. Baldwin reflected on her conversations with Minister Thompson and decided to move her son from Kitchener to the minister's riding. I am thrilled to report to you that he is doing much better. For the first time, Jack has an educational assistant with him in the classroom, and she's there

full-time. He is doing grade level work—last year, he was a year behind—and he will soon have his service dog with him full-time in his classroom.

As for that other young boy I mentioned earlier, Brayden, he also has an autism assistance service dog, Gusto. He first attended school in Kitchener, just like Jack, but at a different school board. At that school board, he was allowed to have his service dog with him in class. But his family decided to move him to the other school board and just assumed that Brayden would be able to attend his new school with Gusto. They were extremely shocked, though, to find out that the board would determine if Brayden needed to have Gusto with him in the school. So Brayden could make it through his school day, his mom decided to go to the front lobby of the school so that Brayden could have breaks with Gusto. Eventually his family, though, decided that was too challenging to have her there—his mom is a nurse and she was working full-time—to be able to do that, and they have started home-schooling their son. So because of those changes from board to board, this little boy is now out of the school system and is being home-schooled.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that Brayden is an amazing young boy. He does have autism. He is non-verbal, but he has found a way to communicate. He uses a method called rapid prompting method, RPM, and also will type things out to explain his feelings and answer questions and communicate with the world. I want to read to you a few things that Brayden has written about his service dog. The first is a poem:

In the hands of his boy
 sitting and waiting for his boy to calm
 He sees people all around
 but his main focus is his distressed boy
 He's on constant alert and senses his boy's emotions
 He starts to feel the calm wash over his boy
 So now it is time for his favourite—lick kisses.

This is from a book from National Service Dogs in Cambridge, where Brayden's service dog is from:

"Gusto is my saving grace to my world. He gives security when I am feeling anxious. He gives independence by being tethered to him and holding his handle. I think it is amazing to walk with my dog and not hold mom or dad's hands. When I am tethered to Gusto, I know where my body is at all times. This is the most amazing feeling ever...."

"Gusto travels with me everywhere I go," but he is home-schooled now, so he's not going to school. "This makes going out in public easier. I don't have people giving me bad stares, but good stares. Gusto helps me every day, so it is impossible only to pick one time that he has helped me."

I hope Brayden's words help you to understand how autism assistance service dogs help the kids that they're with.

A young girl, Peyton, who happens to live in another province but has a Lions Foundation assistance service

dog, reached out to me to tell me about how that dog is helping her in her school in rural Manitoba. She first got Floyd in early 2018, and he began attending school with her earlier this fall. So the little girl's mother, Ms. McFee, told me that having Floyd attend school with Peyton has meant the world to them. She says he has quickly become Peyton's best friend, and with him in school Peyton is now able to spend even more time in her classroom learning. She can now have purpose for her body movement breaks by saying that she's taking Floyd for a walk.

Another young girl, Maya, who lives in Ottawa, is so proud of her autism assistance dog, Ivic. As her mom describes, Ivic is like a true friend for Maya. Also, having Ivic gave Maya's family a chance to speak to her about how she has autism and that everyone is different. As her mom said, as far as Maya is concerned, if autism means she gets to have Ivic, then she is one lucky kid.

A young man with autism who my son Kenner looks up to and admires also has an autism service dog, and that's Cliff McIntosh. Cliff has taken his service dog to school for many years with him, and he describes Basil as being the one that keeps him calm and safe, and also allows him to focus on his schoolwork.

An issue that I'd like to point out, though, is that while less than half of the school boards currently have policies in place around service animals, for the ones that do have policies in place, they can vary drastically. For instance, the extensive policy in one board covers many types of service dogs but doesn't cover diabetic alert dogs. Some policies mention that a school staff member may be trained to support a child who is unable to handle the service dog themselves, while another—which does happen to be that same school board where Jack Baldwin and Brayden used to attend—states that “when a student is not able to handle the dog, the dog will not be considered a certified service dog for the purposes of these procedures.”

Mr. Speaker, when you hear someone talking about being a handler or handling a service dog, it means they're simply the one holding the leash, giving the verbal commands to the dog so that they can perform the task that they need to. I have great concern for the wording in that policy and what that could actually mean for a student. For a student like Brayden, who I mentioned is non-verbal, he may never be able to give commands to his dog and will likely always need support with his service animal, but a policy like that appears to put a major hurdle in front of him ever having his service dog in his classroom with him.

Certainly, it's for those reasons and many others that I'm honoured to be standing here today to talk to you about Minister Thompson's bill to amend the Education Act to allow policies and guidelines to be put in place for the school boards around what their policies should look like for the use of service animals in schools.

I'd like to tell you about another little boy before I end my time today. In the member from Burlington's riding, there is a young boy, Darius, who also has an autism assistance service dog. He, too, is struggling to gain access into his classroom full-time with his service dog, Idyll. After a lengthy—as his mother calls it—“battle” with the

school board, Idyll is currently allowed to spend half of the school day with Darius in the classroom. But despite Darius advocating for himself, along with Ms. Hamlet, Idyll is not permitted to stay with him all day at school.

Speaking this week to Ms. Hamlet, she said that Idyll is also not allowed on the school bus with Darius. It means she either needs to drive the two of them to school together or drive the service dog to school while Darius takes the bus in the morning. Then Ms. Hamlet needs to pick up the dog by 11:35 each morning. It's making it impossible for her to have a job during the school day. Now, Darius himself wanted me to know that, “When I get upset and start to freak out, Idyll helps me calm down and gives me a hug. It would help me and make me very happy to have him with me all day. It would make my day better by 90% to have Idyll with me at school.”

Something else I hear about from families is allergies and phobias. To me, these are very critical considerations for all school boards and staff to work through when any family comes forward with a request for a service animal to be used in a classroom. In many schools across Ontario and our country, these are issues that have been dealt with in a variety of ways to support everyone involved.

For instance, if a school is large enough, the child with a service dog may be in a different classroom than a child with a phobia or an allergy. In a smaller school, I've spoken with service dog providers who have experts go in and look at the ventilation system in the classroom to determine where in the classroom would be best for the service dog to sit with the child, versus the child that has the allergy.

In another case, I've heard from an educational assistant from British Columbia who had a child in the classroom with a fear around dogs, and when a child came forward needing a service dog in the classroom, they were a little nervous about how that was going to work through. In the end, having that calm presence of the service dog in the classroom, the child in that room with the fear no longer has a fear of dogs.

A school board here in Ontario has also done an air quality test. That study looked at the classroom air without a service dog and the classroom air with a service dog, as well as outside air. It found that there is a minimal increase in dander allergens in the classroom with a service dog, and for it to be typical of that of outside air.

0920

I'm very happy that our education minister and our Premier are taking a look at these concerns, though, and making sure that this is part of the education consultation process that we are doing at fortheparents.ca. Again, I encourage all families, staff and people across this province to take part in that consultation process, to put their thoughts forward on the many ideas that they have for the education system, as well as on the use of service animals.

As I end, Mr. Speaker, I want to just tell you a little bit about why I ran to be a school board trustee in 2014, because it highlights why this issue is so passionate to me. I ran then for a number of reasons, especially to ensure

support for children with special education needs and also to support our educators who are trying to help our students. As I mentioned earlier, also my mom was a teacher.

I've heard from many teachers who have talked to me about the struggles they face trying to best support children with special needs in their classrooms and then balance out their day with all of the children in their classrooms. That is why it is so critical to me that we have the supports in place to best support these students.

Now, I certainly know—and I absolutely love my son Kenner—how challenging his anxiety and behaviours can be to work through in a classroom for a teacher and how much time that can take out of a teacher's day. It's sort of an added reason why I've been long advocating for the use of service animals in schools.

I've heard from trustees, teachers and educational assistants in school boards where service dogs are being used in classrooms, and they've told me about the huge impact those service dogs have had on not just the student they are supporting but the whole class. While educators and service dog trainers experienced with using service dogs in classrooms will tell you that certainly the first day or two can be a little bit of a challenge and hectic as they kind of get used to the new world, things do become easier as the child who needed that extra support is then getting what they need, and because a service dog is so calm and quiet, everyone else just kind of forgets that they are there; the service dog just becomes part of that new routine in the classroom.

As I have about 30 seconds left, I just have one other thing that I will read to you. It's an opinion piece from the Waterloo Region Record, from a retired special education teacher. She wrote, "I am disappointed a support dog was denied to a student with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). For a student with observable needs (a wheelchair, hearing aids or a Braille system), our boards and community have little difficulty providing funding to level the playing field. But many ASD students have complex developmental needs that cannot be met with these approaches." That's from Karen Todd-Bustamante.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to start by thanking the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler for sharing with us a little more information about the issue, particularly related to this bill around service animals but also her own personal experience. I really appreciate hearing more about that. Thank you for sharing.

It's interesting because of course we were both elected, I think, in 2014 as school board trustees. It is an interesting thing. I just wanted to start by saying that hearing about why somebody runs for a position like that—frankly, a position in our local democracy that is literally the least valued and a very hard job, actually, and not something that people do for the glory but something you do because something's motivating you. Often, it's a very personal thing.

I know for myself it had to do with the closure, potentially, of some local schools in my neighbourhood

and also some of the issues I had as a parent with my kids in schools and what I found to be a really complex—overly complex—education system, particularly when you're looking to support students with special needs. I really believe that that is something we also have to grapple with: how we continue to support parents in better understanding and navigating the education system, particularly if they have children with special education needs. So I want to thank the member opposite for her comments and for her advocacy around this issue. I think it's really important.

I'm looking forward, frankly, to taking this to committee and having a chance to understand better to make sure we can actually make really good, solid policy that works for boards, that works for families, that works for kids. I'm looking forward to being able to do that with the member opposite, hopefully, and learn more as we go forward.

I also just want to say that the only hesitation I have, the only concern I have around this is, I really wish this was a separate piece of legislation that we could give enormous time and more time and more attention to, because I think it really deserves it.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler for her incredible work. We are so lucky to have her as part of our caucus. Her tremendous experience, not only as a kindergarten teacher, a special education teacher, a school trustee but also a mom of a child with autism, really complements our caucus, and I'm just so proud to have her as one of my colleagues and of all the work she's done on this file. So thank you.

Back in my home riding, we've seen the positive outcomes of service dogs in the classroom. We have COPE Service Dogs in Barrie. They have said research shows that canines in the classroom improves grades, improves learning skills and decreases suspensions. They've been at this for quite some time from when they were first founded. The objective of COPE Service Dogs was back when they were first founded in Germany. The first service dogs were introduced in Germany in 1920 for war veterans who had lost their eyesight. They've taken that model and brought that to Barrie, Ontario, to establish COPE Service Dogs, which stands for "Canine Opportunity People Empowerment."

They are really well-known in the community. They're well-known for success stories, like the success story of Steven and Ruby. Steven was born with cognitive, balance and mobility challenges. The doctors said he would never be able to walk on his own. Eventually, with some physiotherapy and some assistance, he was able to walk a bit but he needed assistive devices. However, when COPE Service Dogs came into his life, he was able to walk without assistance simply with the leash that he was holding with his dog. So his success story with Ruby is incredible.

I think we need to look back on the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler and the stories that she had mentioned about Jack, Brayden, Peyton, Maya and Darius,

and make sure that these types of stories don't happen to future children. The Progressive Conservatives highly believe in equality of opportunity, not a quality of outcome, and we have to make sure our future students have the full potential to achieve everything they can. I'm so proud of all the work our Minister of Education has done on this bill, and the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Like my colleague from Davenport, I also want to congratulate the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler for telling us the story about what motivated her to run at the school board level and what motivates her to be motivated in this particular piece of legislation today.

Autism and helping kids with autism in our schools is so important. What I've learned in my short amount of time here is that a number of us from all sides of this House are devoted to doing that. I have met with two parents, Speaker, over the last couple of months. One parent mentioned to me that they were number 1,038 on the list for supportive services for autism in our area, in Ottawa, and the other parent mentioned that they were number 732 on the list. The way it works in Ottawa is that you can decide to have direct funding or you can decide to go through the route of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. But in both cases, you end up having a child with significant needs, often at a preschool level, waiting for services, and parents anxious to figure out what will happen to their child.

So we know, Speaker, what happens in that context. What happens in that context is that parents with means will avail themselves of extended services, and people without means can't. That's what troubles me, to be honest. I like the idea of service dogs being able to be in our schools to help kids with autism. But what troubles me is that we're in a moment now in Ontario where too many parents, parents that I meet in our constituency office every time I go home back to the riding, are waiting, languishing and not being able to avail themselves of other needs their kids have with autism.

There's only one way out of that, Speaker, and it doesn't happen by shrinking the revenues of the province, so I invite my friends opposite to consider what happens when you cut corporate taxes and shrink revenues for the province of Ontario by \$1 billion. I want you to make the link between taxes and services, because parents whose kids have autism where I live will not be able to access services if they can't afford it privately. That's what happens, and we need to be mindful of that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from York Centre.

Mr. Roman Baber: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and it's my pleasure to rise and speak to this bill for two minutes. This piece of legislation is very important to me personally. I come from a family of educators. My grandma taught French for close to 50 years. My mom taught English and then computers, and math, and economics and geography for what is now close to 30 years.

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I remember that a couple of years ago, the principal asked my mom to teach a subject that she wasn't familiar with. I think it was economics. She struggled with it so much. She struggled with it to the point where she had difficulty going to school, because she felt she was unprepared. She felt that she didn't have sufficient background to teach economics. In fact, she has fallen on some hard times as a result.

We never know what the school year will bring, and teachers often don't know what the school year will bring. It's not unusual in Ontario, for, let's say, a gym teacher to be asked to teach math, for an English teacher to be asked to teach computers. In part, what this legislation is designed for is to provide teachers with a foundational background in mathematics, so if one day they're asked to teach math, they're going to be prepared to teach math. This is not just great for students. This is not just great for the direction in which education is going, which is science and technology, thankfully—this is great for teachers.

I've been meaning to say this ever since I got to the House: Teachers change the world, and I'm proud to support them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler for final comments.

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you to the member from York Centre. Certainly, teachers do change the world, so thank you. Also, thank you to the members from Davenport, Barrie–Innisfil and Ottawa Centre, as well, for their comments this morning.

I just want to end off, with my final two minutes, just to tell you a little bit more about Darius and an incident that happened that his mom described to me this week in school. Ms. Hamlet told me about a recent incident. She said it happened a few weeks ago in the school, and Darius was upset. He had left class and locked himself in the washroom. He would not stop crying or settle down for almost two hours. She said she happened to be in the school's community room at that time with her son's service dog, because he wasn't allowed in the classroom during that part of the day. The school's special education teacher went to find her, and she went and brought Idyll to Darius.

Within five minutes of Darius being with Idyll, he had calmed down and was able to go back to class and learn. That is exactly why I've been advocating for service animals in the classroom. It's to make the lives easier, not only for the child with the disability, but for their classmates and for the educators themselves to be able to get through the school day and make it better for everyone.

As I end off, I definitely want to say thank you to our education minister, Minister Thompson. I know her phone call in the summer to Ms. Baldwin absolutely meant the world to her—for the education minister to take the time to speak to that mother about what her child was going through. Thank you also to her parliamentary assistant, the member from Niagara West, for everything that those two have done to bring this piece of legislation forward. I just

want to thank them for all that they're doing and definitely for that consultation process.

Again, the consultation is online at fortheparents.ca. I'd like to encourage all members of this House as well as all Ontarians to take part in that consultation process.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, thank you, Speaker, for that wonderful introduction.

It really is my pleasure this morning to talk about Bill 48. The short title that we have is the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. But before I start getting into the bill, I want to acknowledge, first and foremost, the wonderful work that teachers do in the classroom, and such an important role they have in developing young minds in our children's lives.

I know my granddaughter—when she started kindergarten a couple years ago, Miss Grant was her teacher. She idolized Miss Grant and that made her experience so much more positive, so much more informative and so much more educational. I want to, first and foremost, again, acknowledge the important role that teachers have in the development of our children, both emotionally and, of course, intellectually.

I know, myself, I had a wonderful experience when I was a kid growing up. I still remember my teachers' names in kindergarten. Mrs. Bladek: I want to say thank you, Mrs. Bladek, for being such a wonderful role model for me when I was a young student growing up at St. Mary's school. Mrs. Groschack, I want to thank you for your kindness. I met Mrs. Groschack just recently at a retirement party for teachers, the RTO London chapter, and she was there. I want to thank Mr. Pusse. He was our gym teacher and he was very active and athletic and he always promoted good physical activity in my education experience as a child.

There are so many wonderful examples of positive things that are happening in our schools, and I attribute that to our teachers. But things have changed over the years, and what has changed is the kind of support students receive and the kind of resources teachers have. A lot of those things have come to roost when we're talking about the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act.

One of the things I want to talk about is the special education needs of children in the classroom. One of the things in the bill that is being addressed, of course, is accessibility and service dogs, and that's a good thing. We've come to this point, as we talked about how things looked in the classroom back when I went to school, 40-some-odd years ago—actually, more than that, I guess—and how things look today. They're different, and one of the things is special education and special needs.

We're talking about service dogs. This bill is addressing that issue, and that's a good thing. But from my perspective, I think this is really something that could have been taken on its own merit and had its own discussion about service dogs and accessibility, not just in the classroom but maybe in other parts of our community, of our neighbourhoods. So it's a great thing that it's in there,

it's bringing up the topic, but I think it could have had more of a fulsome conversation when it comes to public presentations during committee. People could have had that focus on that particular part of this bill.

There are many things in this bill. It truly is a large bill. I would have hoped that the government would have maybe taken some of those pieces out and given it the attention that it needs by giving it its own bill rather than lumping it together with these pretty substantial, important changes that we're going to be dealing with in our education system—giving that attention so that we can get it right and we can make sure we have the opportunity for public input.

There are so many things in here. I don't know what the government's intentions are when it comes to bringing it to committee, but I hope there's going to be a lot of consultation. I hope the committee is going to travel as well, because up until now, there hasn't been a lot of travelling on bills; people have to come to Toronto. I know in London, when we're talking about special education and special needs, there is a lot of concern around that.

I personally know—I know many teachers, but this one particular teacher has just recently graduated from teachers' college and started her new career as a teacher. She is full of energy, excitement and can't wait to get in that classroom—a great attitude. She's a great role model, and I look up to her because she's kind and considerate and she knows what she's doing; she's an expert in her field. She went to school for six years to become a teacher and was so dedicated to that career path.

Now she's in the classroom and she's dealing with seven or eight—those 12-year-olds, preteens. What she has described to me is concerning. She has children in her classroom who have special needs; there are about seven children in her classroom out of about 28 or 30. I think that's a big percentage of the total amount of students. When she first started in September, she had one EA, one educational assistant, for seven students. Because of resources, she now only has a half-time EA for seven students. It's very difficult. She is very stressed, she is overwhelmed, and she needs help. And so do those students.

That is another piece of this legislation I hope this government is going to address in a separate way: how to resource and support, first and foremost, students and teachers so that they can do their jobs. This government is very concerned about having parents part of the whole equation when it comes to education, and we are as well. But that is also going to help parents, right?

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I'm sure now, when you get a phone call at home, if you have a special-needs child—and the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler might understand a little bit of this—parents are now the go-to when there are situations that are unmanageable or out of control in the classroom. That is not a good thing. Of course, when parents drop their child off, they think, "Okay, they're there. They're going to be doing their work. It's a safe environment. They're going to get the help they need, and I can go to work and focus on my job." But that's not the case. There

are many parents called during the day to come pick up their child because the school, the classroom—the resources aren't there to help that child. I see the member nodding that that's absolutely true.

So, absolutely, this bill needs to be discussed. But the bigger picture is, many of these problems could be addressed if we had the resources and supports in the classroom for students, for teachers and for parents—because those three groups are all involved.

I can give you an example. I popped into a school in October and saw a scarf on the ground, so I picked it up and thought, “Oh, I'll go return it to the lost and found.” As I was in the school, I went to the office, and while I was there waiting to drop it off at the lost and found—because you wouldn't want someone's ears to get cold in the middle of winter—there was a disruption in the office. So I was waiting to figure out where this lost and found was to drop it off, but there were lots of things going on. There was a young student in one of the rooms, and I could see he was physically agitated. I overheard the supervisor who was in charge of that situation say, “You have to go home.” They were trying to calm the student down and were unsuccessful. Another young student walked in, and the supervisor said, “You have to take your brother home. He can't stay in school today. I've talked to your mother. She can't be released from work, and you have to take your brother home.” I thought, “How is this young girl”—she looked about 12, and he looked about 10—“going to handle her brother? Where does she get the knowledge and training and experience to handle her sibling with those complex needs? She's going to have to walk him home. It's not the time for the buses.” I was just amazed. I thought, “This is not right.”

This isn't what educators and schools should be having to decide—calling parents, who can't get off work or who can't make it in on time, to come and get their child.

So on a bigger scale, we are not doing as much as we should be doing to help students in classrooms, teachers delivering the education, and parents when they drop off their kids. I really feel that that's something we're neglecting to talk about in a real way and address. Like I said, some of these things that are in this bill could actually help stop that.

That's one example. There are many examples, and I know we all have our own stories about how there's not enough help in schools.

I met with a parent just last week, during constituency week. She came into my office and said she's looking for child care—before- and after-school programs. She's a working mom. She travels. Her husband is also a working person. So she needs to have the before- and after-school daycare. I want to put that on record because I told her I would mention this in the Legislature. She wants it to be a drop-off at the school and a pickup after school. She wants a safe environment for child care. In the board where I am, in my riding, two schools amalgamated. So one school basically doubled the population in attendance, but they didn't make provisions on child care, before and after. So she had to find private child care. She didn't want to do

that. She was scrambling to find that. Her little one is four years old and she is not happy. It's not the ideal situation and she knows that things can be better for him. She's working with the school and, I'll tell you, she said, “I'm a working parent. I've worked so hard. All I want is a place for my child where I know I'm not going to have to worry.” And because it's a private situation, she is concerned. She cried. She cried in my office. She broke down crying, and she said, “I don't know what else to do. I'm doing all of the right things. Why aren't there enough child care spaces to accommodate kids when they go to school?” It's clear that those things could be dealt with when you know the numbers in school. That's another one I wanted to talk about.

The other thing I'd like to talk about is the sex ed curriculum. There is a part in here, of course, of this bill, that needs to be addressed, under provisions, to sexual misconduct around teachers. It's important; it needs to be in there. But we also have to educate our students so that they can acknowledge when they're being taken advantage of. The sex ed curriculum of 2015 gave students those tools. So we're saying that this should not be happening in our classrooms—absolutely, we know that—but then, when students experience that abuse outside of the classroom—bullying from other students—what are some of those things that that new sex ed curriculum would have given them an advantage or even the information on? We have to educate our children and give them, arm them, with information, so that they understand when things are happening to them, what to do: that when somebody is sexting something, they know that that's inappropriate and they know who to talk to and where to go. When they're being bullied in school because of an LGBTQ issue, they need to understand it's not their fault; they need to know where the resources are.

Those things are concerning when we don't have that education in school. That needs to be a fundamental piece. When you're telling teachers and students that those things aren't appropriate on any level, we need to arm people with information and education so that the person who is experiencing it understands that there's support for them and there are resources for them to go to, and that they're not alone. They're not going to stay quiet, keep quiet, and feel like something's wrong, that they don't know where to go. Part of that, the sex ed curriculum—I think it's a fault of this government to not continue it until they decided what changes they wanted to have happen.

Those are the two things I wanted to bring up that were very—the child care piece; then the special needs piece; and sex education, when we talk about arming our children with the right tools, the appropriate reactions when these things happen, where you can find help. That is huge.

That is huge in society today, because the phones that young people carry—I have granddaughters at the age of 18 months. They already know how to—they grab the phone, accidentally, and they know to touch the phone. They know to touch the phone; they know how to turn it on. I'm amazed. They know when it rings. When the phone rings, they'll say, “Grandpa,” and they'll give me the phone. They'll come and grab me the phone and they'll

say, “Grandpa, grandpa—grandpa is calling grandma when I’m with them. They’re very aware and very smart. Our generation today is highly informed as to what is happening in our world because of technology and because of the exposure they have.

It’s a responsibility. We have a responsibility in our society to make sure we inform them of this device and the negative outcomes that can happen when this device isn’t used properly, when people are messaging you things that are not healthy, when they’re bullying you on these devices. It can be, I’m sure, a very lonely time for someone who thinks the whole world has read this awful bullying message. Where do they go? I think we need to do better.

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I don’t know how long this government is going to take to make up their mind on what the new sex ed curriculum is going to look like, the physical health and physical education piece, but they better get it sooner than later because there are many, many children who need help. The phone line to call in—I call it the snitch line. Why not have consultations around the province, talking to people? Technology is great, but when you hear someone’s story and you hear the pain in their voice, or you hear the sincerity in what they are saying, you understand the impact it had in their lives, be it a student, be it a parent or be it a teacher.

Typing it out or phoning it in—what are you going to do, spend half an hour on the phone talking about your whole situation, your experience? It’s kind of a demeaning process, from my perspective. I think having a face-to-face when it comes to this important issue is really the better approach, as opposed to a phone line or a survey, or going online. Those things could definitely be part of the process, but not the only process, because it does speak to access. If someone can’t make it to that consultation, they can pick up the phone; they can go online. But leaving that piece out I don’t think is helpful and I don’t think gives the full picture of what this government can do better.

I do want to end off by saying that there are problems with this bill, of course, when we look at the College of Teachers and some of the powers that the government is going to have around that. Bringing it as an omnibus bill I don’t think serves the Legislature well; I don’t think it serves students, parents and teachers well.

I think there could have been a better approach to this. I know this government is in a hurry. I hope this is not going to be a time-allocated bill. I’ll put that on the record as well, Speaker. I hope it’s not going to be time-allocated because this is a very important topic. If we can’t take the time in this Legislature to debate our children’s future, then there is a problem. There is a problem with this government’s vision of what they want to do pushing their agenda. If we can’t take the time to talk about this, as many members that want to get up and speak to it and get on record—that is the other thing I talked about the other day: You are the government. You have the authority—I’m not going to say “power,” because power sometimes is misused. You have the authority to pass legislation, but you also have the responsibility to listen to other people’s

voices, so that if my constituents weren’t able to get on your snitch line or your online surveys, they’re going to have the opportunity, as I talked about today, to speak through me. I bring their voices here.

I know every member in our caucus—all 40 members—will want to talk to this bill, because we believe that we need to take time when we’re talking about our future generation, our children. We need to understand what they’re going through. It’s not just a quick fix on legislation and pat ourselves on the back and give ourselves applause for the good things we’ve done. We want to make sure that this legislation actually works and does the work that is intended. It’s not just about politics. I hope that this government will not time-allocate it. If anything, do not time-allocate this bill when it comes to children’s needs.

I just want to wrap up by saying thank you for the time to speak and again, thank you for all the work that teachers and students and parents do to make our communities better.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you, everyone, for your comments on this. I think we have to start off asking ourselves, what is it that we’re talking about here? What we’re talking about is the health and safety and well-being of our children in all of our schools. We’re talking about ensuring that there are safe places for our children to learn and be educated in, and we’re ensuring that there’s zero tolerance for any type of abuse against our children.

We are talking about ensuring that parents have a say in ensuring that their children are safe when they go to school. We are talking about ensuring that teachers are accountable for their actions and that there will be zero tolerance when it comes to any type of abuse of our children. We’re talking about making sure that our children have the tools they need to be able to learn in a safe and responsible way.

I find it difficult—and I appreciate the member from London–Fanshawe’s comments. But this is a bill geared towards the safety of our children and the rights of our parents. To take shots at the government through consultation processes—this is about our kids. If you support the health and safety and well-being of our children, then I would ask you to support this bill. I would ask you to stop politicizing and to care about what matters most: ensuring that our kids can go to school in a safe environment, and ensuring that our parents can send their children to school every day knowing that they’re going to be safe. That’s what matters most.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I’d like to thank my colleague the member from London–Fanshawe for her comments on this bill. I think she hit the key points in terms of what is really lacking in this bill.

The member opposite talked about the safety of our children and said to stop politicizing the bill. I think what the member opposite doesn’t understand is that parents and students across Ontario are telling us that they need to

have the modern sex ed curriculum in their classrooms. All of us remember when students were right outside this building, on the front lawn of Queen's Park, holding a rally, asking why this government refuses to include student voices in a piece of legislation and a dramatic policy change that impacts their lives and their well-being. I think all of us have received hundreds, if not thousands, of emails and phone calls about the dramatic changes that are occurring in our education system.

If we truly want to create classrooms that are safe and supportive for our students, then what we need to do first is listen to the students. We need to find out from them what it is that we can do to support them and then take it from there. I don't think this top-down approach that we have seen from this government time and time again is going to make any difference to students' lives.

I want to thank the member again for doing an excellent job of pointing out some of the key areas that are missing in this bill.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Today I'm standing to speak about this piece of legislation, and the main concern I have is that parents have to be comfortable sending their kids to school. When I go to work, I have to be feeling safe about my children. I should not be thinking every few minutes or every hour about how safe he or she would be in the school. So I think that adding more security and more safety to the classes is imperative. It's an important item, to have the peace of mind for people to be able to go to work.

As a professor, I used to teach, and I worked on campus and saw students staying till 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the morning, doing work on their projects and their assignments. I just wonder how safe it is to stay till 1 o'clock in the morning on campus. I think that shouldn't be an issue at all. Any legislation that will be able to make the environment safer for students should be approved by everybody. That's my thinking.

The other point we need to talk about is, the new legislation gives not only the parents of the students, but also teachers, the safety and protection they need to be able to give an environment for the students to innovate and feel safe. I think this government legislation is very important. We are taking action to help ensure that students and children who have been the subject of alleged sexual abuse or acts or child pornography by educators have access to the support they need after the fact.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I just wanted to rise again speaking to this bill so I could be on the record saying from teachers in my riding and from all over the province that I think it's a bit rich that the government wants to put an emphasis on these things at a time when the school infrastructure is crumbling all around us.

I want to take my time to ask a sarcastic math test because, quite frankly, the capacities of teachers where

I'm from are not in question for me. So I want to ask my fellow parliamentarians on the other side to fulfill this math test for me: When the previous executive of Hydro One made \$6 billion a year and you lamented it and you fired him and he makes \$11 billion a year because he's going to cash out his stock options, have you saved the public less or more money?

When we learn that Alykhan Velshi, somebody who used to be a high-ranking Conservative, is going to be fired, likely at a cost of \$500,000 to the people of Ontario, after working for one day, and that very amount of money could be used to maintain the essential services of Pro Bono Ontario, which saves the province \$5 million a year, what is the better investment?

Ms. Lindsey Park: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I recognize the member from Durham on a point of order.

Ms. Lindsey Park: Thank you, Speaker. I just question the relevance of this to the bill being debated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I was listening carefully to the tie-in. I will allow the member to continue but to be very cautious of your line of thought.

Mr. Joel Harden: I think I've offended my friends' sensibilities, and do you know what? Arbitrary math tests for talented people are offensive. So if you're offended, you're making my point.

My question is, why are we taking time out of this Legislature's work to ridicule our teachers when we should be supporting them with funding, with support and with respect? You made my point.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from London—Fanshawe for final comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie. It's always good to hear him speak in the Legislature. Also, I'd like to thank the members from Parkdale—High Park, Mississauga—Erin Mills and Ottawa Centre.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie talked about how this shouldn't be a partisan issue. I think I was very delicate when I described what I was talking about. Sometimes people are very defensive even when you do give considerate feedback, and I understand that. I get where you're coming from, but it wasn't a partisan intent, so I'll just clear that up for you.

Parkdale—High Park talked about the students' voices. I think that's part of the piece that I brought out, that when we're changing the sex ed curriculum, did we ask the people it's affecting? Did we ask kids? You know, if you ask a child a question, they give you an honest answer. They don't hold back. You can actually then create legislation around those honest answers. When I was debating, I saw some of the pages intently nodding their heads. I wonder what they're thinking. You should ask them about sex ed education and health and physical education.

The other one, Ottawa Centre: The member makes a good point. If this government is offended by being asked to be accountable for their numbers in this Legislature, why wouldn't a professional teacher who has had six years

of education be taken aback by being asked to take a math test, right? I understand that this government, when there was a briefing, didn't really know what the math test would look like and didn't, from my understanding, have examples of jurisdictions that actually have this math test. It was only after the fact that they came out with some other jurisdictions—I think it's in the UK—that may have had it.

Again, when you're making legislation and using it as a punishment or to ridicule someone in a profession, at least give us the answers of how you're going to have that math test laid out so people are prepared.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak in support of Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. I will be sharing my time with the esteemed member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte.

The legislation proposes amendments to a number of acts, including the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act, the Teaching Professions Act and the Education Act, and it will keep students in Ontario and in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence safer by making common-sense reforms to teacher regulation in the province of Ontario. It will also ensure that teachers and students alike are more prepared for the return of fundamental math instruction, and reform the governance structure of the Ontario College of Teachers.

But before I go any further into those details, I want to briefly touch on the support for students with special needs in the legislation, as this issue is also very close to my heart as a mother of a child on the autism spectrum. This part of the legislation, as we heard earlier, was inspired by the tireless advocacy of my colleague the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler, who we just heard from. I want to thank her for her dedication to this issue. Her son Kenner, as she said, had a service dog to assist with his autism, and the local school board refused to allow him to have his service dog in class. The Fee family took this case to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, but were ultimately unsuccessful.

From her comments this morning, which were mostly the comments of students, we know that her family isn't the only one struggling with this issue. I can personally attest to the therapeutic importance of the unconditional love that a dog gives to us all, and especially how important that is to children with autism. My daughter's best friend is our chocolate Lab, Maddie, and she has been a very important member of our family and helped my daughter control her emotions, which is very difficult for some children with autism.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act sets out a framework for the use of guide dogs by individuals with a disability, and the Blind Persons' Rights Act sets out a framework for the use of guide dogs for individuals who are blind or have low vision, but no legislation currently exists in Ontario that addresses the use of service animals in schools. The Ministry of Education has never provided direction to school boards on the use of service animals, leaving each school board to

determine their own policies, and only 39 out of 72 school boards in the province have done so. The lack of a consistent approach across our school boards has left students without access to an important support.

Under the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, there will finally be fair, open and consistent processes to be followed when families make requests for service animals to accompany their children at school. All publicly funded school boards in Ontario will have a locally developed and publicly available service animal policy in place by September 2019, based on policies and guidelines established by the Ministry of Education. This is good news for families across the province with special needs.

Mr. Speaker, I have covered that portion of the legislation. I want to turn to the first part, making our schools safer. I mentioned earlier that this legislation contains a number of common-sense reforms. If passed, it will guide the discipline committees of the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators in revoking an educator's certificate for committing any act of sexual abuse of a student or child where the discipline committees of the colleges have found the educator guilty of such acts. It will also allow the government, through regulation, to prescribe other acts of a sexual nature prohibited under the Criminal Code that would result in mandatory revocation of an educator's certificate.

I am sure that many Ontarians already expect that this would be the case. If you're an individual in a trusted position of authority like a teacher and you commit an act of sexual abuse, you should lose your ability to teach in the province of Ontario. But it is not the case right now, and as legislators, I believe that we have an obligation to fix it.

Something else that we have heard a lot about from parents and talked about here is fixing the declining math scores in this province. EQAO data released in August 2018 shows that 39% of grade 3 students and 51% of grade 6 students did not meet the provincial math standard. In grade 9, 55% of students enrolled in applied math did not meet the standard. Those are appalling numbers, and we have to do something about it.

The opposition's solution to falling math scores is simply to eliminate the test. Their election platform called for the elimination of EQAO testing on the theory that if we don't measure the results, math scores won't decline or maybe people just won't know that they're declining. On this side of the House, we're taking a very different approach. Our government has already taken steps to have teachers transition away from teaching discovery math and return to the basic fundamentals of mathematics instruction.

But there is certainly more that can be done to improve math in Ontario schools. If passed, this legislation will require new teaching college candidates in the province of Ontario to pass a basic math test before receiving certification, ensuring they are both better prepared and more confident when it comes to teaching basic mathematics to their future students. I don't think this is too much to ask of our next generation of teachers. It supports the

work that the government is already doing to improve student performance in science, technology, engineering and math—the STEM courses—which we all know are critical to success and the success of our students and our children in the 21st century. This will better prepare our next generation of students for the jobs and careers in the knowledge economy of the future.

I also want to briefly touch on the changes to the governance of the Ontario College of Teachers proposed in Bill 48. As a self-governing body, the Ontario College of Teachers is required to regulate itself in the public interest. The current governance model includes 23 members of the college elected by their peers and 14 members of the public who are appointed by the government of Ontario. Genuine concerns have been raised about the inherent conflict of interest associated with teachers having the majority vote on the council of their regulator, including a September 2011 report commissioned by the Ontario College of Teachers itself.

That's why the proposed legislation will repeal current provisions in the Ontario College of Teachers Act that set the specific size and composition of the council, replacing it with a framework that allows the number of elected and appointed members to be prescribed in regulation. If passed, these amendments will be proclaimed into force only after the Ontario College of Teachers's current governance review is completed, giving the government time to consider that report before acting.

In short, Mr. Speaker, this legislation will keep students safe by making common-sense reforms to teacher discipline, ensure students and teachers alike are more prepared for fundamental math instruction, make it easier and more predictable for students with special needs to bring service animals into the classroom, and reform the governance of the Ontario College of Teachers to ensure an appropriate balance on the governing council between elected and appointed members. I look forward to supporting this legislation when it comes to a vote, and I invite all members of this House to join me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I know you had mentioned that you were sharing your time. Unfortunately, it is now close to 10:15. There will be an opportunity when this bill is brought forward again for further debate, starting on the government side.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Unfortunately, it's now almost 10:15, and this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before we do the introduction of guests, I wish to draw attention to the fact that we have a number of visitors in the Speaker's gallery who are participating in Take Our Kids to Work Day. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Introduction of guests?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have three introductions, but I will be very quick.

First, welcome to the advocates from the diabetes association who are here for World Diabetes Day. I'd like to welcome Russell Williams, Gabriella Simo, Stacey Livitski, Brian Halladay and Dr. Jan Hux.

Second, I'd like to welcome all of the nurse practitioners from across Ontario who have come to Queen's Park today. Unfortunately, the plane from Sudbury was cancelled—no one from Sudbury. But I thank all the other nurse practitioners who are here today for the work that you do.

Third, the police association is here, with three police officers from my riding: Randy Buchowski, Joanne Sanche and Jack Sivazlian. Welcome to Queen's Park. A pleasure to meet with you.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Speaking of take your child to work day, I have a resident of Oakville who's been a fantastic supporter in Oakville, Mr. Jeff Smith and his son, Matthew Smith.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I would love to welcome Matthew Green to Queen's Park. He's been an amazing support to me. Thank you, Matthew. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: C'est un plaisir d'accueillir the Ontario undergraduate students' association, who are with us this morning, and particularly Matthew Gerrits, Richard Wu, Kathryn Kettle, Martyna Siekanowicz and Eddy Avila in the House. Welcome to our provincial Legislature.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislative Assembly Jamie Brama, Randy Henning, Tim Morrison, Keith Aubrey, Brad Durst and Colin Goodwin. They're all members of the Durham Police Regional Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joel Harden: I'd like to welcome a local leader from Ottawa police here at Queen's Park, Matt Skof.

I'd also like to welcome people here for take your child to work day: Dante Elis Washington and his mom, Ipek Kabatas.

Also, from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance: Stephanie Bertolo, Vikram Farah, Shannon Kelly and Michael Del Bono. Welcome to the people's House.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to welcome civilian directors Jay Yocom and Mike Ardito, and my friend Adrian Woolley, president of the Peel Regional Police Association from my great riding of Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: There are a number of people from Guelph here this morning, so I'll try to be quick.

I'd like to introduce Abby McGillis and her dad, Eric, who are in the members' gallery. I would also like to introduce Adam Donaldson from Guelph Politico, who is in the press gallery.

I'd also like to introduce Matt Jotham, president of the Guelph Police Association, who's here with all members of the Police Association of Ontario.

Finally, I'd like to introduce Scott Butler, my constituent, who's here representing the Ontario Good Roads Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'd like to welcome my canvass chair, Philip Menecola, here today.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As we've heard, the Police Association of Ontario is here today. I was pleased to have a meeting with folks from my area: Colin Goodwin, our president-elect, Keith Aubrey and Brad Durst, and I see Bruce Chapman over there. So welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park Elizabeth Lindsay, Michael Del Bono and Shannon Kelly from OUSA. I had a great conversation with them yesterday, and they're very happy to be at Queen's Park.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Good morning, Speaker. I want to welcome Roman Corsetti from the great riding of King-Vaughan as part of take your constituent's kid to work day.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure today to welcome all the student leaders and the president, Brittany Greig, from the College Student Alliance. Thank you for coming to the Legislature today, discussing how important colleges are to the province and the education system.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'd like to recognize, on bringing your kids to work day, two daughters of my staffer Alexis Easton: Brooksley Easton and Vivianne Easton. Welcome to the House.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome Mr. Ferroni from Forest Hill Collegiate Institute and his wonderful class, law equity and social justice, to our House and your House.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, please join me in welcoming the executive from the Police Association of Ontario: President Bruce Chapman; executive director Stephen Reid; policy counsel Mike Duffy; and PAO directors Trevor Arnold, Keith Aubrey, Mark Baxter, Clint Eastop, Cliff Priest, Dave MacLean and Larry Wood. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1040

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I would also like to welcome, from the Police Association of Ontario, Michael Duffy, Trevor Arnold, Jay Yocom, Adrian Woolley, Tony Hart, Jeff Banton, Andy Adams, Mike Ardito and Bruce Chapman.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the pleasure of introducing a number of constituents today. We have Paul Di Ianni from the town of Lincoln; and we have Michael Kirkopoulos, the CAO of the town of Lincoln, and Her Worship Mayor Easton of Lincoln today with us in the members' gallery. Thank you very much for joining us.

We also have a constituent, Cliff Priest, who is here today as a director with the Police Association of Ontario.

We also have a constituent, Sean Reid, and his daughter. Thank you.

Ms. Doly Begum: It's my honour to introduce Kody Fox to the House today. Kody Fox is here from the great riding of Scarborough Southwest, and he's here as part of Take Our Kids to Work Day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'm very happy to welcome Veronique. She is the daughter of my chief of staff. She's on the Take Our Kids to Work Day program today.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome Daniel Parada, in the public gallery, who is a constituent of London West and is here with OSSTF for Take Our Kids to Work Day.

Mr. David Piccini: I would like to welcome to the Legislature four nurse practitioners from Trent Hills Family Health Team: Laurie, Marion, Samantha and Carole. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, a warm welcome from the government to the College Student Alliance. It was great to speak with them this morning.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would also like to add my welcome to Matthew Green here today in the House. He's a former city councillor from the Hammer, and he's also currently the executive director of the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion. Thank you for joining us here today, Matthew.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I would like to welcome two long-time friends from North Bay, with the North Bay Police Service, Noel Coulas and Aaron Northrup.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to welcome Susan Brekvel to the House today. She's part of Take Our Kids to Work Day. She's here all the way from Thunder Bay. You might remember her mom, Peggy Brekvel, who's actually working somewhere in the precinct today.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: It's my pleasure to acknowledge that is today is environment industry day at the Legislature, hosted by the Ontario Environment Industry Association. I want to welcome the individuals here from ONEIA: Terry Obal, analytics and vice-chair; and Alex Gill, the executive director.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome some of the POA folks whom I will be meeting with today: our president from Hamilton, Clint Twolan; joining him will be Jaimi Bannon, Jason Leek and Ken Putt. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to welcome the CSA students, Brittany Greig and Andrew MacNeil—and a special thanks to the Centennial College Student Association, my home college. I would like to acknowledge Jem Hewitt, Matheus Ferreira, Justin Paolo Lim, Sam Casais and Ali Hassan for their attendance.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: On behalf of the member from Windsor West and the member from Essex, I would like to welcome three members of the Windsor Police Association here today: Pete Mombourquette, Ed Parent and Ken Price. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I would like to introduce two nurse practitioners from Ingersoll in my riding. Nancy Bradley and Sue Tobin are here with the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome nurse practitioners from Kitchener-Waterloo, Sahar Haji and Krysta Cameron. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I would like to introduce my guests, Sean Reid from the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada and his daughter Jordan, who is also a grade 9 student visiting with us today.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would just like to welcome everybody who hasn't been mentioned. Thanks.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're getting to that point, I'm afraid.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I have three special guests here today for Take Our Kids to Work Day: Hannah Rimnyak from

St. Joe's, former page Maggie Yurek, and my lovely wife, Jenn Yurek. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe the clock would indicate that we've expired the time for introduction of guests. I, too, would like to welcome everyone who is here, and I apologize to the members who didn't get a chance to introduce their guests individually.

WEARING OF PINS

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I believe, Speaker, you will find we have unanimous consent to wear a pin in honour of Diabetes Awareness Month in November.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow the members to wear a pin. Agreed? Agreed.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to make a comment before we begin question period on the number and duration of standing ovations which have interrupted question period since we began this Parliament. I have heard from a number of members on this, and so I wish to make a statement.

The standing orders do not empower the Speaker to prohibit standing ovations, and I recognize that members will occasionally wish to demonstrate their approval and support for something another member has said in the House. However, the Speaker is responsible for maintaining order and decorum in the House, and members will know that their activities in this House are televised and the public is tuning in to watch the proceedings, I believe in increasing numbers. We are all accountable for our behaviour in this House.

I have made it a practice to order that the clock be stopped when it appears the standing ovations are taking away time from question period to the disadvantage of members on all sides of the House who might be on the list and who are anticipating the opportunity to ask a question.

I would draw to members' attention that the National Assembly in Quebec does not allow ovations or applause of any kind during their proceedings. It was a decision that they took themselves and that enhances decorum, which ultimately, I would expect, enhances public respect for their members and their Parliament as a whole in the province of Quebec.

I have also, on occasion, not been able to hear the member who has the floor, who's speaking, when there's a standing ovation—sometimes I've not been able to see them either—and that's a problem which has to be considered.

I would therefore respectfully ask members to keep their ovations to a minimum to enhance the decorum in this place.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Yes, no standing ovation for that.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO POWER GENERATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to start by, as leader of the official opposition, welcoming the POA and Bruce Chapman, their president, whom I met with several weeks ago, just to say thank you to the police officers who keep our province safe, and to continue to work with you on issues of privatization, making sure you're able to stay well and continue to do your jobs with the support of your province.

Speaker, my first question is to the Premier, who apparently missed me yesterday. Alykhan Velshi served the Conservative Party in many roles, both in Ottawa and here at Queen's Park. He was even chief of staff to the Minister of Finance during his brief stint as interim leader. Yesterday, the Premier struggled to answer some basic questions. Will the Premier today at least admit to knowing Mr. Velshi?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: The OPG is responsible for its own staffing issues.

But let me tell you what we have done when it comes to the energy file. We ended up saving 7,500 jobs out in Pickering that the Leader of the Opposition wanted to get rid of. That's 7,500 families that wouldn't have been able to pay their mortgage or put food on their table, but that wasn't a concern to the Leader of the Opposition.

We cancelled the worst contract there was. It was the green energy scam, I call it—the Green Energy Act. We saved \$790 million for the taxpayers of this great province cancelling these contracts—again, a waste of money.

We ended up getting rid of the hydro board and the CEO. We're turning hydro around because the number one issue when I criss-crossed this province was energy costs—energy costs to businesses and energy costs to people who couldn't afford to pay their hydro bills, choosing between heating and eating.

Interjections.

1050

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members please take their seats. Should I reread my statement?

Interjection: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Hansard has it. I don't have it. Start the clock.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: When did the Premier learn that Mr. Velshi had been offered a job at Ontario Power Generation?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I think this is the third day. They just keep repeating and repeating the question. OPG is responsible for hiring their own staff.

But I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for giving me an opportunity to tell the Leader of the Opposition what people really care about. There are so many accomplishments this government has made. As a matter of fact, there is no government in the history of Ontario that has ended up getting more done in four months than this government here. I mentioned the 7,500 jobs that the Leader of the Opposition wanted to axe. We put a memorial up for the veterans of the Afghan war; reformed OHIP, supporting people in the greatest need; fought for Ontario on the illegal border crossers; cancelled wasteful contracts, as I said, of \$700 million; the independent financial commission to look into who was spending the money the last 15 years; a line-by-line audit—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: At any point in the history of Ontario did the Premier discuss Mr. Velshi's appointment to Ontario Power Generation with his chief of staff, Dean French?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for giving me more time to finish all our accomplishments.

We fought for Ontario jobs during NAFTA, protecting farmers and protecting steelworkers. We ended a nasty strike at York University. We announced the Better Local Government Act, reducing the size and cost of government, getting rid of the politicians in downtown city of Toronto who couldn't get anything done. We challenged the federal government on the carbon tax; we'll be going to court over that. We returned a buck-a-beer; provided \$100 million to fight forest—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order on the opposition benches.

Hon. Doug Ford: —invested \$25 million to fight guns and gangs; Hydro One Accountability Act; announced \$182 million for nine OPP stations; froze driver fees; protecting free speech in universities; increased GO Train service in the GTHA; scrapped the—

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

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I'll remind the House—to quote a former Speaker—when the Speaker stands, you have to sit down. Restart the clock. Next question.

ONTARIO POWER GENERATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. The Premier has now had 24 hours to review the newspaper reports and confer with his chief of staff, Dean French. Can he now confirm or deny that his chief of staff, Mr. French himself, contacted the chair of Ontario Power Generation concerning the appointment of Alykhan Velshi to an executive position?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Ontario Power Generation is responsible for their own staffing decisions. OPG is a crown corporation that is responsible for their own staffing decisions. Put differently, all staffing decisions at OPG are made by OPG.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the CEO of OPG came to Queen's Park but refused to discuss employment matters with reporters, and government MPPs intervened to ensure that he did not take any questions about this matter at the fiscal transparency committee—the fiscal transparency committee.

Will the Premier ask OPG to make the details of Mr. Velshi's contract public?

Hon. Greg Rickford: The biggest potential human resources challenge for OPG would have been that if the anti-nuclear democratic party had power, 6,500 people would have been cut loose. Can you imagine a skilled workforce like that, out in beautiful Pickering country, looking for work, Mr. Speaker? I can't imagine it.

I've looked at all of our nuclear facilities. I'm getting to visit every single one, meeting great workers who are committed to making sure that Ontario has a stable source of electricity from nuclear power. These are significant assets that we appreciate. We appreciate those people, and thank God they didn't have that human resource problem.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier's job is to set a high ethical standard, govern in the public interest, and be accountable to the people who elected him. Instead, the Premier seems to think his job involves doing whatever he wants, whenever he wants, and answering to no one at all.

A Conservative insider is going to get paid half a million dollars for a single day's work. The Premier's office is responsible for this.

Will the Premier finally show some leadership and tell Ontarians what role his office played in this abuse of the people's money?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Let's turn human resources into an opportunity and talk about what this government has done over the past four and a half months. We've been eliminating the barriers that cost employers and small businesses money—to be competitive, creating jobs. There's a human resource opportunity. It used to be an issue during the decade of darkness. But the people of Ontario asked us to flip the switch on, brighten their horizon and create opportunities for jobs, so that the only human resource issues that businesses in this province had was the opportunity to hire more people.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Minister of Finance. For weeks now, the government has refused to disclose basic information about contracts

awarded by the Ontario Cannabis Store. These are contracts awarded using public money. Will the minister disclose who has won the lucrative contract?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much for the question. The Ontario Cannabis Store has a number of contracts and agreements with different businesses and entities that provide the recreational cannabis to its customers. I'll break it down succinctly. We begin with 32 federally licensed producers, some like Canopy Growth and Up Cannabis. There's a long list that has been published of the 32 licensed producers that we purchase from. That product goes to our warehouse, which not only warehouses the products but distributes them. That OCS warehouse was competitively tendered and negotiated under the previous government. Canada Post delivers the orders from Shopify.

Speaker, security at our warehouse is a top priority, and we will not be sharing information on the—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the minister might think it's idiotic to be concerned about how the government spends public dollars, but after this past week, people have a right to be concerned about this government's decision-making.

When was the contract awarded? How much was it awarded for? And who's getting the money?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Once again, we begin with the 32 published federally licensed producers. We know that we have a warehouse, which I'll talk about again in another moment. We have Shopify, who won the contract by the previous government to run our online operation. And we have Canada Post, who deliver it.

When it comes to the warehouse, it was competitively tendered and negotiated by the previous government.

Security of the OCS warehouse is the top priority. We will absolutely not be sharing further information on the day-to-day operations. This is a secure facility. The security of those employees is of paramount concern. We're very disappointed that the NDP want to pursue information of such a supremely confidential nature.

1100

POLICE

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Good morning, Speaker. My question this morning is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Congratulations on her new portfolio.

Constituents and police officers in my riding of Mississauga Centre have been voicing their concerns about the treatment of our hard-working and dedicated front-line police officers in instances where they administer naloxone to overdose victims. Under a regulation in the Police Services Act, police officers have been required to report to, and be investigated by, the SIU in an incident in which a civilian dies after naloxone is administered. This requirement is placing unfair burdens on our dedicated front-line officers who perform their dangerous duties day

in and day out to keep our Ontario communities and families safe.

To the minister: Could you please update the members of this Legislature on how our government for the people is addressing this process which unfairly burdens our brave front-line officers?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It would be an honour. Thank you to the member for Mississauga Centre, because this is an important issue.

Because the Police Association of Ontario is here, because so many front-line officers are joining us today, I would like to publicly thank you on behalf of our government for the important work you do. Know that you have a government who understands the challenging work that you do as front-line officers and that you have a government who is listening.

It was a great honour yesterday but, frankly, I really have to give all the thanks to Minister Tibollo, because he did all the work in preparation for the announcement, so thank you. It's very much appreciated.

I will speak to the specifics of the naloxone change in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I thank the minister for her response. It is very reassuring to hear that our government for the people is treating the dedicated and hard-working men and women of Ontario's police services with respect. Our dedicated front-line officers perform some of the most dangerous work in the province, and we must ensure that they have the necessary tools they need to perform their work safely. I am proud to stand here today knowing that our government for the people is taking action to ensure that the men and women of our police services are better equipped to continue saving lives and keeping our communities safe.

Speaker, can the minister please explain why this amendment to the Police Services Act needed to be made?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As the member knows, currently today, our front-line officers, our paramedics and our firefighters, are able to use naloxone. They don't have to go through an unnecessary criminal investigation if something goes wrong, and yet, before this small regulatory change was made, our police officers did. It wasn't fair. It wasn't right.

We made that change, and I'm proud to stand with Premier Ford and our government to support the people of Ontario.

POLICE INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. This is a question about ensuring impartiality in our criminal justice system as police investigate the activities of the Ontario PC Party. As the Premier well knows, there are multiple police investigations involving the party that he currently leads.

Yesterday, the government admitted that it would be improper for the government to involve itself in an investigation. For this reason, will the Premier agree to

bring in an independent special prosecutor to ensure the complete impartiality of this investigation?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, as I've answered this a couple of times already: We can't get involved in police investigations, but I'll tell you, I was elected to be a leader of this party, to clean up Patrick Brown's mess. That's exactly what I did, and we're moving this province forward in a positive way.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, unfortunately, the level and frequency of the scandals that we're seeing is even making the Liberals blush in this House. It is of public importance that this investigation and eventual prosecutions are conducted fairly and impartially.

In the investigations into possible fraud in the PC nomination in Hamilton West, police report that witnesses have been so far uncooperative and refused to provide statements. This is very concerning, because the fact is that one of these candidates at the centre of this nomination battle is now safely employed within the government, working directly for the Minister of Health.

Speaker, something smells here and the public just won't believe that the party under investigation can be trusted to prosecute itself. Will the Premier agree to bring in an independent special prosecutor to ensure the complete impartiality of this investigation?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, the member from Essex is suggesting he doesn't trust our police. He doesn't trust the Hamilton police; he doesn't trust any of the police. I can assure the member from Essex that I trust our police; I trust the investigation. Do you know something? I have faith because they're accountable; they're transparent. Unlike the NDP, you don't know where they're coming from. I have all of the faith in the world in our police across this province. They're absolute champions. That's who I have trust in. I don't have trust in you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Once again, I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

Start the clock. Next question.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. I'm pleased to hear that our government for the people will be conducting forestry round tables across the province to develop a comprehensive forestry strategy. Currently, Ontario's forestry sector contributes \$15.3 billion to the economy and supports roughly 150,000 jobs in approximately 260 communities across this province. Our forestry sector is a major economic driver in Ontario. However, under the previous government, the industry lost 51,000 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to bolstering Ontario's forestry industry and repairing the damage inflicted by the previous Liberal government. Could the minister inform the House of the crucial importance of conducting his round tables and engaging with stakeholders?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I would like to thank the member for the question. I agree with the member that Ontario's forestry industry is a major economic driver in this province, and I'm pleased to announce that I'll be getting on a plane tonight and travelling to Sault Ste. Marie for the very first round table.

The forestry industry was neglected by the former Liberal government. Restrictions, regulations and tax burdens hindered the industry. Our forestry strategy will help local communities grow and thrive because, Mr. Speaker, Ontario is once again open for business.

These round tables will focus on gathering feedback from forestry stakeholders about the challenges and obstacles that are preventing the industry from growing like we know it can. The information gathered at these round tables will allow our government for the people to identify what we can do to help the industry and unleash its full potential as a driver for economic growth and prosperity, particularly in northern and eastern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I would like to thank the minister for that response. I'm so glad to hear that our minister is starting right away with these forestry round tables, right now in my hard-working colleague's riding of Sault Ste. Marie, and is continuing to engage with the industry through a number of round tables throughout the province, and through written submissions and online submissions.

There are so many hard-working Ontarians whose families depend on the forestry sector, and I'm pleased to hear that our government for the people is committed to strengthening the sector as a whole and opening up Ontario for business. Can the minister expand more on how our government is supporting the forestry sector in Ontario?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Again, thank you to the member for the question. Our government for the people has been clear that we are committed to opening up Ontario for business. The forestry strategy that we are developing will assist in doing just that. Our government will always value and stand up for our forestry industry.

Speaker, I was disappointed to hear the leader of the NDP disregard forestry and deem the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry a "lower" portfolio. Thousands of Ontarians earn their living through forestry. Does the leader of the NDP consider them "lower" as well?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Sorry. The Minister of Natural Resources has a loud voice, but the government side is so loud I can hardly hear him.

I would ask the minister to conclude his comments.

Hon. John Yakabuski: This government is committed to reducing red tape, improving efficiencies and identify-

ing opportunities for innovation while ensuring sustainable forest management. Fortunately, we have a government for the people that will always stand by forestry. I can assure the member and this House that that will always be the case, regardless of what the leader of the NDP says.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Minister of Education. So far, this government's record on education has been nothing but cuts, chaos and contradictions. They have cut \$100 million in funding meant to tackle the school repair backlog, meaning kids could face another winter wearing hats and mitts inside the classroom. They cut the Parents Reaching Out Grants, grants that funded important programs aimed at engaging parents in their children's education. They scrapped the modern sex ed curriculum, leaving young people without the tools they need to face issues like cyberbullying and consent, and to protect themselves from abuse.

This government has already taken so much out of education. Can the minister tell us what other cuts parents, students and educators should be bracing themselves for?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I stand before you today to tell you, with my hand on my heart, what I am going to cut out is the nonsense coming from that—

Interjections.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: —over there. She's doing nothing but perpetuate fear, and it has got to stop. This is nonsense, what's coming out of that member from Davenport—absolute nonsense. It has got—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I had my earphone in. I couldn't hear the Minister of Education because of the applause from the government side. I would ask the government members to consider that and think about it.

Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I suspect that I hit a nerve.

Back to the minister: I am not surprised by this minister's lack of response. In fact, last week, the government showed just how unwilling they are to talk about looming cuts. When a journalist asked what cuts this government has in store for our kids' education, the minister's staff replied, "Let's ignore." So much for transparency, Mr. Speaker; so much for accountability.

I ask again, can the minister tell us what further education cuts are coming, or is her government going to continue to ignore the real concerns of parents, students and educators across Ontario?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, what we need to cut out of this House once and for all is the perpetuating of fear via nonsense politics.

The fact of the matter is this province is currently paying \$1.426 million an hour in interest on our debt. I'm telling you that we need to be responsible in here. I'm hearing—and everybody needs to take note of this comment—that people are appreciating that we are taking our time with our line-by-line audit, cutting out the waste, because there was a lot of it over the last 15 years. I'm very

proud of what my team is doing in a responsible manner to make sure we support our classrooms—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: It's the nonsense democratic party.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for York Centre will come to order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Your witty guys are supposed to be in the front row.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Essex will come to order.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: You're so intolerant.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Guys, you run circles around them.

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Environmental Commissioner revealed that the previous government allowed raw sewage to be dumped in our rivers and lakes 1,327 times last year. This is disgusting. My daughter had one word for it: "gross." This is our drinking water. This is the water we take our kids swimming, fishing and paddling in. We know that climate change will only make the situation worse.

One low-cost solution is to stop paving over our green space, so I'm asking today, Premier, will you commit today to protect and expand the greenbelt to defend the places we love and to protect our water?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Guelph, and thank you for the question: He is correct in noting that the Environmental Commissioner did deliver her annual report, and there was some troubling information about the previous government's focus on water. He has spoken to me about this individually and personally as well. It's something that will be part of the plan that we will have coming out at the end of the month with regard to the environment.

It's an important consideration: clean water, clean air and clean land. What this party committed to in its election, and what we are committed to in our environmental plan that will be forthcoming, is to make sure that Ontarians have clean air, clean water and clean land. I should reference as well that we are still open for consultations on that. We've had over 5,000 Ontarians contribute, and they can continue to until Friday, at ontario.ca/climatechange.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I do hope the Premier will commit to protecting the greenbelt, though.

Yesterday also, the Insurance Bureau of Canada was here, raising alarm bells about the costs of climate change:

\$1.2 billion in insurable losses in the last nine months. That's over \$350 per household, yet the government has no plan to reduce these costs on families. I released a climate change strategy this morning. I forwarded it to the minister's office. He is welcome to steal every idea in that plan.

My question to the Premier or the minister is this: Will the government today commit to pollution targets that meet our Paris obligations and leave a livable, affordable future for our children and grandchildren?

Hon. Rod Phillips: To the member from Guelph, I do appreciate both directly and today his input that he has provided. As I said, over 5,000 Ontarians have provided input directly, and we continue to gather that input.

The member from Guelph also—this morning he attacked our government. He attacked our government for getting rid of cap-and-trade, which was a commitment that we made during our election and part of the mandate that elected us. He attacked our government for fighting the Trudeau carbon tax—again, something we committed to. We won't apologize for meeting our commitments. We won't apologize for an environmental plan that protects families and protects the environment.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Before I begin, I would just like to welcome to the Legislature a personal friend and colleague of mine, Matt Skof, president of the Ottawa Police Association, as well as directors Barmak Anvari, Jamie McGarry and Brian Samuel. I look forward to meeting with them later today.

My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We have an aging population in this province and across our country. Our seniors built this great nation, fought in our wars and made Ontario what it is today. However, sadly, the previous government treated them as nothing but an afterthought for the past 15 years. We have over 30,000 people on wait-lists for long-term-care beds. In my riding of Carleton alone, these wait-lists are years long.

I know this is an issue the minister has advocated for passionately in the past. Can the minister please explain what is being done to invest in additional long-term-care beds across my riding of Carleton and Ontario?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would like to thank the member from Carleton for this important question. Our government for the people is delivering on our promise to end hallway health care by taking urgent action to expand access to long-term care, reducing the strain on our health care system in advance of the upcoming flu season, and working with front-line health care professionals and other experts to transform the province's health care system.

We are moving forward with building 6,000 new long-term-care beds across Ontario, representing the first wave of more than 15,000 new long-term-care beds that the government has committed to build over the next five years.

1120

We told the people of Ontario that we would make our hospitals run better and more efficiently and we'd help get them the care they deserve. Mr. Speaker, we are keeping that promise.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to thank the minister for her response. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I'm excited to hear that this is just the first wave of long-term-care beds and that we'll see many more beds across Ontario in the coming years. It is clear that with our government for the people, help is on the way. We've done a lot in just four months, and I know that the minister is committed to ending 15 years of neglect. For 15 years, the previous Liberal government failed to take care of the seniors who worked to build Ontario up.

Could the minister please provide more details about our plan to show respect for Ontarians who expect and deserve quality long-term care?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Aside from creating more long-term-care beds, our government will be extending funding for spaces already operating in the hospital and community sectors across Ontario to help communities prepare for the surge that accompanies the upcoming flu season. Hallway health care is a multi-faceted problem that will require real and innovative solutions. Our government will continue to listen to the people who work on the front lines of our health care system as we develop a long-term transformational health care strategy to address hallway health care and end it.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

For too long, Ontario's families have been stuck waiting longer and longer for the health care that they need. In this week's financial update, it is clear that cuts and privatization will be on the agenda for our health care system. The minister has said so much in recent speeches to the Ontario Hospital Association and others.

Can the minister lay out exactly how privatization and spending cuts will make it easier for people to find a family physician or to get the hospital care they need?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, through you, I feel it is really important to address, for all members of the Legislature and anyone watching these proceedings, the actual facts. In fact, I made no such statement. What we are going to do is expand health care across Ontario for the people who need it. That's why we've committed to building or creating 5,000 new long-term-care beds within five years. That's why we have committed to \$3.8 billion over 10 years to create a connected and coordinated mental health system across Ontario. Those are the things that we're concentrating on. That's what we promised the people of Ontario we would deliver, and that is what we are going to deliver.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, when I hear the minister talk about innovation, I feel like I have seen this agenda before. It is clear during the minister's speeches and during the resolutions that will be debated at the PC convention this weekend. When I see things such as a resolution to encourage public and private sector partnership in the delivery of the health care system, I get nervous, Speaker. Like Tommy Douglas, the NDP believes that care should be based on need, not on ability to pay, and that the private health care businesses should not be maximizing their profits on the backs of sick people.

Can the minister tell us which health care services her Conservative government plans to privatize next?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Let me be clear: No such thing is going to happen. There are many things that get discussed at party conventions. You have party conventions. The other parties have conventions. We have conventions. That does not mean that that's going to become government policy—not at all.

In fact, what we are committed to is making sure that people have access to our health care programs across the province. We know that there are areas where that is not happening, and we're going to concentrate on that. We are going to work on ending hallway medicine by creating those long-term-care spaces, by developing a long-term connected mental health and addictions strategy, by making sure that people get the home care services that they need. That's what we are concentrating our efforts on: building up our services in Ontario so that all people will have access to them.

CURLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Daryl Kramp: My question today is for our fine Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. When we hear "Hurry, hurry!", I'm not suggesting we accelerate the actions of this House; of course, what I am referring to is the Tim Hortons Brier, Canada's annual curling championship. The winner of the 2020 curling championship will represent Canada a month later at the World Men's Curling Championship from March 28 to April 5 in Glasgow, Scotland. Additionally, that winning team will return to defend its title as Team Canada in the 2021 Tim Hortons Brier.

Can the minister today inform this House of our government's involvement with this tremendously important 2020 Brier?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for the question. I'm happy to tell the House today that after waiting for more than 50 years, Kingston will get its long-awaited second opportunity to host the world's most famous national curling championship. The 2020 Tim Hortons Brier will be played from February 29 to March 8 in downtown Kingston. Kingston is home to one of the oldest curling clubs in Canada, and it's fitting that the championships are coming back to the city.

Great sports like curling strengthen communities and bring us closer together. Additionally, the Tim Hortons

Brier will prove to have a positive economic effect in Kingston and the surrounding area. It will create jobs and provide opportunities to meet and socialize. I congratulate the city of Kingston for this great achievement.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I'd certainly like to thank the minister for that response. Kingston last hosted the Brier in 1957, a long time ago—I even remember—when Alberta's Matt Baldwin hoisted the tankard following a perfect 10-0 round-robin performance at the Kingston Memorial Centre.

But the Brier is not only an opportunity for Ontarians to come together and support our sports sector; it's also a tremendous opportunity to promote the economic growth that is so important to all of these regions. Could the minister today elaborate on the importance of the Brier for Ontarians in all of our local communities?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that question. Ontario's government for the people is open for business and committed to supporting the continued success of our sports sectors. In many communities across Ontario, curling is an essential part of our cultural heritage and our identity as proud Ontarians. It's a time for all provinces and territories to come together for what is one of the most prestigious trophies in Canadian sport.

The Brier will be a positive economic and social benefit for Kingston and for all Ontarians, who will gather to watch the championship from across the region. That's why I'm happy to congratulate Kingston today, and I look forward to the camaraderie and competition that will be taking place shortly in Kingston.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The Ontario Black Youth Action Plan was a commitment and investment in Black children, Black youth and their families. Funding meant enhanced youth outreach by youth workers who received anti-racism training in order to better support youth experiencing trauma or mental health challenges. Black youth and their families would also be connected with community-based services and resources, as well as provided with culturally appropriate mentorship.

To date, the Conservative government has not made combatting systemic anti-Black racism a priority, and has instead relied on pre-written scripts to evade talking about real action. Will the minister be continuing the funding for the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan? Yes or no?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member of the NDP for the question. You know, it's interesting to me that we hive off these individual issues, and yet when we say that we are reviewing all programs, we are looking at every single program that our government provides, to ensure that it is providing the appropriate outcomes and getting what the people of Ontario need and deserve; that's what our responsibility is as government, and that's what we are doing. Yes, it takes time. Yes, it is going to be

thorough. But we are doing a line-by-line, program-by-program audit to ensure that the outcomes that were promised are actually being delivered.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Back to the minister: Not talking about systemic and institutionalized racism doesn't make it go away. The Anti-Racism Directorate, which is something that the Ontario NDP has long been advocating for, was the government's commitment to building a more inclusive society and its commitment to identifying, addressing and preventing systemic racism in government policy, legislation, programs and services.

It's estimated that the racialized population in Ontario will be 48% by 2036, which means that the work of the Anti-Racism Directorate is critical for supporting the needs of our increasingly diverse population. Will the minister be maintaining the Anti-Racism Directorate with adequate resources to do their job: yes or no?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I think it's important for the members of the NDP to understand that we work as a team here together. And I am incredibly proud of my parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton South, who is taking these files and taking the lead on it, because we understand the importance of protecting our young people. We understand the importance of ensuring that the programs we are providing are getting the outcomes that we want. My parliamentary assistant, our team member, the member from Brampton South, is doing that. I know that with his thoroughness we will get there, with appropriate outcomes that actually are going to make a difference for the people and the children of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Stephen Crawford: My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. My constituents are concerned about how years of Liberal mismanagement have left the province's finances in terrible shape. They're also concerned about how the damage wasn't limited only to the public accounts, but to public trust. That's why it was so important to hear, during a speech last week, that the President of the Treasury Board talked about restoring accountability and trust to government.

In fact, I was interested to see that, just yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board attended a town hall with employees from the ministry to answer many of their questions. Can the President of the Treasury Board please inform this House what actions the ministry is taking to reinstall transparency and accountability throughout government?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'd like to thank the member from Oakville for that thoughtful question. Since being sworn in, I have visited hundreds of the ministry staff in their offices to discuss what they do and how they are doing it. People are hungry for change. That's why we've consulted public servants through our Big Bold Ideas Challenge, and we've received thousands and thousands

of great ideas from our Ontario public service on how we can transform government.

My speech last week was called *The Challenge of Our Generation*. Well, it was made clear during the town hall yesterday that the staff of the Treasury Board Secretariat are ready and able to meet that challenge. I look forward to working with them and all of my colleagues as we transform government and serve the people of Ontario together.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the President of the Treasury Board for the answer. I must say, it's refreshing to have such an engaged and knowledgeable President of the Treasury Board.

It's been said that no single person has a monopoly on good ideas. That's why the Planning for Prosperity survey has received over 26,000 ideas from members of the public eager for change. Only by consulting a wide range of Ontarians can we understand what actions we need to take to repair the years of damage caused by Liberal mismanagement.

It's important that we ensure our province is modern and fiscally sustainable for this generation and for the next. Can the President of the Treasury Board please inform this House what ideas were brought forward in the TBS town hall concerning modernizing the public service?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again, through you, thank you to the member for that question.

Yesterday, as I looked out at the crowd at the town hall, I was struck by the young, diverse and many talented people that we have in Treasury Board Secretariat. In fact, a TBS employee is here today. Colin—I don't know where he is in the gallery—is responsible for the digital documents in cabinet to support our meetings. That's the kind of modernization that we need to continue to drive.

Mr. Speaker, it's up to all of us to work together as we deliver a modern, sustainable government that serves the people, not the other way around. I am confident that, together, we will meet the challenge. We have to, for this generation and for future generations. Together, we are restoring trust, we are renewing accountability, and we are re-establishing transparency.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. One hundred and thirteen people applied to appear before the committee that will analyze rollbacks of our employment and labour standards, just tomorrow. That's 113 people for only 20 spots, over a five-hour period, over one day. These people applied from Peterborough, from Barrie, from Thunder Bay, from Ottawa, from Cambridge, from Brantford and from Chatham. It's only for the people who can make it to Toronto, just tomorrow.

Does the minister think that that is enough consultation on this regressive piece of legislation?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks very much for the question this morning, and I'm pleased to answer it. Bill 148 was the most harmful piece of legislation that was brought forward for businesses in Ontario in our generation. We ran an election in the spring on making changes to Bill 148, to ensure that Ontario was open for business again. I can tell you that when Bill 148 was introduced by the Liberal government, our members went out then and met with business owners, employers and even employees across the province and heard directly from them that this piece of legislation, Bill 148, was killing jobs across Ontario. It was a job killer, Mr. Speaker.

Since the election, my two parliamentary assistants, Skelly and Parsa, have been fanning out and hearing directly from employers as well. We have heard loud and clear that we are on the right track here.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The government is imposing serious, far-reaching, regressive changes to labour laws and employment standards across this province. Across the board, wages will be cut, paid sick days will be slashed and workplace rights removed. But the government doesn't seem to have the decency to hear from the people of this province, from hard-working Ontarians.

Shutting down the voices of the people of Ontario on a bill that will directly impact them is undemocratic and it affects the quality of the life of workers in this province. Premier, let the people in and let them be heard on this bill and make sure that you extend the delegations on Bill 47. Will you do the right thing? Will you?

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that when the Liberals introduced Bill 148 in this House, we heard loud and clear from people across Ontario that that piece of legislation—which was supported by the third party at the time; potentially headed for third-party status again—wasn't doing anything to grow the economy in Ontario. It was killing jobs in Ontario. It was sending employers outside of our jurisdiction to the United States.

Tack on the high cost of electricity—the NDP supported that legislation as well, the Green Energy Act—and tack on the cap-and-trade, Mr. Speaker. The NDP supported the Liberals on that piece of legislation, as well. These guys have done everything they can to drive jobs out of Ontario. We're doing everything we can to make sure that Ontario is open for business.

1140

Interjections.

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

Start the clock.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: This year we have seen unprecedented levels of vomitoxin mould on corn across the province and in North America. Farmers in my riding, and indeed across the province, are struggling to keep their businesses operating during this

harvest season because of the rising levels of mould, resulting in some corn being rejected at the grain elevators. Farmers are struggling to get their corn to market, agri-food businesses are struggling to produce feed, and livestock farmers are worried about providing their animals with nutrition. This is an issue that is affecting the agricultural industry across the board.

Can the minister please tell us what farmers can do?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much to the member from Sarnia–Lambton for that very important question. As the member highlighted, this year has seen an unprecedented amount of vomitoxin on corn, and I'm aware that farmers across the province are frustrated about the impacts on their business. I understand how challenging this is for not only Ontario farmers but also the hard-working people across the entire agriculture industry.

My ministry encourages farmers to harvest as early as possible to avoid having the disease spread further across the field, and to keep storage bins clean and separate from the diseased corn.

I encourage all farmers to contact Agricorp for more advice on what assistance is currently available for them.

I continue to meet with those impacted across the industry. My ministry and Agricorp will continue to keep farmers informed on any new next steps.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the minister: Thank you for his response and leadership on this issue.

I've heard from a number of farmers who have found high levels of vomitoxin on their corn, and the number of concerns I'm hearing from them is increasing day by day. Some farmers are not able to get their corn to market, as their crops are being rejected at the elevators for the level of mould. Farmers are beginning to contact Agricorp for assistance on what to do with impacted corn and what this means for their production insurance.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us what this government is doing to help farmers and provide them with the assistance that they so desperately need?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Again, I thank the member for the supplementary question.

I want to assure the member that my office is in contact with Agricorp and those across the agriculture industry on next steps and the best practices to provide a timely and effective solution for all of these impacts.

I acknowledge the challenges and the hurdles our farmers and agri-food industries are experiencing. Frequently rainy weather, amongst many other factors, has contributed to the problem and has made harvesting a challenge.

Tomorrow I will be hosting a round table with those across the value chain, from grain farmers to ethanol companies, feed producers and livestock farmers, to gather input from those impacted in the sector.

Mr. Speaker, I will work tirelessly with our partners like Agricorp to find solutions and support Ontario's hard-working agricultural workers. My ministry is committed

to working with the farming industry and providing all of those impacted with clear and effective solutions.

I thank the member again very much for the question.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. One of the most significant heritage assets in Niagara-on-the-Lake is the Rand Estate. The town of Niagara-on-the-Lake recently moved to designate the Rand Estate under the heritage act for its local and national cultural heritage significance. That designation is now being appealed by the developer who instead wants to develop this historic property. This same developer now, today, is taking a chainsaw to this extremely important site.

Mr. Speaker, the province has the tools available to help the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and its residents regain control of what has happened on this site, including under the Planning Act. Will the minister take action to ensure that this jewel in Niagara-on-the-Lake is not lost forever?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the honourable member for putting his question to me this morning. I'm sure he knows that I obviously have to be careful in my comments, given that the matter is before a tribunal, but I am very concerned and very interested in the points that he made regarding what's happening on the site this morning. I would like to, through you, Speaker, offer the opportunity to sit down with the member and gain further insight into what's actually happening in his riding. If he would afford me that opportunity, I'd give him some time after question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Wayne Gates: This week, the developer virtually clear-cut a quarter of the site. He is thumbing his nose at the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and its residents, who, if you can imagine this, are now engaged in acts of protest to try to stop this deliberate destruction of this cultural heritage jewel. The residents are doing everything they can to raise opposition to this. He's chopping down trees that are 150 years old.

Speaker, will the minister stand with the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake and issue an order under his powers in the Planning Act to protect this historically significant property?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, through you to the honourable member: I don't have any further information to add. I've made my offer. I'd be more than happy to sit down with you, but, again, you have to be—

Interjections.

Hon. Steve Clark: With all due respect to the heckling from across, matters before the tribunal are very, very delicate. But I do value the member's information that he has placed before this House, and I look forward to speaking to him after question period.

TAXATION

Mr. Parm Gill: My question is to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The residents of my riding of Milton know that a carbon tax will raise the price of everything. This tax is hurting our most vulnerable. It hurts our families, it hurts our seniors, it hurts our job creators, and it hurts the prosperity of our province. I'm proud to oppose this tax and I'm proud to be part of a government that is cutting taxes and not raising them. Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister outline our efforts to oppose this aggressive tax?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Milton: It has never been more important than now for this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, to stand against the Trudeau Liberals.

As you know, our Premier has been leading a growing coalition of provinces. There are now six provinces that stand opposed to the federal government's climate plan. This could never be more important, because just yesterday—and I've had to learn to parse the statements of my federal counterpart. The federal Minister of the Environment talked about—under questions about the fact that the carbon tax, according to economists, wasn't high enough to be effective; that it was only going to add \$648 to the price of families here. But she says—and I have to translate this—that her focus for now is to implement the climate framework—by that, they mean a carbon tax—and then move forward with increased targets in the future.

Mr. Speaker, we don't know how much it's going to cost Ontario families—

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

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank the minister for his answer. Back to the minister: The Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario reported that the cost of the Trudeau carbon tax is well over \$600. It is unfair to impose this tax on working families. The people of Ontario agree: They do not want to see higher gas prices or groceries.

1150

Can the minister update us on the next steps we're taking to protect our jobs and oppose this tax?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Milton: The Financial Accountability Officer did identify \$648 per family by 2022, as the member pointed out. As I just pointed out, the federal government isn't done yet. The federal government is talking now actively and publicly about how much they plan to increase that tax.

That's why we have a number of steps that I can talk about. We are of course using the courts. As we talked about, no stone will go unturned. We are supporting the government of Saskatchewan's review of this. We will have our own for which our factum will be filed at the end of the month. We will also be taking other steps in terms of working with other governments.

The federal Minister of the Environment cancelled the regular face-to-face meeting with environment ministers in Ottawa, where this was going to be the first item on the

agenda. I wonder why that is. We'll follow up with those other ministers and take all the steps we can within our power—

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for University–Rosedale has a point of order.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to introduce Uriyah Ravitz-Heller. He's from Bloor Collegiate and he will be working with me today as part of Take Our Kids to Work Day. Thank you for coming.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–St. Paul's, point of order.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'd like to rise on a point of order to welcome my goddaughter Jecema Hewitt Vasil to our House—to your House. I'm so proud of you as a student leader and it really warms my heart to see you here today.

Applause.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you.

Again, I'd just like to welcome Forest Hill Collegiate now that they're in the space, and Mr. Ferroni, for being here today for Take Our Kids to Work Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'd like to welcome Andrea Young and Kennisha Taylor from my office to the Legislature today. Welcome.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'm standing today to recognize the beginning of Transgender Awareness Week and that November 20 is the Transgender Day of Remembrance to honour the trans people who have been victims of hatred, violence and murder.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I would like to welcome two groups of students today in the gallery: the College Student Alliance, including their president, Brittany Greig; and the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance: Danny Chang, Mitchell Pratt, Karen Albrecht, Julia Göllner, Peter Henen, Beth Lindsay and Aidan Hibma. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Sy Eber, a friend and a resident of Toronto, to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome Dave MacLean and Jeff Lalonde from the Cornwall Police Association. It was great meeting you this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: As I was mentioning, today is environment industry day, and I wanted to remind everyone the Ontario Environment Industry Association is having a reception this evening. I would like to remind all members from all parties to join us in committee room 228 this evening for the reception.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I'd like to welcome a constituent of mine from North Hastings, Velma Waters, a lovely lady who always thinks outside the box.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, I just noticed we have one of the strongest police officers in Ontario standing up there. Pat Comeau from the Belleville city police has joined us today. It's good to see you, Pat.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, we welcome all visitors to the Legislature today.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kitchener Centre has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services concerning the Black Youth Action Plan and Anti-Racism Directorate. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Guelph has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks concerning protecting the greenbelt and climate change targets. This matter will also be debated today at 6 p.m.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mrs. Gretzky assumes ballot item number 45 and Mr. Rakocevic assumes ballot item number 57.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1155 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome my Legislative Assembly assistant, Angela Britto, to our House today. I would also like to give a welcome to Phillip Morgan and Rory Ditchburn, my constituency assistants.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DIABETES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to recognize World Diabetes Day. Did you know, Speaker, that in my riding 12% of the people of Nickel Belt live with diabetes? If you look at the First Nations within Nickel Belt, it is 24% of the population of the First Nations that lives with diabetes. In the year 2011—that's the last year I was able to get stats for—33,000 Ontarians got eye surgery because of diabetes, we had 33,000 hospitalizations because of diabetes, and up to today, every four hours in Ontario, somebody with diabetes gets a foot amputated.

It doesn't have to be this way, Speaker. Well-managed diabetes doesn't have all of those complications. Here in Ontario, we have thriving health innovators that bring forward things such as flash glucose monitoring. Rather than having to prick your fingers and read the thing, you can just have a little beep and you know exactly what your sugar is at and what you need to do.

For those every four hours that we amputate a foot, we have off-loading devices—all sorts of them—but people cannot gain access. We have to change this. We have to have a program in place in Ontario to be able to bring health devices to market and to people who need them.

PHONE IT FORWARD CAMPAIGN

Mr. Doug Downey: Mr. Speaker, 2018 marks the 100th anniversary of CNIB, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Over the last century, CNIB has been improving the lives of Canadians with visual impairments. This year, they're focusing on unleashing the power of technology, pushing for equality and boosting participation in the world of work through their Phone It Forward campaign.

Today, smartphones are able to download dozens of accessibility tools that can make daily tasks more manageable and allow the visually impaired to live more independently. Unfortunately, not everyone has access to this life-changing technology. The unemployment rate for people with sight loss is triple that of the general population. In 2012, StatsCan found that working-age adults with a visual impairment had a median income of almost half that of adults without a disability. This pay gap can make owning a smartphone inaccessible.

The Phone It Forward campaign is attempting to address this issue by wiping and refurbishing donated smartphones and providing them to visually impaired Canadians in need. I urge all members to promote the Phone It Forward campaign on social media and to your constituents, donate any old smartphones that you are no longer using and join me in accepting the donated phones in your offices. In small ways, we can make a big difference.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would like to talk about an issue today that connects to Oshawa but broadly to the

Durham region, and it is the issue of freeing Highway 412 and protecting the 418 and removing those tolls.

I had introduced Bill 43, the Freeing Highways 412 and 418 Act. But, Speaker, it wasn't my idea; it was brought to us from the grassroots, from people across Durham region who wanted us to remove those tolls. This is a fairness issue—I would say, non-partisan. In fact, so much so that during the campaign, the NDP said that if they formed government, they would remove the tolls, and the PCs said at the time:

“If the PC Party forms government the first priority of Durham region PC MPPs will be to advocate strongly for the removal of the tolls from the 412 and 418 highways....”

“All Durham candidates believe removing the tolls from the 412 highway and not tolling the 418 is the right thing to do....”

Speaker, I remind all members of this House and members of the broader community: This is a fundamental fairness issue. It is Durham region that is targeted by these tolls. No one else has tolls on their north-south connector roads.

I have letters from the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce calling on this government to support this initiative to remove the tolls. I have a letter from the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade—again, these are unsolicited letters to the Premier—saying that this is an issue of importance to them. They support not only my bill, but they would support this government picking up this issue and running with it.

We need to move forward on this issue so that all of the residents of Durham region can indeed also move forward.

DARLINGTON REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

Ms. Lindsey Park: Recently, the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, the Honourable Greg Rickford, visited my riding of Durham for a special tour, so I just wanted to take a brief moment to talk about it.

On Saturday, October 27, the minister and I attended an open house at OPG's world-class Darlington nuclear generating station. This open house saw over 3,000 visitors from the community interested in coming and learning about the refurbishment. As many of you know, Darlington currently provides 15% of our province's electricity needs.

We saw the amazing work that's happening right now with the Darlington refurbishment project, which will allow the power plant to continue to provide that critical baseload supply for another 30 years.

OPG is refurbishing the first of its four reactors there, and highly skilled nuclear professionals from across Ontario are working to ensure that the project, which is currently—wait for it—on time and on budget, is carried out safely and with excellence.

The minister and I had the opportunity to go inside the unit 2 reactor vault, where the refurbishment work is taking place.

I can say, Speaker, I am so proud that my riding of Durham is home to so many incredible nuclear professionals,

who are helping provide our entire province with reliable, low-cost and clean energy.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. Chris Glover: Transformative change often happens in Ontario's colleges and universities. This morning, I had the pleasure of attending a seminar on transformative social change at the Humber College Lakeshore Campus. It was organized by Arthur Lockhart of the Gatehouse Centre. The Gatehouse Centre is a place that aims to help people heal from the trauma of childhood sex abuse.

Today's seminar was not about childhood sex abuse but another type of trauma. Today's seminar was about community healing from the trauma of gun violence.

So far in Toronto this year, there have been 352 shootings and 473 victims of gun violence in this city. Every incident leads to trauma.

A number of organizations across the city and across the province are starting to advocate for a public health approach to gun violence. This approach recognizes that gun violence is a symptom of a deeper disease. That disease starts with poverty and with segregation of people with low incomes into neighbourhoods with poor access to transit, to youth programs, to employment, to opportunities for education, to the opportunities that they need to thrive.

Today, the group produced a video, and there were a number of speakers there. Among the organizations that are advocating for change are the Zero Gun Violence Movement and Think 2wice.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the government to take a public health approach to gun violence, to bring healing to this community.

MEDICAL HUB

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to talk a little bit today about a project that is going on in Thorncliffe Park.

Thorncliffe Park is one of the most vibrant neighbourhoods in my riding of Don Valley West. It's a compact, densely populated high-rise community of roughly 33,000 people from all over the world. Children in Thorncliffe Park speak two, three, four languages. Thorncliffe Park really is a microcosm of this country.

In the last two years, there has been an enormous amount of work done with community organizations to establish a medical hub in the heart of Thorncliffe Park. It's a hub that will fill a medical and particularly a primary care gap that exists. Progress had been made, and at the time of the provincial election there was an expectation that the hub would be opening in the very near future.

1510

The kind of coordination that's going on in the planning for this will allow great use of public space and efficient and effective access to services for the population in Thorncliffe Park.

I look very much forward to the community members, the organizations in Thorncliffe Park being able to work with this government to make this hub a reality. It will make a huge difference, and it will provide great primary

care to the people of Thorncliffe Park. I look forward to moving ahead on this project.

DYSAUTONOMIA

Mr. Ross Romano: I'm very excited to rise in the House today to speak about one of my local constituents, a young girl by the name of Emily Wilkinson. She is an extraordinary girl. She is 19 years of age, and a number of years ago was diagnosed with a very rare disorder called dysautonomia. This is a medical condition that causes a malfunction of the autonomic nervous system. In other words, people who suffer from this have difficulty controlling functions of the body that we would not normally think about—things like regulated heart rate, temperature control, kidney function, and the list goes on and on. She was bedridden from this for a period of time. There is currently no cure for dysautonomia. Since her diagnosis, she has become an advocate for those living with this disorder.

She really is quite incredible, Mr. Speaker. She studies early childhood education at Sault College in Sault Ste. Marie. She tries to stay active, playing soccer and coaching under-14 girls' soccer.

She came to see me about a month ago and asked if I would be able to help her raise awareness of this disorder in the provincial Legislature. I said I would happily stand up and speak to this in the Legislature.

She was telling me about how being a soccer coach and a soccer player has helped her to get out of bed and become more active and really helped her along. So I said, "Well, we'll take it a step further."

Last week, in my riding, we met during one of her soccer games she was coaching. I used to be a soccer goalie myself, and I had all the kids shooting on me. We had all the media there. It was a great event, and I was really happy to help her out in raising awareness.

I just want to help her in that regard of raising awareness here today.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: This past weekend, four people died of overdoses in Windsor in a 24-hour period. Thirty others overdosed, but thankfully, their lives were saved. Speaker, these people are not addicts; they are human beings suffering from addiction. They are our mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers.

There are a number of ways that our community needs to be supported in order to adequately treat and care for people. While it's good that the Conservative government did not scrap all of the overdose prevention sites outright, we are very concerned that putting a cap on the number of sites in the province will pit communities like Windsor against other municipalities that are facing the same issues we are.

We need immediate solutions. Several community groups are coming together to operate a mobile outreach van and an OPS information tent. These are great initiatives, but there's more that needs to be done. There is a serious lack of funding for treatment beds in my community. Hôtel-Dieu Grace

Healthcare is able to help people through detox, but once discharged, they have no choice but to go on a lengthy wait-list for treatment, often facing a relapse. Community agencies like House of Sophrosyne are consistently running at capacity, with months-long wait-lists and dwindling funding.

With an increase in drug use by youth and the lack of youth beds in treatment, we're only seeing these issues put greater stress on the system. People are dying needlessly, and we need the Conservative government to recognize the value of both an overdose prevention site and adequate funding for treatment beds so that our front-line workers have the tools they need to save lives.

IMMIGRATION FRANCOPHONE

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: La semaine dernière, nous avons célébré la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone. C'était une occasion de rendre hommage aux communautés francophones d'ici et d'ailleurs et de rappeler l'importante contribution des nouveaux arrivants francophones au développement de l'Ontario. Le thème de cette année, « Une langue, mille accents », était très pertinent puisqu'il nous invitait à célébrer la diversité qui nous unit et qui fait la force de notre communauté francophone.

Notre gouvernement reconnaît que l'immigration est un vecteur du développement important pour la francophonie ontarienne. L'Ontario accueille le plus grand nombre d'immigrants francophones au Canada à l'extérieur du Québec. À travers l'immigration, nous favorisons l'essor et la vitalité de nos communautés francophones en contribuant à la prospérité économique, sociale et culturelle de notre province. L'immigration contribue aussi à transformer et à enrichir notre francophonie et fait de l'Ontario une province diverse et ouverte sur le monde.

Encore une fois, je tiens à remercier les nouveaux arrivants francophones qui contribuent grandement au développement de nos communautés.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mrs. Robin Martin: It is very disheartening to find myself rising today to respond to an anti-Semitic assault and robbery that occurred on the evening of Sunday, November 11, in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence. According to media reports, at approximately 8 p.m. on Sunday, four yeshiva students walking home on Fairholme Avenue near Bathurst and Lawrence in visible religious attire, including kippot, were subjected to derogatory comments from a larger group of youth. The incident quickly escalated to a physical assault and robbery, now under investigation as a hate crime by the Toronto Police Service.

I want to thank the Toronto police for their prompt attention to this matter.

Let me be clear and unequivocal: There is no place for hatred or anti-Semitism in the province of Ontario. We will not tolerate a situation where members of the Jewish community feel uncomfortable practising their faith or wearing religious items such as kippot in public.

I call on those responsible for this despicable act to turn themselves into the Toronto police, apologize to the four young men targeted for no other reason than their faith and commit to working with the Jewish community to put an end to anti-Semitism.

Mr. Speaker, I hope and pray that this is the very last time an act of anti-Semitic violence happens here in Ontario and certainly in my riding.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for member statements this afternoon.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to welcome a good friend to the House, a friend of mine from Wellington–Halton Hills. Councillor Bryan Lewis, from the town of Halton Hills, has joined us. Welcome, Bryan. It's good to see you here.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAFEGUARDING OUR INFORMATION ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA PROTECTION DE NOS RENSEIGNEMENTS

Mr. Crawford moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 55, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to the disclosure of confidential information / Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la divulgation des renseignements personnels.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Oakville like to explain his bill briefly?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This bill amends the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 to provide that if a government institution makes a request to a lender to obtain personal information of a consumer with whom the lender has entered into a credit agreement, the lender may only disclose the personal information if the consumer consents to the disclosure. Similar amendments are made to the Consumer Reporting Act and the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, 1994.

KEEPING STUDENTS SAFE ON SCHOOL BUSES ACT (HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT), 2018

LOI DE 2018 RENFORÇANT LA SÉCURITÉ DES ÉLÈVES DANS LES AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES (MODIFICATION DU CODE DE LA ROUTE)

Ms. Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 56, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of seat belts on school buses / Projet de loi 56, Loi

modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les ceintures de sécurité dans les autobus scolaires.

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

First reading agreed to.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Don Valley West care to explain her bill?

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: For decades, Ministers of Transportation in Ontario and across the country have raised the question of whether we should require the installation and use of seat belts on school buses in order to prevent injury and death of students. I was one of those ministers, and so I can say from personal experience that when that question was posed more than once in my term as Minister of Transportation, the response was that we continue to rely on the best evidence available regarding school bus safety, which was contained in a Transport Canada report from 1984 that concluded that school buses were safer without seat belts.

Mr. Speaker, new evidence has come to light that contradicts the conclusions of that previous evidence, and it is in response to that new evidence that I bring forward this legislation.

The bill, if passed, would make it mandatory to have three-point seat belts installed and used on all new school buses by 2020 and on all school buses by 2025.

BROWNWOOD HOLDINGS LIMITED ACT, 2018

Mr. Baber moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act to revive Brownwood Holdings Limited.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

850148 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2018

Ms. Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr4, An Act to revive 850148 Ontario Inc.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: On a point of order, I just wish to welcome to the Legislature today Cynthia Watt, vice-president of AMAPCEO, who is here with her daughter for Take Your Child to Work Day. Welcome to the Legislature.

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jill Andrew: “Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I proudly sign my signature on this on behalf of the people of Wychwood Barns and Toronto–St. Paul’s, our riding. I hand it to Hannah.

PUBLIC SAFETY

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

“Whereas safety, security and peace of mind is of the utmost importance to the Ford government; and

“Whereas Ontario residents who have not been convicted of criminal acts could find themselves unable to gain access to various privileges they enjoy; and

“Whereas there are no provisions to prevent convicted terrorists from accessing privileges in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 46 and disallow anyone convicted of a crime under section 83 of the Criminal Code of Canada and any international treaties that may apply from receiving:

“(1) a licence under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997;

“(2) health insurance benefits under the Health Insurance Act;

“(3) a driver’s licence under the Highway Traffic Act;

“(4) rent-geared-to-income assistance or special needs housing under the Housing Services Act, 2011;

“(5) grants, awards or loans under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act;

“(6) income support or employment supports under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997;

“(7) assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997;

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

I hereby support this petition. I sign it and give it to Jack.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Gravelle: This petition was brought to me by Long Lake #58 First Nation in my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services announced July 31 that they would be reforming social assistance and pausing initiatives announced in chapter 1, section 7, of the previous government’s 2018 budget;

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

“The 100-day review will continue with First Nations-specific initiatives announced in chapter 1, section 7, of the previous government’s 2018 budget, where, at a minimum, First Nations north of the 49th parallel with or without road access and First Nations south of the 49th parallel without year-round road access will be entitled to the remote communities allowance;

“First Nations independent adults will be permitted to elect to be considered financially independent and receive assistance on their own behalf when living with parents;

“The 100-day review will respect First Nations’ unique needs and affirm First Nation administrator discretion and First Nation authority in delivering a social assistance program that contains wraparound and holistic services to help those on assistance stabilize and work.”

Speaker, I support this petition, and I’ll pass it to my page, Georgia.

1530

CURRICULUM

Ms. Marit Stiles: I’m proud to present a petition entitled “Protecting Children: Forward, Not Backward, on Sex Ed.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’m presenting this on behalf of my constituent Desirée Wells. I am pleased to affix my signature, as I support this petition. I’ll hand it to Emily to table with the Clerk.

PUBLIC SAFETY

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

“To Ensure the Safety of Residents of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas safety, security and peace of mind is of the utmost importance to the Ford government; and

“Whereas Ontario residents who have not been convicted of criminal acts could find themselves unable to gain access to various privileges they enjoy; and

“Whereas there are no provisions to prevent convicted terrorists from accessing privileges in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 46 and disallow anyone convicted of a crime under section 83 of the Criminal Code of Canada and any international treaties that may apply from receiving:

“(1) a licence under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997;

“(2) health insurance benefits under the Health Insurance Act;

“(3) a driver’s licence under the Highway Traffic Act;

“(4) rent-gear-to-income assistance or special needs housing under the Housing Services Act, 2011;

“(5) grants, awards or loans under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act;

“(6) income support or employment supports under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997;

“(7) assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997;

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

I will affix my name to this and give it to page Aditya.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the good people of Killarney, who have provided me with several petitions entitled, “Stop the Cuts to Indigenous Reconciliation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

—reinstate the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation;

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

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

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

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and present it to page Shlok to bring it down to the Clerks’ table.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: A petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“To Ensure the Safety of Residents of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas safety, security and peace of mind is of the utmost importance to the Ford government; and

“Whereas Ontario residents who have not been convicted of criminal acts could find themselves unable to gain access to various privileges they enjoy; and

“Whereas there are no provisions to prevent convicted terrorists from accessing privileges in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 46 and disallow anyone convicted of a crime under section 83 of the Criminal Code of Canada and any international treaties that may apply from receiving:

“(1) a licence under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997;

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“(5) grants, awards or loans under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act;

“(6) income support or employment supports under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997;

“(7) assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997;

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

I will be affixing my signature to this petition, and hand it to page Zoe.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jeff Burch: I would like to thank hundreds of students from Brock University in my riding for sending me their petitions: “Don’t Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Make client companies responsible for workplace health and safety for temporary” agencies;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“To Ensure the Safety of Residents of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas safety, security and peace of mind is of the utmost importance to the Ford government; and

“Whereas Ontario residents who have not been convicted of criminal acts could find themselves unable to gain access to various privileges they enjoy; and

“Whereas there are no provisions to prevent convicted terrorists from accessing privileges in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 46 and disallow anyone convicted of a crime under section 83 of the Criminal Code of Canada and any international treaties that may apply from receiving:

“(1) a licence under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997;

“(2) health insurance benefits under the Health Insurance Act;

“(3) a driver’s licence under the Highway Traffic Act;

“(4) rent-geared-to-income assistance or special needs housing under the Housing Services Act, 2011;

“(5) grants, awards or loans under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act;

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“(6) income support or employment supports under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997;

“(7) assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997;

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

I will sign this and pass it to page Imran.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREEN ENERGY REPEAL ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 ABROGEANT LA LOI SUR L’ÉNERGIE VERTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 13, 2018, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Doug Downey: I rise today to speak about Bill 34, the Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018. If passed, this act will alleviate the concerns of many communities across Ontario and ensure that any future renewable energy projects have the support of those local communities. That would be something different than they’re used to under the previous legislation. It will also ensure that the financial interests of Ontario are being met after far too many years of neglect.

In this speech, I’m going to attempt to make both a quantitative and a qualitative argument and rationale for why this bill is so fantastic. So if you’re a numbers person, this bill is for you, and if you’re not a numbers person, I’m going to say it anyway.

The quantitative reasons related to giving energy away: Let’s start with the numbers. I’d like to begin by drawing the attention of the House, of anyone who might be watching elsewhere—these are staggering numbers. An analysis by the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers estimated that Ontario lost between \$732 million and \$1.25 billion over a 21-month period, spanning 2015-17, just by selling the surplus clean electricity outside the province. I just want to say those numbers again: \$732 million and up to \$1.25 billion over a 21-month period.

Mr. Speaker, I like to translate numbers so that they’re digestible. Everybody has a sense of what a million dollars is. They’ve seen a million-dollar home. They’ve seen things that they can put into perspective. But when I talk about \$1.25 billion, that’s a number that’s really hard to conceive. One million seconds is 11 and a half days, but one billion seconds is 32 years. These numbers are not close.

So when I talk about the waste up to \$1.25 billion, that’s a lot of money. How did the province lose so much money? Was somebody asleep at the switch and it just happened? I’m not sure. I can’t impute motive, Mr. Speaker, but I think it was on purpose, because it was designed that way. They lost that much because Ontario agreed to pay a certain amount to produce nuclear, water, wind and solar, but then it could only sell it for a bargain basement price.

It’s not like we said that we’ll take the excess power and sell it at a bargain basement price, off hours, to our manufacturing sector that was subsequently decimated. We didn’t say we’ll give homeowners a break and sell it really cheaply

to them. We sold it to Michigan and New York. We gave it away, and we sometimes paid to have it go down there. I have nothing against the good people of Michigan and New York. As I say, some of my best friends are in Michigan and New York. But as an Ontarian paying the bills, I'm not interested in subsidizing my friends in Michigan and New York, nor their businesses, to compete with my businesses. The subsidy was to the tune of \$500 million a year, which is really a staggering number—half a billion dollars. That would be ridiculous, wouldn't it? I would suggest that it was ridiculous. That's why we brought Bill 34: We have to get Ontario back on track.

But this is what Ontario did. Experts like Paul Acchione, an Ontario Society of Professional Engineers past president, had an important message. He was quoted in the *Toronto Sun* as saying, "You don't build clean capacity for export—that's suicide because you can't make enough money on the export market." Dozens of others warned us the plan wouldn't make sense. It's pretty simple math, Mr. Speaker. My children understand this: that they can't spend an allowance they don't get. It's really simple math.

Dozens of others warned us it wouldn't make any sense. The books warned us that the plans of the Liberals wouldn't make any sense. We carried on, though. The Liberals carried on making life affordable for New Yorkers and those in Michigan, and the companies that were being attracted there because of the cheaper hydro rates.

I'm honoured to have been elected to serve in this House to try to save Ontarians money. That's what we're going to do with Bill 34. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when I knocked on doors—I've been knocking on doors for about 25 years. I know I look a little younger than that, but I have been knocking on doors for 25 years. I have never, ever seen an issue when I knock on a door that got a physical reaction from the person on the other side of the door. If somebody said, "Oh, hi. How are you? What will your government do for me?" I would just say one word. I would just say "hydro," and one of two things would happen with the person at that door: Either the person would get angry and into a stance, or they would slump because they had given up and were defeated. This is what I saw at the doors, over and over and over. The government just ground them down.

So when I said, "We're going to reduce hydro bills by a substantial amount, by 12% right off the top," they said, "How are you going to do that? What kind of magic is this? We're so used to being sold tricks." You just lay it out, and the one thing that we're going to do is to stop signing these nonsense contracts. It's fairly straightforward. That's why I was glad to see the bill come to the House so early.

Obviously this government has been working very hard. We're on Bill 50-something at the moment. This is Bill 34, so this was a priority for the government. It came in very early, and we're making it happen. It reminds us and it reminds those whom we serve that we're looking out for Ontarians where they work, where they live, and the people who employ those Ontarians across this province. We are making Ontario open for business by doing this.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the impact of some of the contracts that we cancelled. I want to start talking a little bit about what it did to neighbourhoods. Some people's neighbourhoods are a three-minute walk between neighbourhoods; my neighbourhoods are a little bit like Mr. Vanthof's, or other members who live in rural areas. It's a bit of a drive between the neighbours, but it doesn't make them any less of neighbours. Sometimes it's actually family members. I can tell you from my experience, because I did some of these contracts for some of the rural communities, that it pitted family members against family members. It pitted neighbours against neighbours.

What would happen is that you would have one farmer on a concession and his brother down the road, and one of them decided to take advantage of these outrageous payments the Liberals were prepared to give—I'll get to the actual numbers in a second. It was a betrayal of the family, and it was taken that way. It was personal and divisive, and part of the reason it was so personal and divisive was because it didn't allow for a conversation, not even at the municipal level, which I'll also get to. This really pitted people against each other, and some brothers and sisters felt like the other brothers and sisters had sold out. It was a really visceral, personal thing.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I've heard from some of these people since we've been elected and since the bill has been introduced. I've been to some of the fall fairs and out connecting with my agricultural community, some of my friends who are still farming, and I can tell you that they are absolutely thrilled that this tension is now gone, that this tension about what might happen with their family members and their neighbours is now gone, because we've said, "Enough is enough." We did it for economic reasons, but what a positive spinoff in not dividing communities anymore.

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Mr. Speaker, I found one article about a Buddhist meditation retreat centre that changed their plans because of turbine concerns. These turbines were sight pollution, in areas. I'd go up to Manitoulin, up on the North Shore near Kagawong on Maple Point, and I'd sit there. I remember the first time that I sat on the shore and looked out, and across the way were all these blinking red lights. I said, "I came all the way up here to Manitoulin to my mother-in-law's place, and I have to look at that? That's not why I came up here." Mr. Speaker, it's across the landscape. I've spoken to people in Holland, and they call it sight pollution.

Then all of a sudden the solution was, "Let's put them out to sea. Let's just push them all the way out to sea." But you can still see the blinking red lights, Mr. Speaker. It's very disturbing. I am glad we are putting an end to this. People are very happy about this. There are very few people who are wanting to go forward on this path, and almost all the people that I talk who suggest that maybe we should just keep going but in a different way are generally invested in it. They've generally taken advantage of the projects. But it has to make sense for the province and for the rest of Ontarians. I don't want to subsidize other people.

Now, I want to clarify some of the rhetoric we have heard lately which has been completely false. Let's deal with the first one, the falsehood. "The Green Energy Act is being scrapped because the Conservatives don't care about the environment." Really? Really? False, false, false. Mr. Speaker, the record of the Conservatives on the environment is absolutely second to none. The millions of square hectares that previous governments—

Interruption.

Mr. Doug Downey: Mr. Speaker, just wait. Just wait, Mr. Speaker, for the plan that comes out of this government on the environment. It is going to be absolutely fantastic, and it's coming soon. The Green Energy Act is being scrapped because it didn't account for some fairly straightforward ideas about supply and demand. It was flawed in concept right from the start. It disproportionately negatively affected our citizens in a variety of ways. I have only outlined one of them on the social side.

We're retaining many energy conservation practices. We encourage Ontarians to continue to choose energy-saving methods at home and at their businesses. We recycle. There are recycling buckets all over this place. There's turning off lights. There's all sorts of ways that we can conserve energy without me having to pay for my neighbour. It's just not helpful.

Now let me talk about municipal authority, Mr. Speaker. I talked to a previous member with the Liberal Party when he was a minister. What he told me—and I'm not going to say the name, because it may not be fair; he's not here to defend himself, and part of the reason he's not here to defend himself is because he said, "The municipalities are happy that we took away their authority, because it takes the local politician off the hook. We're taking the heat for it when those wind turbines go up and the solar litter goes across good farmland." He actually had the gall to say that the municipal officials probably couldn't handle the issue anyway. Now, the height of arrogance of that is why he's not sitting in this House anymore.

Mr. Speaker, I really encourage everyone to do a quick media scan of the way municipalities responded to the Green Energy Act initially, but the Coles Notes are this: Across the province, we found example after example after example of municipalities who opposed it. They passed resolutions. It came up at AMO. It came up at Good Roads. It came up at OSUM. It came up at every municipal forum, talking about the heavy hand of the Liberal government in ramming this stuff down our throat. And that's beyond the economic realities of what it did.

For those who haven't been tracking it, all these municipalities declared themselves not willing to be a host for the wind turbines. The Liberals finally relented a little—a little—and they said, "Okay. Well, now you have to consult with the municipalities, but you don't have to listen to them."

Interjection: That's still not consultation.

Mr. Doug Downey: That's not consultation, Mr. Speaker. It was a clear message. Now, if we were to go out and say, "We want input by municipalities on a particular issue," there's a way to do consultation. But to go from,

"We don't want to hear what you have to say. We're going to ram it down your throats," to, "Okay, we're going to listen to you, but we're still going to do what we were doing in the first place"—they're coming at it from the wrong end. They have no credibility on any sort of consultation.

The feedback from municipalities was widespread, from Perth to North Frontenac, to all over—members across this area. Again, the more rural, the tougher it was. This is why we're working hard to restore the voices and the decision-making of municipalities when it comes to siting renewable energy facilities.

As a former municipal councillor I know first-hand, with intimate knowledge, that municipal governments have the needs of our communities at their heart in these types of matters. Mr. Speaker, municipalities are close to the people. They understand what their local municipality wants. I think the Liberal government was probably wrestling with, "We're afraid of what the municipality might say for NIMBYism." But municipalities make tough decisions. They've made tough decisions on all sorts of things in the past. When it comes to the no-smoking ban—I don't know if everybody remembers back when you could smoke in restaurants. It was pretty common. It was very common—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Most of us are younger than you.

Mr. Doug Downey: Yes, for those of you who are younger than me. No.

There's a role for municipalities to play and there's a role for the province to play, but on local issues like this it's the municipality's role to articulate the importance of their constituents. And it's our role to take those to heart in a genuine way. Now, we're not always going to agree, but we have to have a respectful conversation, a respectful dialogue. That had just broken down over the term of the previous government.

Mr. Speaker, I promised at the top of the speech that I would talk about some actual numbers, so I just want to share some of them with you. When the program started—I'm talking wind and solar. You have to remember there's rooftop solar, there's ground solar and then there are turbines, and there are different rates for each of them.

I want to talk about ground solar first. Ground solar is this: You take a piece of land, it gets assessed and it gets a contract. Sometimes that contract to develop it as solar gets sold to a third party, so the intention and the conversation you have with the original contractor means nothing—if it's not written down, it means nothing—because they get bundled and sold off to another producer. Then, it either gets activated or it doesn't.

I can tell you, I reviewed those contracts in the early days and they were terrible. They took into account nothing about what would happen at the end of the contract, so I always forced my clients—or strongly encouraged my clients—to make sure that there was something in there to remove the ground mount from what were otherwise good farm fields. Because when those solar panels are no longer effective, I think some of those producers are going to

walk away from them, and they're going to turn to us and say, "Look at this land."

Now, why would you put solar in good farm fields? Well, you wouldn't unless you had bad data. What we would do is push the producer and say, "Where did you get the data?" "Well, we got mapping." "Okay, so it's class C farmland. You got mapping? Where's the mapping?" "Oh, we got it from the county archives." "Oh, so it's 1950s mapping that you've pulled out?" Somehow the government accepted that and that's exactly what happened. This was active, furrowed land that wasn't in the 1950s and they were allowing them to put them on that land.

I have examples of clients whom the government paid to tile-drain the same farmland. They helped with that. They helped with other subsidies and grants, Mr. Speaker. I think down the road they're going to be coming back to us saying, "Now I have these big chunks of concrete, the ground mounts, in our farmland. We want to return it to the initial piece."

But it gets worse, because before they put the ground mounts in they stripped all the topsoil off. So even if you could redo it, you don't have the topsoil to make it work. It's a problem that is going to go on for a generation because the Liberals were so short-sighted in what they wanted to accomplish at the expense of future generations. My son and my daughter, and their sons and daughters, will be paying for the mistakes of the Liberals on this file along with other files. It really, really gets me angry.

I was going to get into the numbers but I'm just so upset about the concept. I'm not going to drag you through all the numbers, but just a general sense: We were paying 80 cents a kilowatt hour. There was a time where we were paying 80 cents a kilowatt hour—80 cents—to produce it and selling it for five. Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know in what business model that makes any sense. It doesn't make any sense to me to enter into a contract where I buy high and sell low. It just doesn't make any sense at all.

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They should be ashamed of themselves. They pit neighbour against neighbour, propped up by my friends across the aisle. They split people. It's a simple matter of math. It's pretty, pretty straightforward.

I don't know what else to say except that I hope they're sorry—and not just not sorry. I think it's important that they wear what they did to my children. I haven't heard it yet. But boy, oh boy, I am proud of this government because we're getting Ontario back on track. We're realigning things the way that they should be. I'm very proud of this government for doing the things—tough decisions, earlier decisions—and we're getting it right.

I look forward to supporting Bill 34 in the future.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte for his presentation, but I've been around here for a few years, member, and I've seen the Liberal action on the environment. I've seen the lack of—I remember the Harris days when they did

nothing to protect the environment, and now all of a sudden you're the environmental party. That's amazing.

I think you're the big-business party, is what you are. I remember the landfill in Hamilton called Taro landfill, where they were even bringing waste material from Michigan, that the state of Michigan wouldn't accept. It was getting dumped above the escarpment in Stoney Creek, Ontario, right above Lake Ontario. They had leachate problems and all kinds of arguments with the company, and the company would run to their Conservative representatives, who would protect them from litigation and possible violations of the environmental act.

I remember that they even cut back on the inspectors who would go in and inspect the trucks. They used to do about 1,000 trucks a week, bringing environmental hazardous waste onto Hamilton Mountain, into that landfill, and when we complained about it and wanted more inspectors, the governments of both groups blocked it. They didn't want more inspectors. They didn't want the people to know.

Then we formed a liaison committee from the public to deal with the company and to deal with the lawyers of the company, and what did the government of the day do? They cancelled that and they appointed, basically, puppets to do the work of the company and eliminated the honest citizens who were involved in those liaison committees.

So I actually find it humorous when you stand here and say that you're the party that protects the environment and the Liberals are the party that protects the environment. That is a joke. The only people who are going to protect the environment are sitting over here.

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

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: This is the second time I've had the opportunity to speak after our brand new deputy whip, the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte. It's great because he always gives me so much material to work with. So thank you for that.

Talking about wind turbines: As many of you know, I represent the riding of Cambridge, I live in the riding of Cambridge, and I do that commute—103 kilometres—every single day to come in to be here at this Legislature. I do that twice a day, every day. Do you know what I see on my commute every single day as I drive east on Lakeshore? That one gigantic wind turbine. I'm sure you know how many days we've been sitting now. I will tell you that in all the days I have driven in to come into the Legislature, that windmill has turned maybe two days. And that little blinking light? I'm not sure it even turns enough to make that light work. So I do question why that is there, other than just to be a complete eyesore and to pretend we're doing a great job in saving the environment by putting up a gigantic wind turbine in the middle of Toronto. But I digress.

According to the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Electricity System Operator, wind and solar added \$3.75 billion in costs to electricity bills in 2017—

shameful. Wind and solar represent just 11% of total generation in Ontario but reflect 30% of global adjustment costs that are borne by electricity consumers.

Finally, some more numbers, because I know that my colleague likes numbers so much: In 2017, 26% of electricity generated from wind and solar was curtailed, or wasted. This is electricity that we as Ontarians paid for but we didn't need and we didn't use.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to speak.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I sat here in my seat and listened to the comments from the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte—and congratulations on your new position as deputy whip.

I just want to talk about some of the numbers that you might be shocked with. I enjoyed your analogy of one million versus one billion, but here is a number you need to digest: \$40 million. That was the boondoggle that the Liberals brought in with their Fair Hydro Plan. Guess what: You can't blame them anymore, because it's your plan. My goodness, digest that one, my friend.

Here's another number you need to digest, here are the facts. People who are listening to this, prepare for this: The Conservative government actually supported the Liberal government not 1%, not 2%, not 10%, not 30%, but 49% of the time on the decisions they made. Oh, my God, truth be told. Truth be told, those are real numbers. And, actually, I will tell the media to go out and look at what they actually supported the Liberal government on, because that's a fact. We have those numbers. Oh, I love numbers. I love the numbers game.

Here's another number that you have: a 12% hydro reduction. Oh, my goodness, you're cancelling contracts. How much is that going to cost Ontario taxpayers? Oh, I'm sure that the industry is just going to walk away from those contracts and say, "Oh, okay, we're just going to walk away from this business." Come on, there are going to be some negative impacts and financials that are going to be hurting. There is investment that is no longer going to come to Ontario based on the direction that you're taking this province.

Listen, I love numbers too, but come on. One plus one, you guys; do your math properly.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's a great honour to rise today to respond to the comments made by my friend the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte.

I also like numbers. I don't really take any lessons from the NDP on that. They voted 97% of the time, I believe is the number, with the Liberals.

I want to start with some numbers about green energy. Like my friend, that's what I heard about at the door: how upset people were about the Green Energy Act and how it was just a disaster for the province of Ontario.

The first number I want to start with is: What was the average cost of power before they got their hands on green energy and brought in this act? The average cost of power

in Ontario was about five cents a kilowatt hour. At the time, when they were using Denmark as an example, the average cost of energy in Denmark, where there were windmills—by the way, it is an island in the middle of the ocean. There are windmills there, but the average cost of power was 20 cents a kilowatt hour. They only got 20% of their power from wind, despite the fact that they were an island in the middle of the ocean; and 80% of their power from nuclear, wheeled in from France and from Germany. So it was insane, as my friend said, to begin with, that they embarked on this whole thing.

What they did in 2006 was sign contracts for wind power at 8.6 cents a kilowatt hour. Then with the Green Energy Act they said, "Why don't we give the wind producers windfall profits? We happen to know some of those wind producers. They're former directors of the Ontario Liberal Party. Let's give them 11 cents a kilowatt hour. Or, if they can deliver it during a peak, we'll give them 14 cents a kilowatt hour." Now, Mother Nature is the only one determining whether it's going to be delivered during a peak so why we were giving them extra money I don't know, but the people of Ontario paid through the nose for their mistakes, and I'm glad that we are changing and repealing this act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte.

1610

Mr. Doug Downey: I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Cambridge and Algoma–Manitoulin—and his rendition of the count; I quite enjoyed that—and my friend Ms. Martin as well.

The fact that we can do fun with numbers, and it is fun—

Mr. Michael Mantha: We can do it all night.

Mr. Doug Downey: Yes, we can do fun with numbers, and that's great, but I want to focus for a second. We'll have lots of opportunity to actually tease out the numbers. But I want to talk about one thing: the question of what it will cost us to cancel these 758 contracts. The answer is nothing, because notice to proceed had not been issued. So that will cost us nothing.

The reputational cost of a government who rams things down the throats of the constituents, the reputational cost of a government who ignores the municipalities and the people on the ground, and the reputational cost of a government on the international scene that is—I'm trying to find the right word that I don't have to withdraw; fill in the blank—to its citizens is very disturbing and hurts our brand in a way that you can't just turn the page.

So we're working very hard. We're consistent. We're intentional. We're going to get Ontario back on track by doing the right things. We've committed to doing certain things. We've done the line-by-line and a commission of inquiry; the select committee is doing fantastic work. We're going through a very methodical process to start turning this ship around so it's headed in the right direction, because this ship was headed for an iceberg and everybody knows what happens in that story.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to passing this act.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It is an absolute honour and privilege to stand today for my inaugural speech within the Legislature as a member of the 42nd parliamentary session of the Ontario Legislative Assembly and, specifically, to stand alongside my fellow members of the Ontario New Democrats official opposition, led by our fearless and compassionate leader, Andrea Horwath.

I also extend greetings today to Green, Liberal, independent and Conservative government members. I also wish to acknowledge the service of our previous MPP for Toronto–St. Paul’s. Dr. Eric Hoskins, thank you.

Each day I walk into this building, up and down these hallowed halls, my eyes ascend, I take in a deep breath, I exhale and I remind myself that I am, in fact, not dreaming. I am here. Busily buzzing through the Legislature, as we all do, does not necessarily afford us the time for an intimate engagement with the breadth of historical images and relics within these walls. But on occasion, especially late at night, the inquisitive child in me stands in awe in this building, looking, observing, intently reflecting upon just what those faces on the wall would say to me, if only the walls could speak.

I sometimes run my fingers against the marble, feeling the names, reimagining the social, cultural and political times of those carved into history. “Is this the house democracy built?” I wonder. Well, this magnificent space has been welcoming to many, but it has also been inextricably linked with policies, procedures and legacies that served to exclude, dehumanize and challenge the very right to personhood for many. We can never forget the monstrous, because to forget it is to become, and to become is to repeat.

It is prudent for me to acknowledge in these privileged chambers the colonized Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, Inuit land we occupy and call home. We are grateful to work on this land and this territory. Our mere presence here should dictate our moral, ethical and social responsibility to uphold our commitments to truth and reconciliation recommendations. These are commitments that this Conservative government has already severely undermined with the scrapping of a sole minister of Indigenous affairs, the slashing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission curriculum-writing sessions, and the government’s lacklustre response to the mercury contamination water crisis plaguing Grassy Narrows. And that’s just for starters.

We are here to do good and to move communities forward, not backwards. The weight and responsibility of this rare opportunity to serve as an MPP, the audacity of the challenge, the sheer excitement and immense pride I feel each day, even in the tough, worst moments, is never lost on me.

I am the daughter of a woman, my mother, a proud postal worker, a single parent who arrived to St. Paul’s in the 1970s. I am the daughter of a woman who proudly stands shoulder to shoulder with her sisters and brothers on the CUPW picket line. It gave me such honour to stand

on that picket line denouncing Bill 47, anti-worker legislation. Mom, I thank you for your love, your support and the fine example of hard work, and I am sorry that this government’s actions show their utter thanklessness for your service.

I would not be here if not for the people of Toronto–St. Paul’s. To our Toronto–St. Paul’s community and to the cherished voters who exercised their right to vote and entrusted me with their hope on June 7: I can never thank you enough. To those who voted otherwise: We’re now taking this journey together, and I look forward to working with you.

To paraphrase my colleague from Timmins during his debate on the standing orders, a good system of government is one where you do not entrust all the power to one office. There is strength in diversity, and this strengthens our democracy. Our role as MPPs is not only to stand for our party lines but to also uphold our constituents and their needs.

Through my dogged determination, I will fiercely advocate for our community, and I will do so while keeping my integrity intact. I promise to maintain a steadfast commitment to equity, inclusivity, access and human rights, and to let this guide my intentions, my interactions and my decisions. In this House, my voice will serve as a chorus representing the diverse, multi-generational voices and needs in St. Paul’s.

I have said “I” and “my” several times throughout this speech, but rest assured that there is no “I” in team. On April 28, I was nominated as the Ontario NDP candidate for Toronto–St. Paul’s inside Oakwood Village Library and Arts Centre, one of the many cultural hubs located in St. Paul’s and where I’m headed in December with my love, Aisha, to participate in a community podcast on queerness and the holidays.

I stood in front of family, friends—old and new—feminists and community activists. I stood in front of colleagues. I stood in front of community. Throughout our campaign, my loved ones, our donors and our selfless volunteers showed up for us, investing hours into our campaign, doing so with sore feet, wood-splintered hands and aching shoulders from clipboards and campaign literature. I especially want to recognize our elders, disabled and far-travelling volunteers who gave us their all.

To our Toronto–St. Paul’s campaign team, including Liz, Michael R., Richard, Chana, Omar, Andy, Doug—our digital dream team—Chris, Rob, Julian, our numbers guy Ethan, our E-day extraordinaires Janet and Wendy, and later on Camila and Mona: None of this would have happened without and your courage. I thank you.

Richard, you are the consummate friend who is loyal beyond words. Omar, simply put, your genius was our fortune. Michael R., how many times did we cry and laugh in that car? Do you remember when we got towed? That could only be topped by Julian and me in an ice storm, driving around the riding, days before my nomination. Chana, Wednesday was a real lifesaver. I loved that dog. Chris, your and Emily’s friendship is one of the best things that happened to me during the campaign. Mona, the

beautiful picture you gave me on election night now hangs in my office at Queen's Park. And Gill, one of our local teenagers—a 16-year-old who I know will one day be Premier or the world's biggest strategic thinker because he is just so amazing—really inspired us to work that much harder.

To my friend Michael Erickson, who engineered a victorious last stretch of our campaign within its final days: I wouldn't be here without your support, your outreach and our big queer and gay canvasses.

I couldn't possibly list every supportive ear or mentor in my network, but I must give special shout-outs to former New Democrat MPP Cheri DiNovo; the Women Win TO political series; previous city councillor Joe Mihevc; and the first Black woman to sit in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, who was also the first Black woman to serve as a cabinet minister in Canada, former NDP MPP Zanana Akande, who had been a role model to me long before I met her, long before she knew who I was. I thank you all for your leadership and your examples.

I also give a hardy thank you to the NDP provincial staff for your support during the campaign process. And I know again that I couldn't have been here without our fierce leader, Andrea Horwath, who ran an exceptional provincial campaign with an actual platform, ready to deliver change for the better for Ontarians, especially vulnerable and marginalized Ontarians, who have been dangerously targeted by this Conservative government since it took office on June 7 and even before we were sworn in, actually.

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Well before and throughout my campaign and after the election, whenever I got home, I plugged away on my dissertation for my PhD in education at York University. On October 10, after years of precarious employment, full-time employment, unpaid leaves, chronic-health-related hospitalizations and surgeries, I walked across that York University stage and officially became Dr. Jill Andrew. Like my political campaign, I didn't achieve this alone. Without my patient, determined, brilliant and caring academic supervisor, Dr. Karen Stanworth, this victory would not have been won. I thank you for our conversations. For the times that you listened, for the times that you provided a shoulder for me to cry on, I thank you. After all, we're right: Representation does really matter.

As the culture critic for the official opposition, we know that the arts and culture sector is an economic engine in our province. But outside of increased job creation, tourism and the obvious power of the arts to both tell and share our diverse lived experiences locally and abroad, the arts are often a mirror into our community's soul and our value system. As such, arts and culture become invaluable tools in the pursuit of social change and community physical and mental health and wellness. A strong and robust arts sector in the province is one that is diverse, equitable and accessible, where creative communities, artists and audiences, no matter where they are, have opportunities for creation, performance, mentorship and engagement. From the large

cultural institutions and museums in this city to the community-engaged arts education programs run by countless arts non-profits across Ontario, a well-supported arts sector, artists, and safe and equitable workspaces are vital to the future of Ontario.

So let me take you on a smorgasbord tour of some of the arts, cultural institutions, vital sites, support services and pleasures of Toronto—St. Paul's: Nia Centre for the Arts; and Artscape Wychwood Barns, which houses diverse, bright and vibrant arts organizations like b current performing arts, Storytelling Toronto, the Storytellers of Canada, Children's Art Studio, Loud Roar Productions, No Strings Theatre, Solar Stage and The Disability Channel, as well as studios for many individual artists and creatives. Hey, we were once home to Drake, for goodness' sake, and Kardinal.

We've got community-engaged arts activities happening throughout the riding, such as free music performances and theatrical productions for our seniors and residents in retirement homes, like Christie Gardens, Briton House and Dunfield Retirement Residence, and in many public and private schools and churches.

We also have fine arts programming at synagogues such as Holy Blossom Temple, home to the oldest Jewish congregation in Toronto, and other various places of worship in the riding, such as the visual arts, yoga and children's music program at St. Matthew's United Church, where I was baptized decades ago and attended many a summer camp. It's funny: My constituency office is located now mere steps away from that church. Talk about a real-life 180.

We're home to Casa Loma, where my beloved Aisha and I exchanged our vows during our spiritual ceremony at the mass LGBTQ wedding during World Pride 2014, and the Spadina Museum, where I canvassed outside with organizers and volunteers from the Fight for \$15 and Fairness during Nuit Blanche.

My constituents enjoy Tarragon Theatre and six Toronto public libraries. We're home to Cedarvale Park, the ravine and Mount Pleasant Cemetery, where I laid a wreath this past Remembrance Day in honour of Lieutenant-Colonel William Barker, Canada's most-decorated veteran, and the No. 2 Construction Battalion, the only Canadian battalion composed primarily of Black soldiers to serve in World War I.

We have countless beloved dog parks; artisan markets; Skills for Change supporting newcomers; Oakwood Vaughan Neighbourhood Action Partnership; St. Stephen's Community House; Anishnawbe Health Toronto; and the Geneva Centre for Autism.

We've got Noemi's Jolly Eats; Wailers; Gerry's; Ellington's Music and Cafe, my next-door neighbour; Randy's and Raps on Eglinton West, often referred to as Little Jamaica, along with a host of hair shops like Monica's Beauty Salon.

We remember our loved ones and lost ones through our community laneways like Feel Good Lane and Charley Roach Lane. We empower young, pregnant and parenting moms at Humewood House, and Montage Support

Services provides resources to people with disabilities. Social justice supports in Oakwood Village, like the Legal Line and the John Howard Society of Toronto, are also lifelines for many in our community. And of course, we also have our share of street festivals and community gardens, and 12 BIAs to keep you informed.

We have five Out of the Cold facilities, the most in any riding in the city of Toronto, located at Beth Sholom, Holy Blossom Temple, First Interfaith at St. Matthew's, Holy Rosary Church parish hall and Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. We are home to Cornerstone Place and Na-Me-Res Native Men's Residence.

To say Toronto–St. Paul's is an engaged, social, cultural, environmental and politically active community is an understatement. Those are just some of the reasons why I ran. I, like many others, had been encouraged into politics over the years, but often there is a vivid catalyst. For me, it was anger. I had experienced hallway medicine and long emergency wait times like many of my constituents—especially our senior citizens—way too often.

Two years ago, when I survived what I hope is my last crisis requiring surgery, the buck stopped there. I got angry. My botched surgery, the daily medication and unspeakable side effects that I continue to live with made me angry. They made me want to run so nobody else had to experience what I did.

My constituents need to be able to go to their specialist appointments, like all of us can, without fear of being fired or without having to pay for a doctor's note they can't afford. Some of my constituents don't have health benefits. Some of them can't afford their medications, so they just don't take them. I wonder how that bodes with their health.

I've also worked on the actual front lines of education. Over the past 20 years, I've served as a child and youth worker, a high school social sciences and theatre teacher by trade, a student equity program adviser, a college and university contract lecturer, a TA, an RA and a community advocate serving vulnerable populations: girls, youth, queer people, fat people, racialized and disabled communities. I'm also the proud co-founder, alongside my partner, Aisha, of Body Confidence Canada, where we celebrate, acknowledge and advocate for body diversity and body justice.

My previous work and my lived experiences inform my moral compass in this House. You see, I'm a survivor of child sexual abuse. Nothing devastates your sense of safety, confidence, self-esteem and body autonomy like being the target of rape, child molestation and sexual assault. If the Conservative government wants to create safe and supportive classrooms to protect children from sexual abuse, they must equip teachers and students across our province, and in my riding, with the updated 2015 health and physical education curriculum. Consent education saves lives. Children knowing the exact names of their body parts saves lives. That saved my life.

Students across the province and thousands from our ridings have protested the Conservative sex ed curriculum rollback to 1998—for goodness' sake, I was still a teenager.

The Conservative government has decided not to listen and has instead eroded our democratic process by way of pushing most of their bills through without consultations, without sending them to committee and putting forth time allocation motions that take away our opportunity to debate issues on behalf of our constituents.

I'm here to say, on behalf of my residents of Toronto–St. Paul's; on behalf of my mother, who worked so darn hard to get me where I am today; on behalf of Aisha, who has been my backbone through this entire campaign, through this entire journey: The buck stops here.

I will continue to use my voice. I will continue to listen to my community. Toronto–St. Paul's, we will be heard. Our issues with housing will be heard. Our issues with education will be heard. Our issues with transportation will be heard. We will address anti-Semitism. We will address anti-Black racism. We will address anti-Black-woman racism. We will address the fact that little boys celebrating their 16th birthdays can't go to a cat café because Meow Cat Cafe is discriminating against people who use wheelchairs. All of these things will be heard in this House.

I will be the voice. I will share my voice. I will listen to my constituents. I will consult with my constituents. Toronto–St. Paul's will absolutely be seen and heard, and you can bet your last dollar on it.

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

1630

Mr. Paul Calandra: I do appreciate the opportunity to speak. Obviously, I'll modify my comments, given that it was the member's maiden speech in the House. So let me first start by congratulating her on her victory. I'm sure it was a tough battle that she fought very hard for, so I congratulate her for that.

But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, look, we're all a product of our environment. We're all a product of our upbringing. I'm a child of two Italian immigrants who came here in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They often suffered in the early stages from horrifying racism. My father died when I was 13. My mother, at 39, had four kids who she had to raise.

Part of the thing that struck me as I was growing up—I remember a number of instances. I remember in the 1980s my parents were struggling to make mortgage payments as interest rates went up. I remember after my father died, my mother was trying to manage and raise four kids and seeing the tax bill that she had, knowing that some months she was paying more in taxes to the government of Canada and the government of Ontario than she was investing in her children and the struggles that she had. I remember that as a child I was one of the first people who was actually going to have my education paid for when Catholic education was given the same treatment as public education.

We're all a product of our environment and our upbringing, so I hope that the member will also—I understand how passionate she is on the issues, but none of us sets out to do bad things. I replaced a good—great—member of provincial Parliament, a former Liberal member of

Parliament who I have a lot of respect for, Dr. Helena Jaczek. She did some great things for the community. So I hope the member will appreciate that in this place, that we are all working for the things that we believe in. None of us seeks to do bad things. None of us is out here trying to hurt people in our community; it's just the opposite. I hope she'll redirect some of that passion into helping some of us and some of her colleagues on that side to better understand the positions that she's fighting for, and sometimes not to always think that it's just one side against another side.

Again, congratulations on your election.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you for the enthusiasm. I want to thank my friend, my sister from Toronto—St. Paul's, the member from Toronto—St. Paul's, for her inaugural speech. It was so beautiful to listen to you, and there are so many things that I feel like I could relate to in terms of the joy that we share in this beautiful city that we live in, but also the pain that we share, the struggles that we face and our parents faced.

I want to thank the member opposite for his comments as well, but I also want to make sure that we understand that just because that pain has become a regular thing and it's increasing, it does not make it normal. We cannot allow it to make it normal. We have to make sure that we protect our children. We have to make sure that we protect our newcomers, that we protect our people, our seniors and the families who struggle so hard. I know my parents worked so hard when they came here. My father worked, I think, over 18 hours a day. I remember seeing him wake up at 5 a.m. in the morning and then coming home around 10 p.m.—absolute dedication to making sure that we had the proper education. I was the first one to graduate from university in my entire family, and that meant so much. Just for that, they were working so hard, so it means a lot.

We have to make sure that we as a government—this government, as a majority, you have a lot of power, and with great power comes great responsibility. You have to take that responsibility very seriously, because you have the power to make changes that will help our children to have that future that our parents and our grandparents worked so hard for and struggled so much for, so that we don't let that sacrifice go to waste. Please consider that.

Thank you so much for the words. It was beautiful.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: I would like to make a comment about the Green Energy Act and around my colleague Doug Downey's talk. The Green Energy Act makes it so much harder for businesses in Ontario to stay in business. Thousands of jobs were lost across Ontario because manufacturing plants were too expensive to operate.

The Green Energy Act represented the largest transfer of money from poor and middle-class people to rich Liberal insiders.

We believe the people of Ontario should have the final say about what gets built in their community, and that municipalities should have the power to stop expensive and unneeded energy projects in their communities.

We made a promise to lower the cost of living for hard-working Ontarians by reducing hydro rates by 12%. After years of skyrocketing electricity rates, we like to see that hydro bills will finally start coming down. We will be happy to see our electricity system work for the people once again.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I love the way you say that, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very privileged today to be able to speak to the inaugural address of the member from Toronto—St. Paul's. We are neighbours; our ridings are neighbours. I've worked many times and helped out in other campaigns and worked with the communities in and around St. Paul's for many years, so it really gives me enormous pleasure to be joined here in the House by the member from Toronto—St. Paul's and have her representation for that community, which I think is so important. I was really touched by how she attempted to name, I think, every single organization and community and library, to try to paint a picture for all of us here of the diversity that exists within that community, and I really appreciate it. I think the constituents, your constituents in the riding of Toronto—St. Paul's, will also appreciate that acknowledgment. It's so important.

I also wanted to mention that I was touched by—we've all talked a little bit about your life experience and your sharing of that and how important it is to bring that to this place, because I think that is how we make good policy, policy that really connects and is meaningful.

I want to mention as well that it's your diversity of experience on the cultural side as an educator, as an innovator, that will make you such an important contributor here in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, because sometimes that diversity, in every respect, has been very much lacking.

I want to thank you again for your words. It was wonderful. I learn something new every day here in the building, but I learned some new things about you as well. I'm truly honoured to be your neighbouring MPP, and I look forward to the work we'll do here together.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Now back to the member from Toronto—St. Paul's for final comments.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you very much, Speaker. I would like to thank my colleague from Scarborough Southwest and my colleague from Davenport. I'd like to thank the government member for your piece as well.

It is a true honour to stand here, but as I've always felt, the honour needs to be in our responsibility and in the way in which we pay it forward, listen to our constituents and do not get caught up in egos and bizarre theatrical productions of power and control in the House but, instead, actually listen and really try to work together.

I think what we also have to get past is this fundamental ideological difference around this idea of, “Well, I worked hard. My parents were immigrants. We all had a sob story.” This isn’t about a sob story, government. This is about recognizing that not because you struggled, not because your parents struggled in a time when inflation wasn’t what it was, in a time when social media didn’t create the kinds of educational learning environments that it does now for our kids—this is a time where we can do better, we can be better, and we’ve got to give people what they need to do that. They need a curriculum. They need safe workspaces. They need workers’ rights. We need to respect our teachers.

1640

On that piece of this bill, to so-called make Ontario open for business: We can’t do that on the backs of workers. You can’t do that on my mother’s back. That’s really what it comes down to. You can’t do it on the backs of the constituents. I’m just here to work hard. I’m brand new. I’ve got a lot to learn. I’m here to work hard, but I’m here to work for the people.

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

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: It’s a great honour to stand here today to talk in this debate about repealing the 2009 Green Energy Act. We heard this at the door almost every single day when we were door-knocking in our campaigns—not even just our campaigns, but before our campaigns—how this piece of legislation increased the costs on hard-working families in this province. We made a commitment to the people of Ontario to make life more affordable, and I’m very proud to stand here with this government delivering on many of our promises that we made while on the campaign.

I want to take an opportunity to thank the minister for his great work on this file. Minister Rickford has been a great advocate in making sure that this happens, because this was one of the key planks of our platform. Why the people of Ontario voted us in on June 7 is because, as we know, the hydro rates in this province are just unaffordable for the average Ontarian—tripling hydro rates in this province. This plan was brought forward without any fiscal due diligence at all.

I know earlier in the House we had the member for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte speaking to this as well, where he noted approximately \$732 million to approximately \$1.25 billion of surplus over a 20-month period that we didn’t see. That’s a loss that taxpayers are paying and that was the result of failed energy policies that were made to really benefit Liberal insiders. That’s unfortunate because that’s been paid on the backs of the hard-working families of this province.

But thankfully, after June 7 we hit the road running in this government to ensure that we restored accountability. We restored the faith in our public institutions and ensured that we delivered on the promises that we made at the door every single day, whether that was with Hydro One and making sure we renewed the leadership there—that was another great accomplishment and something that we spoke to in the campaign as well.

Not only that, but cancelling cap-and-trade, which was a huge burden on the families of Ontario, a huge burden on someone trying to drive themselves to work, driving their kids to and from hockey practice—it was just an unfair tax on hard-working Ontarians. We see the decrease in gas prices across the province, thanks to this government once again committing to reduce gas prices to make life more affordable.

I could keep going. Minister Rickford acted very quickly to ensure that we didn’t sign an extra almost \$700 million worth of contracts that our province didn’t need so we could finally stop these increasing hydro rates and finally have leadership in this province that’s willing to work for the people and not for insiders trying to line their pockets at the expense of hard-working families in this province.

It’s great to once again stand here and speak to this. We promised to fix the hydro mess and put the interests of people ahead of the insiders. We promised that we’d put an end to this disastrous green energy policy of the former government and reduce hydro rates without harming the environment. That’s what we campaigned on and that’s why people gave us the mandate on June 7 across this province.

It’s such a great time to be in government and to work with so many great people here to ensure that we deliver on our promise.

One of the big things that we saw with this policy that was put forward was how the government took away powers and responsibilities from municipalities that didn’t want to have certain green energy projects or certain of these projects in their areas. I had the opportunity with so many of our colleagues to go to AMO a couple of months ago—and just to see the municipalities so happy to hear the tone of our government willing to listen to municipalities and willing to include them in our discussions.

With the 2009 Green Energy Act that we’re repealing, we saw a complete lack of regard for some of these municipalities and their autonomy and their ability to really push some of these projects. A lot of these projects were forced on them. They didn’t want to have these projects, but they were forced to foot the bill. Who was going to cover the cost for these? Again, the average Ontario family.

We all know that the act led to increasing electricity rates. Rates tripled, and not only does that hurt Ontario families but it hurts the manufacturing jobs in this province. Once again, our province used to be the economic engine of this country and, due to the policies of the previous government, that, unfortunately, isn’t the case.

It was policies like the disastrous Green Energy Act that caused so many jobs to leave the province. But once again, our government hit the road running and took action to ensure that we had an open-for-business policy and an open-for-business attitude. We want to make sure that we bring more jobs to this province. We want to make sure that we create an environment where government can help businesses and we can help hard-working Ontarians get higher-paying jobs.

We look at some of the legislation that was passed and how Liberal insiders and friends of the former government

made fortunes putting up solar panels and wind farms that really do nothing more than gouge some of the hard-working families, businesses and ratepayers, generating energy that we don't really need as a province. Manufacturing workers, small businesses, single mothers, struggling seniors and families—all of Ontario watched their hydro bills triple.

In 2017, I believe 26% of electricity generated from wind and solar was curtailed or wasted. This is electricity that Ontarians paid for but didn't use or even need. And once again, we saw what the member for Barrie-Springwater mentioned in his remarks: that over \$700 million was wasted subsidizing Ohio and Michigan—the US—with energy that we paid for, with the hard-working families of Ontario, the hard-working people of Ontario and, ultimately, the families of Ontario footing the bill.

That's why we made a simple promise to Ontarians to be a government for the people that was going to make life more affordable for the average person. We love our province. We want people and businesses to stay here. Repealing the Liberals' 2009 Green Energy Act will absolutely make life more affordable in this province.

To be frank and transparent, the Green Energy Act represents nothing but the largest transfer of money from the poor and middle class to the rich in Ontario's history. If you look at the numbers, that's exactly what the act did, regardless of whether it was intended or not.

According to the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Electricity System Operator, wind and solar added \$3.75 billion in costs to electricity bills in 2017. What this hefty price tag shows is that wind and solar reflect 30% of global adjustment costs that are borne by electricity customers.

We should also ask how much wind and solar generate in Ontario, and that's only 11% of the total.

1650

It's not only families who are bearing the brunt of this. The Green Energy Act, as I was speaking to before, made it so much harder for businesses in Ontario, especially in the past couple of years, to stay open. Thousands of jobs were lost across Ontario because manufacturing plants were too expensive to operate.

One of the first actions, as I spoke to earlier, that we took was to cancel 758 expensive and wasteful projects, as part of our plan to cut hydro rates by 12% for the people of Ontario, saving \$790 million for electricity customers. Unfortunately, what the previous government did was shove these wind and solar farms into the backyards of communities that didn't really want them, and essentially told them to deal with it. That was wrong. Instead, we should be working with the local communities and giving them more autonomy over this issue. Who knows best? I'm pretty sure it's those who live in the communities where these projects are going up.

Simply put, Mr. Speaker, our legislation would give the government the authority to stop approvals for wasteful energy projects where the need for electricity has not been demonstrated. This would put the brakes on additional

projects that would add costs to electricity bills that the people of Ontario simply cannot afford.

Now, I know some members might critique us, that we are not prioritizing the environment and that wind and solar energy sources are best for the environment, and what we are proposing for whatever reason will end the world. But, Mr. Speaker, rest assured the proposed legislation will maintain provisions related to energy efficiency and conservation standards to give people the information they need and the autonomy they should have to make decisions to help lower their energy costs.

We all believe in the need to conserve energy and make it more efficient, as much as any other member here, so what we are proposing, in my opinion, is the best of both worlds: protect the environment through measures like promoting energy efficiency standards and energy conservation, and also protect the money of those hard-working Ontarians who have seen their hydro rates triple over the past couple of years.

Mr. Speaker, the Green Energy Repeal Act is just one of the ways that we're taking Ontario back. We are moving it forward, and we are unleashing the potential not only of southern Ontario but of northern Ontario and all parts of this great province. That also includes our expansion of natural gas into some of these smaller communities that will finally have an opportunity, even, to attract and grow small businesses in their communities.

The Green Energy Repeal Act is another step in our agenda to make life more affordable for all Ontarians, because we heard it during the election. I know all of my colleagues worked just as hard as I did knocking on doors, talking to people, talking to small, medium and large job creators, businesses in our ridings across the province. They all heard the frustration that many of them felt with respect to how costly it had become to live and work in Ontario. The repealing of this act is just one way we are going to help support these local businesses, support these businesses to really grow in Ontario and make sure that we have and continue to have good-paying jobs across this province.

You know, the economic livelihood of my riding is really rooted in the success of a lot of these small businesses. Over the last number of years, these businesses have suffered due to many decisions of the previous government, including the enactment of this bill. Job losses have become the norm in this province, and that's what we have really got to ensure that we change and make sure that we make this province more competitive. And that's why it was surprising to see—even from the Fraser Institute. They put out a report about Ontario's electricity costs and stated that it was among one of the fastest-growing in the country. Between 2010 and 2016, electricity costs for small industrial consumers in Ottawa increased by 50% and in Toronto by 48%, while the average rate of increase in the rest of Canada was only 15%. That's unacceptable for businesses in Ontario, and we need to make sure we change that. That's why we have acted so swiftly to ensure that we repeal the Green Energy Act to

bring the relief that these businesses deserve, the relief that the hard-working families of Ontario also deserve.

We have always promised a government that puts the people of Ontario first. We promised to respect their hard-earned money and to make sure that they keep more of it in their pocket, exactly where it belongs. We promised to be accountable to the people who pay their bills day in and day out. We promised to drive efficiencies in the electricity sector and to push energy costs down. Most importantly, we promised to restore the public's faith in our electricity system.

Since day one, we have been working for these promises. We listened to people across the province when they told us what was wrong with Ontario's electricity system. We heard about the negative impacts it was having on families and businesses. I support this legislation because it corrects past mistakes and delivers real relief to the people of this province. For many people in Ontario, the Green Energy Act has become a symbol of an inefficient and burdensome energy economy. That's why repealing it has been a key priority for this government.

Our amendments will give municipalities back their voice when it comes to making future decisions about the placement of renewable energy projects in their own communities. By restoring municipal authority for the placement of renewable energy facilities, we're ensuring that any future projects have the support and buy-in of local communities. Restoring municipal authority will allow local governments to accommodate proposals as willing partners, where proposals align with local planning objectives.

Through this repeal, we are fostering a more effective energy relationship across levels of government by establishing a regulation-making authority to provide clarity for existing projects. In addition, our government is committed to making these changes in a reasonable and responsible manner.

While we are repealing the Green Energy Act, there are certain elements we re-introduce into existing legislation. First, we are recommending that we re-introduce energy efficiency and conservation provisions, because conservation saves money. Conservation saves ordinary consumers money, and it saves the system money as well. It will reduce electricity bills and the need for us to build more costly power generation.

We're also proposing to maintain energy and water efficiency standards in order to protect consumers from low-quality and inefficient products. Without these standards, consumers are left with products that use more energy and water and end up costing Ontarians more over time. We're also going to help bring down costs for energy-efficient technologies by enabling economies of scale. Lower costs for energy-efficient technologies make these innovations more affordable and more accessible for Ontarians.

Additionally, we will ensure that Ontario continues to harmonize our energy and water efficiency requirements with the most stringent standards in North America. This will eliminate potential misalignment and undue burden on manufacturers and ease international trade.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, Ontario's government for the people is delivering on its promise to repeal the 2009 Green Energy Act and reduce Ontario's skyrocketing hydro rates. Let me be clear: The Green Energy Act helped Liberal insiders get rich while families across Ontario were forced to choose between heating and eating.

1700

I believe the people of Ontario should have the final say about what gets built in their communities, and that municipalities should have the power to stop expensive and unneeded energy projects in their communities.

We're cleaning up the Liberal hydro mess and making sure our electricity system works for the people and that an Ontarian's hard-earned money is where it should be: in the person's pocket, not ours.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud to stand here and support the repeal of this legislation, to make sure we deliver on our campaign promise to put more money into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Let's bring the energy a level up here a little bit, shall we?

I want to agree a little bit with some of the things that the members opposite have said in this debate, and that is, that the last 15 years of leadership by the Liberal Party was really bad news for many in this province. The privatization of hydro, the driving up of hydro rates, made life really difficult for a lot of people. It made life difficult for a lot of people in my riding.

Certainly, like many of the people here, over the last few years, knocking on doors, talking to people in my community, there were a lot of folks concerned—a lot of seniors, particularly—affected with the rising costs, and that's in Toronto. The reality in many other communities across this province was even worse—Sudbury, Nickel Belt.

But there are some facts that the members opposite have, I think, completely disregarded. I want to talk about that.

First of all, hydro prices are still rising, and Bill 34 won't do anything about that.

Secondly, this bill is a clear signal that this government is turning their back on climate change. And by turning their back on renewable energy development, they are turning their back on the huge economic potential as well as the potential to keep prices low in the future.

And, finally, the province can still site any electricity generator wherever they want. This is, simply put, an attack on renewable energy—again, closing a door on giving control of electricity to local government.

The member from Toronto–Danforth called this bill a con job, and I couldn't agree more. This is intended to make it look like the government is doing something, but in fact what they're doing is letting down our province in terms of climate change.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in this House.

I'd like to congratulate the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte on his additional responsibility.

By the way, I also like numbers and I also like door-knocking. I don't have that experience, though.

Mr. Speaker, we're one of the very few blessed in this province—in fact, one in 120,000—who represent Ontario here. Life would have been much easier if all we had to do was come here and spend, spend and spend. However, the people of Ontario have elected us knowing that our debt is \$338 billion, and chose us so that we don't have to keep borrowing from our children. Added to that would be a deficit of \$15 billion. If we don't take action, we will need to keep borrowing from our children. That is why we are doing the right thing by repealing the 2009 Green Energy Act.

Another promise we made was to make life more affordable for Ontarians. We gave them hope.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that not only the members of our own party, but every member, will work with us to find those efficiencies so that we can reduce the debt and we can reduce the deficit so that we can keep making critical investments for the betterment of our communities.

One of the first actions we took as a government was to cancel 758 expensive and wasteful energy projects. We're cleaning up the hydro mess and making sure that our electricity system works for the people again.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'd just like to mention, as the member from Davenport said, that this is really a thinly veiled attempt to undermine what the province needs to do, which is head toward renewable energy.

Really, the takeaway from all of this is that getting rid of someone else's climate plan is not a plan; it's just getting rid of someone else's plan. The truth is, they have no plan. We keep pointing this out to them, and they keep saying, "Oh, we're going to have one." But then you've got to ask: Wouldn't a responsible government have a climate change plan before they cancel the last plan? This really is a government that is doing nothing here but cancelling someone else's plan.

This bill signals that the government is turning its back on climate action, and it's turning its back on the huge economic development potential, as my friend from Davenport said, that renewable power offers. It confirms the government's commitment to nuclear and gas. The message that's being sent is, "Gas? Yep, no problem. Nuclear? No problem. But renewable energy? No. We're not interested in that." In the year 2018, that's pretty incredible.

The bill also seems to be saying, as the member from Danforth pointed out the other day, that the renewable power development has to prove there's a need for its power. No other power source in this province—hydro-electric, nuclear or gas—has to prove that a demand exists for that power.

Once again, all this bill does is it cancels one government's plan and offers absolutely nothing in exchange.

The government is saying, "We don't want to do anything with it. We don't want green energy." That's why this bill is so cosmetic. There is nothing to it. They're just getting rid of another government's plan. I think that people in this day and age deserve much better than that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Ottawa West–Nepean.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. You're so wonderful at introducing members. It really is quite a charm to listen to.

It's wonderful to rise today to make some comments on my colleague's wonderful speech here about our cancellation of the Green Energy Act.

The hydro mess created by the former government had to be the number one thing that I heard at doors throughout this past election. Time and time again, people were talking to me about how much this was impacting consumers, families and businesses across our province.

Sometimes, in politics, we get caught up in the thrust and parry of politics, and we start to, perhaps, exaggerate some things. So when I heard some people talking about people being forced to leave their homes and not being able to pay for food because of hydro rates, I thought, "Oh, jeez, that seems a bit much. Maybe it's not that bad." And then I started to actually meet people who were being impacted by this.

I remember one day, Mr. Speaker, I was door-knocking on Valley Ridge in my riding, in a lovely apartment there. I was door-knocking along and came across this one lady. She said to me, "You know, Jeremy, I used to live in the country, in Casselman. I had a beautiful home. Over time, over the past decade, my hydro rates went through the roof." It got so bad, between the delivery charges and the rising rates, that she had to sell her home in the country and move to the city.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I love my riding. I think it's the most beautiful place in all of Ontario. But no one should have to sell their home and move because of government hydro rates. That's why I'm proud to be supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Brampton South for his final comments.

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to take an opportunity to thank the members from Davenport, Mississauga–Malton, Niagara Centre and Ottawa West–Nepean for sharing their remarks after my speech.

Once again, I'm so proud to stand here today to speak on the repeal of this piece of legislation, because it's exactly what we campaigned on. It's exactly what we went to the doors and told the people we were going to do—we were going to make life more affordable for them; we were going to reduce hydro rates in this province. I'm so excited to go back and knock on those doors and say, "Promise made, promise kept."

1710

Once again, a big thank you to Minister Rickford, who has worked so hard on this file, whether it was the Hydro One executives that he took swift action in helping,

whether it was not signing \$700 million worth of contracts that our province just didn't need.

With this, the repeal of the Green Energy Act, that's action that—we can go back to our constituents and say, “You elected us. We made a promise, and we delivered on that promise. We're going to make life more affordable for the hard-working people of Ontario.”

Not only that, as a government, we committed to ending cap-and-trade, which we did, putting more money into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians, and we're going to continue to do that.

I'm so proud to stand here with all of my colleagues working hard for the people of Ontario every single day, ensuring that we make life more affordable and ensuring that we keep our promises as a government to the people we serve.

Once again, I want to thank all the members for their comments and thank the minister for bringing this repeal forward.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's a privilege and an honour to stand here this afternoon on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin and talk about Bill 34, the Green Energy Repeal Act.

Since we're throwing numbers out there this afternoon, I've heard it coming from various sources—and as I look around the room, people are very much engaged with their telephones, and I'm not sure why. I'm going to look at some numbers here. I liked the analogy the member for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I know they're not paying attention, but that's fine.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, you are. Yes, I know.

His analogy in regard to the one million versus the one billion in hours and days was really fascinating, so I walked over and had a quick chat with him in regard to getting those factual numbers. Again, it really demonstrates the dollar figures when you're putting them into days, into the lengths of time. So I asked him, “What's the calculation with \$40 million”—because that's kind of what this Conservative government has adopted. They can no longer blame the Liberal government for what they've done, because it's now their policy.

This is part of your DNA. You can't blame them anymore; it's yours. You're carrying it. You have made that decision to carry on your PC version of the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan—well, no, let me correct that. It's the PC Fair Hydro Plan. I'm not sure what you're identifying it with, but it's yours. You can't shift that over anymore.

Since we're, again, talking about numbers—I touched on it a little bit earlier, Speaker, and for your information, here's some big news for you. We often hear the Premier and the Minister of Finance and other members of the Conservative Party talk about how we had supported the Liberal government initiatives. Sometimes we did. There were some good things that we could support, and we

actually were successful in amending these things while we were in committee. And do you know what? Here's a surprise—and it's a little bit of a news flash: So did the Conservative government.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They did?

Mr. Michael Mantha: They did. Unbelievable, right? And they did it to the tune of 49% of the time. That's almost 50% that the Conservative government supported the Liberal government in a lot of their initiatives.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just like they're supporting their Liberal hydro plan.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Well, no. That's part of their DNA.

There's no denying it. Those are the numbers. Those are the facts.

There's another thing that I'm going to agree on with the members from across the way. With the Green Energy Act, were there problems? Of course there were problems. But was it a good initiative? Absolutely, it was. Why? Because it was a responsible way to start moving ourselves away from fossil fuels and moving towards greener technologies.

Let's agree on another thing. Was there a problem with how it was rolled out? Of course there was. We actually agree—geez, I feel like it's Groundhog Day because I've had this speech many times. I remember sitting somewhere over there in the third row, and I remember looking at some of the members who were here, thinking, “Wow, that makes sense. I'm actually agreeing with what the Conservatives are saying in regard to some of the bad roll-outs and the privatization of the Green Energy Act: how we took away the democratic rights of our municipalities; how we took away that opportunity to engage with our communities; how we took away that right from many Ontarians to what is one of the biggest things that Ontario municipalities have been asking for.

I believe I saw you over at AMO, in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker? I think you were there. No, maybe you weren't. But that's okay. Let's not talk about where you were or where you weren't. But there were many people who were there listening to the needs of municipalities. One of their biggest needs was, “Give us some tools to generate new revenue.” Why? Because there's a lot of legislation that has been imposed, a lot of policies that have been imposed on Ontario municipalities that have taken away from their ability to provide certain services to their communities. They're really having a hard time.

This was an opportunity under the Green Energy Act to give municipalities that opportunity to generate new revenue. Why? Well, for their services, for their infrastructure, for some of their rinks, recreational facilities and so on.

Again, I'll agree with some of the points coming from this government across the way, that it took away from municipalities that democratic right. Was it the wrong thing to do? Was it the wrong rollout? Absolutely it was. However, there were a lot of good things that were happening. The rollout of the Green Energy Act is really what hindered and handcuffed us, and part of that rollout is really the responsibility for what had happened with

increasing a lot of our hydro rates here across Ontario. Those are the numbers. Those are facts. Let's not twist that in every which way. Those are the facts.

Again, I always enjoy talking about numbers, and I'll go back to the earlier numbers that the member had brought up with regard to what this government is planning on doing by reducing energy by 12%. Well, we're still waiting to see the results of that. Ideally, what you've done is, you've just put a band-aid on everything. There are no concrete actions that you've taken now that are actually going to reduce hydro rates. At least I have not seen it on my hydro bill.

When you look at what your plan is—and we're trying to figure that out. You've cancelled several of the contracts that were there under the Green Energy Act. What does that tell you as a province? What does that tell me as industry—

Applause.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Really, that's nothing to applaud. Really, it isn't. The signal you're sending out there is, "Come to Ontario, but wait a second. We're going to change the rules."

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sign a contract; then we're going to change the rules.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes. Sign a contract, commit to coming here, and then guess what? Well, maybe we're going to change the rules.

Listen, I went through that episode with the previous government. I remember dealing with the hydroelectric dam project in the community of Pic Mobert, a \$180-million investment that was being done, and what had to happen was that in midstream of this project—get this: We were about \$110 million into the project and the government comes to the proponents, to the community, and says, "Wait a second. We have new measuring tools. There are new spectrums that have come out, and we want you to apply that to your project. We want you to pause." We've heard that term before: "We want you to pause your project." When you pause certain projects, what does that do? Well, it costs, and it also scares industry because there's uncertainty and there's no clear path to what is going to be accomplished.

1720

So here we are. We bring the community here, and we bring the ministries that are involved. We sit them down at a table and we finally clear the air to getting this project back on. I was proud: I was part of the unveiling of the hydroelectric dam project that was done in Pic Mobert over the course of this summer, along with the community. This means \$20 million of revenue for this community. They're a small First Nations community just about 20 minutes north of White River. It gives them the certainty for their community that they will be able to expand, provide new services for their community, move ahead with some economic development and look at doing some housing projects. That's what it meant. Luckily, we were able to get that project online.

However, when you look at what this government has done by cancelling all these projects, it sends a negative

message to industry. It sends a negative message to others that are coming here to Ontario and saying, "Hey, you've got resources and you've got fantastic opportunities, but I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to proceed." Industry is hesitant to come here. That's the signal that this government has given out.

Again, I want to go back to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Energy and Indigenous Affairs: It really is nothing to applaud. That's the message you're giving out.

Ce qui fait que j'aimerais aussi toucher un peu—je n'arrive franchement pas à comprendre l'entêtement de ce gouvernement conservateur à vouloir absolument annuler toutes les initiatives vertes. Franchement, ça ne va pas seulement affecter tout ce que le gouvernement précédent a fait rentrer; ils sont en train de juste éliminer—ce n'est pas vraiment une idée qu'on veut offrir aux industries ici à travers l'Ontario. Si c'est le cas, c'est complètement ridicule.

Il est temps que les députés du gouvernement arrêtent d'agir comme des marionnettes et qu'ils commencent à agir pour les générations du futur. Nous avons la responsabilité de développer une vision à long terme pour l'Ontario. Notre planète est en danger présentement. Notre demande en électricité va dépasser notre capacité d'ici quelques années. Les gens payent les plus hauts frais d'électricité en Amérique du Nord. Mais la bonne nouvelle, c'est qu'il n'y a pas de meilleur moment pour faire une transition et pour régler tous ces problèmes d'un seul coup, parce que notre économie ne s'est jamais aussi bien portée depuis 20 ans.

L'Ontario, et tout particulièrement le Nord, a un potentiel hydroélectrique immense. Je viens juste de discuter et de vous donner la perspective d'un projet sur lequel j'ai travaillé dans le coin de White River avec la communauté de Pic Mobert.

Ce que je continue à entendre, c'est qu'il faut développer un plan stable qui va nous permettre d'avoir de l'électricité fiable et abordable partout dans la province. C'est ce que l'industrie demande et c'est ce que les résidents demandent. Les initiatives vertes ne feraient pas mal à l'économie; bien au contraire, elles vont apporter un complément à l'économie. C'est en développant sa créativité et sa compétitivité—j'ai de la misère avec celui-là, puis moi je parle français—que l'Ontario pourra se transformer en une économie verte et forte. Alors, franchement, je ne sais pas pourquoi nous perdons notre temps sur un projet de loi qui ne vise qu'à défaire plutôt qu'à construire sur ce que l'on a déjà présentement et qui n'est, essentiellement, que symbolique, puisque la loi changerait très peu de choses concrètement.

Speaker, I just want to go back to a couple of points that I was raising earlier. Let's talk about what can be done in order to fix some of the problems that we have. One of them is hydro.

I had Meet the Miners here just a couple of weeks ago. We had a fantastic reception. I really enjoyed sitting with them, along with my leader, and talking about what their priorities are and talking about what their needs are going

to be to move this province forward, to move their economy forward, to move the industry forward and to move the mining sector forward. Do you want to know what their top priorities are? Number one: energy. Number two: energy. Number three: energy. They need a reliable, stable energy source. They need to know where it's going to come from and what it's going to cost so that they can forecast and do the planning that they need in order to generate the jobs and opportunities that we're going to need.

This government likes to—sorry, Speaker; I'm battling this cold and I'm trying to do my best not to hold us up too much.

Mr. Roman Baber: Did you take the flu shot?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, I did. Thank you for caring. That's good.

Interjection: That's Roman: always caring.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, there is. There's a heart over there. I like it.

Let's talk about this opportunity to change things, because I know I hear a lot from across the way that we have no vision and we have no plan. I want to remind you that we had a full plan put out there during the campaign, and you are welcome to use it at any point in time. If any of the Conservative members needs a copy, I would be happy to print one for you, and I'll walk it over and deliver it to you for you to reflect on and to use it as a suggestion. You can take whatever ideas you want, because there were some really good ideas in there. We had pharmacare, we had issues that dealt with—we just finished speaking this week talking to a lot of students and a lot of universities and colleges, and there were a lot of items in there that were addressing their needs. We had many things.

But, here, we're talking about energy and the need to move forward. We also had the elimination of time of use. Time of use is not saving anything for anybody. It isn't. We also had in there equalizing the delivery charges. Now, there's a good idea, Mr. Speaker. Particularly in northern Ontario—I'm speaking as someone who comes from northern Ontario and I'm speaking from experience—a lot of different rates and delivery charges are out there for individuals. Why not look at this as equalizing it for everybody? We're in one Ontario, right? And the biggest one is: Why not return it into public hands? Why not? Why not have that vision in getting it back to providing hydro to this province at cost? Why not do that? Why not really challenge ourselves?

But, no, instead—I'll mention it again—this Conservative government has decided to adopt the \$40-million Fair Hydro Plan that the Liberal government had come up with, which is their plan now. There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. That's part of your policy.

Again, I want to go back to the green energy plan, because this is what we're talking about: the repeal of the Green Energy Act. Was it perfect? Absolutely not. There are a lot of points that we've agreed upon with this government. However, eliminating those contracts is reckless. There will be some challenges that are going to be coming. There will be some court costs that are going to be

coming—and to what cost is this going to pay? How much are we going to pay as Ontarians to defend what this government has done? How much is that going to cost Ontarians? Is this what this government is going to be recognized for? Is this going to be this government's 407? Is this what this government wants to be remembered for?

There are a lot of memories and there is a lot of ammunition that they've given to me, as an opposition member, just in the very brief period that they've been in governance. There is going to be a lot of material that I'm going to look forward to returning back home over the next four years, because I'm sure, as we speak, there are things that are coming up all the time that we're going to be talking about. I'm sure this government will not like to answer those questions.

Remember I talked to you earlier a little bit about being over at AMO and talking to some of those municipal leaders? There was also NOMA that was up there. There were FONOM representatives there. But there was one delegation—I remember talking with them—out of the Thunder Bay Generating Station up in Atikokan. They were up there talking, with concerns with the east-west transmission corridor. There's also BioPower that is in Atikokan, and there is a pelletization plant that is there as well.

But I just want to go back to the Thunder Bay generation station. This station was initially operated through coal. It has now been converted over to gas. That plant is scheduled to shut down in 2024, I believe. When we're talking about industries and you're looking at northern Ontario and we're speaking about the Ring of Fire and we're talking about mine development in northwestern Ontario, why are we talking about infrastructure that is already—they're prepared to go and ready to serve, where we have individuals and the expertise of individuals ready to go to provide the demand. Right now we're absolutely in an oversupply, and there are a lot of reasons why we're in that oversupply. But we're still going to need power by 2023 and 2024. How are we going to be able to provide that power?

1730

There are a couple of good suggestions. Let's look at what we have available already throughout northern Ontario. There are lots of hydroelectric dams where we're letting the water flow over the dams instead of capturing the power that's available. There are also some plants that are just waiting. There's the BioPower plant in Atikokan, which is actually set to be—again, their contract is going to be due in 2024. They're providing 40% of their product, which is a biomass product, pellets that are made out of compressed sawdust—most of their product is going to the OPG plant in Atikokan, the Atikokan Generating Station, and 20% is going to domestic markets, but 40% is being exported, and they have the opportunity to grow that market. However, these are initiatives that came under the green energy plan. These are good things that are happening through green energy.

Again, in the short time I have left, there are a lot of things that happened through the Green Energy Act—good and bad—and there are a lot of things where we're going to

agree with what this government has said, but there are a lot of things that they're doing that we're not going to agree with. One of them is repealing the entire act and taking away the benefits that were there. The job losses that I've spoken about many, many times throughout my riding, whether it be in Wawa, Sioux Lookout or Wikwemikong—we've felt the negative economic impacts of it.

Rethink your thoughts, do right for Ontarians, and give actual numbers in regard to what is actually happening and the benefits to the Green Energy Act and some of the energy needs that we're going to have in Ontario.

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

Mr. Doug Downey: I heard that part of what the member from Algoma-Manitoulin was saying was that people need stability. I agree with that. This is something that we can agree on. People do need stability and predictability.

When we ran, we told people what we were going to do, and we're going to do it. We're reducing the hydro rates. After years of skyrocketing electricity rates, we had to turn it around. We said that we were going to do it, and we are doing it. That is very predictable and very stable.

We aren't doing anything radical at all. We don't think we have to reinvent the wheel. We just have to get back to common sense and stop paying higher prices than we're willing to sell it at. In terms of predictability—and business is built on this. The employers and even families that are doing budgeting need to be confident of what they're going to be paying for electricity, because at the end of the day, when you talk to people who rent and to homeowners, and they're trying to get through a budget—they have their food and they have clothes and their kids have activities—it's really hard to budget when you have a cost that is constantly going up and you don't know how high. Mr. Speaker, I just want to—

Interjection: Rethink your thoughts.

Mr. Doug Downey: I don't think we need to rethink our thoughts. I think we need to hold true to our thoughts and use the common sense that evolves from it.

I commend the member. As is often the case with the NDP, they sort of get it. They get a piece of it right. It's just in the execution. Yes, we need consistency and we need to be predictable, but not in the direction that they would take us. We need to go in the direction of Bill 34. It's very systematic. It's bringing down costs for businesses and employers and for your average person: your homeowners, your renters. Mr. Speaker, it's the kind of thing that we're going to be doing a lot of over the next four years.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, you know, I agree with some of the comments that were made by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. We agree that there are things in the Green Energy Act that, quite frankly, were problematic. We've been in this debate before; I'm not going to go back through it. But the problem with the approach that this government is taking is that they're throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Is there a need to move ourselves from fossil fuels to a greener style of energy? The answer is yes. The problem with what the Liberals did, and where we agree with you, is that they said that the only way you can do that is by making deals with the private sector where you sign contracts—you're right—at 80 cents per kilowatt. That was far more than we could afford, and it was a real problem. Nobody disagrees with that. But what we could have done is, we could have empowered communities in order for them to put forward green energy contracts.

For example, in the town of Hearst, we have a real problem when it comes to wood waste that has been stored there for years and years. We can do cogeneration by getting rid of the wood waste, burning natural gas, creating steam, creating electricity—steam being bought by the plywood plant next door, steam being bought by the municipality, and electricity being bought by the province. All of us are winners. It would have been a way for the municipality to be able to also raise some money—because governments have downloaded onto municipalities to the extent that they can't do their jobs anymore.

Mike Harris, I remember, downloaded all of these highways onto northern communities that could ill afford to pay the maintenance of a highway.

But we could have at least done something positive and had green energy.

The problem with your approach—and the member for Algoma-Manitoulin is correct: You're throwing the baby out with the bathwater. You're saying, "We shall never go in that direction again. We should stay in fossil fuels." Essentially, that's what you guys are saying.

So I don't have a problem with making changes to the very flawed Green Energy Act that the Liberals had in place, but you don't throw the whole thing out without coming back with some sort of replacement.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: I'm astonished by the member from Timmins talking about a "very flawed" Green Energy Act, when the NDP voted for the Green Energy Act. The NDP voted for the worst piece of legislation in this province's history.

In fact, in my view, there's nothing more shameful than the formal Liberal government did than the Green Energy Act. Let me tell you why. The Green Energy Act has set in motion a colossal disaster that has been inherited by this province. It set in motion a huge hydro debt that consisted of approximately \$18 billion, which the province, under the previous government, has sought to relieve the ratepayers of. So they took—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, and you've adopted their plan. It's now yours.

Mr. Roman Baber: One second—no. You voted for the Green Energy Act, and you should be ashamed of that. So you can keep heckling, or you can let me finish.

At \$18 billion—

Interjection.

Mr. Roman Baber: It still wouldn't change your vote—because you still voted for the plan, and you should

still be ashamed of yourself. You now can see that it's flawed? If you can see that it's flawed, why did you vote for it?

What they've done as a result: They had to refinance \$18 billion worth of debt. They did that at a cost of \$21 billion, plus added some HST stuff, to a total of \$45 billion. Now we hear from the FAO that the total cost of the plan is not \$45 billion; it's probably going to end up somewhere between \$70 billion to \$90 billion that they saddled this province with, that they saddled my generation with.

This is the legacy of the Liberals and this is the legacy of the NDP: the Green Energy Act, which we're going to repeal.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: The member from Timmins, I want to say, made a really great point when he talked about—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I appreciate the heightened level of enthusiasm that's currently being displayed, but I would ask that the members would have consideration for the member from Davenport, who is about to give her questions and comments. Therefore, I would ask the two members who are engaged in enthusiastic discussion to cool it.

Back to the member from Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I think that the energy level in here has lifted a little, though.

The member from Timmins, I think, made some really important points in his comments, as did the member opposite. The member from Timmins makes the point that this government is throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

This bill, in fact, does nothing to protect the environment, despite what the members opposite would try to argue. It will not stop the province from rolling over municipalities. It's as simple as that.

1740

Most of the Green Energy Act is re-enacted under the Electricity Act in Bill 34. Now they will revoke all of the Green Energy Act regulations, so things like energy efficiency standards for appliances, requirements for efficiency and conservation plans, disclosure to government of energy consumption—I'm not sure which of those regulations would be re-enacted.

Speaker, the Green Energy Act—

Mr. Paul Calandra: Why don't you read the bill?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I've read the bill, thank you very much. I appreciate that. I always like to be mansplained in here. It feels really good. You guys are good at that.

The projects that the government wants to stop were already cancelled by the Liberals. What I find happening here again and again and again in this House is that the members opposite make a big to-do about putting forward policy that's going to change everything that the Liberals put in place but in fact does very little—

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: No. In fact, what they do is leave in place the most harmful aspects of what the previous government did. We could actually move this province forward. We could move this province forward together, but this government is taking us backwards.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for final comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to say to the member from, I believe it was, York Centre—my friend Roman over there. What happened to that caring guy who just offered his compassion to me in regard to making sure that my wellness was good? What happened to you? Come back. Come on, there. Come back. Oh, jeez. What happened to you? Why aren't you talking about that \$40-billion boondoggle—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. *Interjection.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, sorry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There's a reason why I had to say "excuse me" several times, because we always ask that you make your comments through the Chair. As a result, you weren't doing that. So I just want to bring you back to make your comments through the Speaker.

Mr. Michael Mantha: There's that care from the Speaker, for getting me back. Harmony: It's such a wonderful thing. I love the camaraderie that we have in this place, where we can openly talk about our concerns, where that caring attitude and those concerns about that \$40-billion mess that the Liberals left us with—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And now they've adopted.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Well, they don't no more. But where is the care from this government that has actually endorsed it, used it? It's part of their DNA. There's no escaping it. It's yours now, and that's a fact.

Essentially, what is happening here is that it's great to throw out the issue and throw out the baby with the bathwater, but let's not forget: You have actually done very little to change the energy prices. You have done a heck of a lot in changing this province from protecting the environment and on climate change. You will continue taking this path, and it's quite concerning for many Ontarians.

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

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ça me fait plaisir de me lever pour discuter du projet de loi 34.

I agree, actually, that this bill is a very highly symbolic bill. Indeed, I think it could be called the anti-wind-turbines bill. But it's worth reading it very closely, because there is one provision in this that I'm very concerned about and that reveals some dangers for the future of green-tech energy in Ontario.

Just to remind you slightly of a couple of things: The fixed-term contracts were not going to be renewed in any event, so it's not necessary to have this piece of legislation. It's already gone. Indeed, I think what we need in Ontario is a long-term plan for energy that really does reflect the need for green energy to continue to be part of the mix.

I was not there at the time of the Green Energy Act. I reflected recently that I was only elected two years ago this month. Celebrating this two-year anniversary—there have been so many changes in my life. But I want to say that I was there at the time of the long-term energy plan, where the purpose of ensuring affordability was to ensure government neutrality versus the different types of energy.

This bill does not do that. It's one thing to say, "We don't want to have a favourite treatment for renewable energy," but it's something else to create more hurdles for renewable energy projects than for others, and that's what this bill does in section 4. This is my concern, and I've said it before. It's okay to be in the process of wanting to repeal everything, to want to celebrate the fact that for a long time the Conservative Party was against green energy and I think they wanted to—it's in their DNA to want to cut the Green Energy Act. But it's important when you repeal legislation not to go too far and not to swing the pendulum in such a way that you may prevent a sector from continuing to prosper.

Let me talk a little bit about the way in which this bill, in my view, because of section 4, is not good for Ontario. It undermines the renewable energy sector, and I think it is not necessary. Section 4 of the bill treats renewable energy differently than any other type of energy. I agree with the member from Timmins when he said it's almost like the government is saying we will never want to do this again, and going too far in this direction. Section 4 does say that it would be possible to prohibit the issue of a renewable energy approval in circumstances "which may include ... the demand for the electricity that would be generated ... has not been demonstrated." This is the problem here. It's going to allow for some renewable energy projects, contrary to nuclear or contrary to gas or contrary to other projects, to be subject to a higher standard, a different standard, and that's problematic. It makes the industry less competitive. It adds a hurdle to their approval process, and that's not good.

The point of the provision of the famous section 4 is to prevent some renewable energy projects from going on and being approved if the demand for them has not been established. To me, that's completely unnecessary because it's for the market to decide what the energy is and the right price of the energy to be produced. If it's not affordable, then it's not going to take place. The producer will not be in there. The danger in creating this process and adding steps for renewable energy is to make them less competitive and create a disincentive for investors to invest in green energy projects.

There is no reason to punish this sector. Indeed, it's a growing sector. It's a fabulous sector that has created many jobs. Just this afternoon, I was meeting with ONEIA, the Ontario Environment Industry Association, whose premise starts by saying exactly this: that the government should have a progressive policy environment that is neutral and favours market-driven solutions to environmental problems. Market-driven solutions to environmental problems do not require the government to say in advance, "We will be more severe for renewable energy projects and less

severe for other types." It requires neutrality, and that's why I found section 4 problematic.

The other part that this industry association recommends is to continue to invest in the green sector. I will quote from their presentation: "Ontario's environment industry offers the world's best environmental technologies. Whatever the challenge and whatever the need, Ontario's environment industry can offer a range of solutions that are cost-effective and environmentally sound. From municipal water treatment to the most advanced renewable energy technology, Ontario companies" are at the top of their field. This bill, by treating renewable energy differently, undercuts that advantage. It makes them less worthy, and that's wrong.

There are 42,000 jobs that had been created in the green energy sector, with over 30 solar and wind manufacturers right here in Ontario. These are good jobs, and it's not being "open for business" to single out one sector and want to punish it, as opposed to supporting it. That's my worry with this bill: It's going too far.

1750

I have to say, I don't like the English expression "throwing the baby out with the bathwater"; it evokes for me, really, a scary vision. But I think that that's an expression that's appropriate here. It's not necessary to have a section 4. It's not necessary to accomplish the symbolic goal to undercut the renewable energy sector.

Let me continue in that vein. The long-term energy plan of Ontario validated what we call "neutrality," a mandated neutrality, recognizing that there are lots of technological advances that make renewable energy often very competitive on price. It's not to have a preference for renewable energy; although at times some municipalities and some communities may want to invest in renewable energy, it's not to create a disincentive and make it less attractive for renewable energy as opposed to the other types of energy, whether they are nuclear or gas.

I worry that what this government is saying here is very short-sighted. It assumes that a renewable energy project should never take place if there's enough energy around—as though they would know, which is not clear. They are stifling, I think, the technological advancements that do come from the green energy sector. We know that we should not prevent ourselves from investing and benefiting from the increase in competitiveness in the green sector. Let me say it again: The future will be green, or there won't be a future. We know that green procurement will continue to occur around the world, and I think it's an important aspect of the competitiveness of Ontario's economy that we continue to situate ourselves there. It's important, I think, in this way to reflect on the fact that neutrality is what's needed to allow the market to compete fairly on the different types of energy that are to be consumed. It's dangerous for a government to presume that it does not want renewable energy contracts.

Let me continue to talk a little bit about what ONEIA, the Ontario Environmental Industry Association, was saying. One of the things that they were mentioning—and I think several people have mentioned it—is that there were

some good things that came out of the Green Energy Act. Not everything was good; I agree. It could certainly be improved, and certainly for me the green energy projects, the renewable energy projects that I saw working so well were done in co-operation with the municipalities and with the communities. When it's not done, it doesn't work so well. You know that. Lessons learned.

I think what's important is to cite from their brief, where they say, "Jurisdictions" around the world "that are investing heavily in next-generation technologies and research.... While Ontario can be ... proud of the growth spurred by the Green Energy Act" in our green sector, there are other jurisdictions that continue to invest "tens and even hundreds of billions in future growth" in the green tech sector. It's frightening to hear that and see this government going backwards—not only not investing in green technology, but making it harder for the green tech sector to compete. That's my fear, and I think it would warrant a second look here to make sure that you are continuing to look at ensuring a competitive, growing sector that will ensure good competitiveness for Ontario in years to come.

Let me just talk a little bit about the other part about the Green Energy Act which was, I think, positive for Ontario, and what it would mean to continue to have a renewable energy sector that is vibrant.

Une vision à long terme pour l'énergie pour l'Ontario demande d'avoir un secteur de l'énergie verte qui soit vibrant, qui soit présent et qui soit en mesure de compétitionner contre les autres secteurs. C'est ce dont on a besoin pour l'avenir de l'Ontario.

I was quite struck when I looked around at the different projects that were being cancelled. Not a lot of energy was going to be produced by those but, symbolically, what we are cancelling here are hydroelectric projects with First Nations. We are cancelling a variety of windmill projects where there was some co-operation with municipalities. We heard about the famous northern Ontario pellets project. That was another one that actually had promise for the future. I think it is important, when we decide to cancel projects, not to do it in a blunt way, in a way that can undermine the capacity of the sector to continue to grow.

The second part of this green energy cancellation has been about cancelling contracts and fixing the compensation by regulation, even allowing the government to change the compensation by fiat, by regulation. That's dangerous. That's against the rule of law. You prevent investors from knowing that they can be compensated fully. That's dangerous. You undermine the reputation of the jurisdiction as a safe, reliable jurisdiction where to invest money.

That's a dangerous place to go. It's not necessary for you to go there; just don't go there. It's not necessary to undercut this compensation and fix it by fiat in the legislation. It's dangerous. I am sure it will be contested in litigation in front of the courts. I worry that the government may lose these cases and may have to pay compensation. But more importantly—

Interjection.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Pardon?

More importantly, I am worried that this has negatively impacted the reputation of Ontario as a place to do business.

Il est important pour nous tous de prendre une pause de temps en temps pour s'assurer qu'on ne va pas trop vite et qu'on ne fait pas plus que nécessaire.

Obviously, the government was going to cancel the Green Energy Act for symbolic reasons—ran on it for years. For the two years I've been here, I heard a lot about how unhappy they were and how they labelled and taxed the Green Energy Act with all the sins in the world. Nevertheless, I think in doing so, you have to be careful, and if you are undermining a viable sector of the economy, you're not helping Ontarians.

There is a great deal that needs to be said about the green sector. I think it continues to have wonderful opportunities for all Ontarians.

In the tech and research sectors, that's where the growth is. We know that's where the future will be. What industry wants is the capacity to export their projects, and let me talk a little bit about what they're doing.

There are over 3,000 companies that do environment in Ontario. They employ 65,000 highly trained people. They generate annual revenues in excess of \$8 billion, and they export more than a billion each year. This is a growing sector. It should not get bad messaging from the government. It should receive messages about the fate in the way in which the green sector will be part of the future. That's what I worry about, the cancellation of cap-and-trade and the fact that we still don't have the plan from the government. It's been advertised. It will come, but it would have been better, in my view, to present a plan to reassure investors, to reassure the green-tech sector that you're still behind it before sending negative messaging about the green energy sector or green technology generally. That is one of the mistakes that I think you should correct. I think it is very important to have a climate change plan before you move too fast in sending negative messaging around the green-tech sector.

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Je veux conclure mes remarques en identifiant vraiment pourquoi est-ce que même dans Ottawa–Vanier les gens viennent me voir pour me parler de leur engouement pour protéger l'environnement. Que ce soit dans les écoles ou dans les universités ou dans le secteur privé, les gens savent que l'environnement continue d'être la meilleure ressource pour notre productivité et pour l'avenir de l'Ontario.

Dans Ottawa–Vanier, il y a des compagnies qui ont bénéficié, certainement, du Green Energy Act et qui sont inquiètes de l'avenir face à ce nouveau gouvernement. Je veux leur assurer que, pour ma part, je vais continuer de me préoccuper de l'environnement. Je pense que c'est notre devoir à tous et à toutes, and I hope that this government will kind of jump on the green-technology wagon, because that's the future of Ontario. That's where there will be so much place for new technology, new environment, new highly skilled, trained people to be involved, and it's not appropriate that they be left behind.

Merci beaucoup.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Just to the member, when this bill is brought up again in the Legislature, there will be additional time for questions and comments.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): However, pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Ottawa Centre has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Attorney General. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Therefore, I will now turn it over to the member from Ottawa Centre, and you have up to five minutes, please.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise tonight in this House. As you mentioned, I'm rising because, as a member of the opposition, I'm disappointed with the fact that the government has not yet stepped forward to guarantee that Pro Bono Ontario will have operating capacity to help some of the most marginalized people in our province who have serious legal needs. In order to make the case, I'm going to try to make an ethical case tonight, and I'm going to try to make a financial case. So I want to try to put you in the shoes of someone who comes through the doors of Pro Bono Ontario.

I want you to imagine that your spouse passed away in the prime of their career without leaving any will. You now have to struggle financially with two kids, and you are forced to contend with the legal system to salvage your family's earnings. Who do you turn to?

Now imagine that you are a single mother of three teen-aged children who was defrauded by a used-car salesperson. Your lease-to-own vehicle has significant problems which the dealer refuses to fix, and you have no funds for a lawyer. To whom do you turn?

Now imagine that you are being sued by your mentally ill brother subsequent to his being involuntarily hospitalized at the order of a family physician. You were appointed a substitute decision-maker for your brother and you made a difficult choice you thought was in his best interest, but now you're being litigated against and you don't have funds for a lawyer. To whom do you turn?

These aren't made-up stories, Speaker. They are real-life cases brought to my attention from my riding of Ottawa Centre, and in each case lawyers with Pro Bono Ontario have resolved challenging matters for people in their time of need. Sitting right over there is David Campbell, someone who volunteers his time as a lawyer for Pro Bono Ontario. It's because of people like David that folks who have cases like I've mentioned get helped in Ottawa

Centre, and not just in Ottawa Centre, but in Spadina-Fort York, in Willowdale. These pro bono legal offices help give people access to justice. The offices are funded by the Law Society of Ontario and free office space is provided by the government of Ontario.

But what we've learned from people who run these legal clinics is that on December 14, given a massive spike in demand, they will have to close these crucial centres. The office space that the government currently provides them is estimated by the providers at about a \$50,000-a-year subsidy, Speaker, but the value they generate—sorry. Let me begin by saying that to keep them operating would cost the public \$500,000, but the return on investment in these institutions is tenfold, and this has been an independent, audited assessment of legal aid in this particular capacity, in Pro Bono Ontario. That's a 10-to-1 return on investment. That's the financial case for making sure that Pro Bono Ontario continues, but in a public capacity, not funded by the Law Society of Ontario, not funded by individual lawyers, making sure that the province recognizes its duty, in an equal opportunity society, to make sure everybody has access to justice. That's the ethical case and the financial case.

I'm going to expect—I'm going to try to attempt a legal manoeuvre here; it's called an anticipatory breach—that my colleague may mention that they can't afford it, that they've inherited a large deficit. I hear about it every day in this chamber: \$15 billion. What troubles me about that claim, Speaker, is that the government seems to be able to afford certain things that I think it ought to reinvest in Pro Bono Ontario; for example, putting the Ford family lawyer, Gavin Tighe, on a public contract at a cost of \$667,000. That could be invested in Pro Bono Ontario. Or what we learned yesterday: Alykhan Velshi, a former senior official in this government, getting a payout of \$500,000 after one day of service. This is the exact amount of money that could be used to make sure that over 25,000 people in the province of Ontario could get access to justice.

I call upon my friends in government: Whether you come about this opinion from a financial perspective or whether you come about this opinion from an ethical perspective, making sure that people have access to justice is not a frill. To my mind, it's right up there with our decency of health; it's right up there with making sure we have a right to decent education. Making sure that everybody gets access to justice—that the people who get served by our legal system are not just the people with the means to access legal help—is paramount.

We look to this government not just to ensure what they ran on in their platform in the election, but to make sure that the responsibilities they inherit as the governing party of Ontario are observed. For me, access to justice for everyone has to be critical, and I want to hear a compelling case as to why that can't happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, the member from Durham, may reply for up to five minutes.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'm pleased to stand this evening on behalf of the Attorney General, the Honourable Caroline

Mulroney, and speak to the question posed earlier this week by the member from Ottawa Centre. I appreciate your interest in this issue.

I'd like to begin my comments today by reminding everyone of the lay of the land on which all of our government's decisions are made today. The previous Liberal government left our province and the people of Ontario with a reported \$15-billion deficit and more than \$330 billion in debt to pay back. For 15 years, the Liberal government went on a spending spree with the taxpayers' money, treating families and hard-working Ontarians like their own personal ATM machines. The tax-and-spend practices were unsustainable, and it's led to the reality that we face today, which is that we need to get our fiscal house in order so our children and grandchildren have a future in this province.

If the NDP had it their way in June, they would have done nothing but add to the burden so many Ontarians are already facing, which is why our government was elected with a strong mandate to restore financial accountability. Our government recognizes that if we're going to help our most vulnerable, we must do better when it comes to managing our finances, and that includes managing the services provided by the Ministry of the Attorney General and its other publicly funded partners.

With that landscape in mind, let me be clear: We understand the importance of pro bono legal services and how valuable that work is that Pro Bono Ontario does helping some of our most vulnerable. In fact, Speaker, as a legal professional who has spent time doing pro bono work myself, as has our member from Eglinton–Lawrence, I have a keen understanding of the value of this type of legal service and the important role it has in making the justice system more accessible.

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I also want to shout out to our incredible staff and officials at the Ministry of the Attorney General, who work so hard every day to improve access to justice in so many ways to those who need it most. That's why the ministry provides Pro Bono Ontario with rent-free space at courthouses in Toronto and Ottawa for its legal help centres, and our ministry is prepared to continue to make that rent-free space available.

As part of her commitment to providing access to justice, the Attorney General, her staff and officials from the ministry have met with Pro Bono Ontario numerous times since July of this year to encourage Pro Bono Ontario and its board to work with its private sector and justice partners at Legal Aid Ontario, the Law Foundation of Ontario and the Law Society of Ontario, among others, to establish a sustainable and prudent fiscal plan for their services.

I note, Speaker, that while I have not been privy to Pro Bono's conversations with its private sector and justice partners, I can share some publicly available information with you and with the member from Ottawa Centre, to update you. This is a tweet put out by the Law Society of Ontario on November 8: "The Law Society supports the work of @ProBonoOntario. We provide a \$50k annual

contribution. In addition, @LawFoundationOn provides a grant of over \$800,000 annually. To date, the Law Society has not received a request for additional funding from PBO." Let's be clear: We're not speaking about an unfunded service.

I reiterate: We encourage Pro Bono Ontario and its board to work with and collaborate with its private sector and justice partners, as they have in the past, towards a sustainable business plan, and the Attorney General will continue to provide the rent-free space.

Many great partners are required to uphold access to justice in our communities. We all have a part to play. I want to thank the many private and public sector partners, including the numerous volunteers—of whom we have at least one here today, and so many of whom I've met along the way volunteering myself—for their tireless volunteerism and ongoing contributions.

We also understand that our ministry's modernization efforts are important in improving access to justice and that the failure of the previous Liberal government—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I'd like to thank both members for their active debate.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Kitchener Centre has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The member may have up to five minutes to debate the matter, and in this case, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to engage in this discussion on the "Dish With One Spoon Territory." What I've learned from my work with Indigenous elders—and I've mentioned this before in the House—is that the notion of the Dish With One Spoon is twofold: (1) We're not bringing knives to the table; we're here to share knowledge; and (2) all of that pool of knowledge requires all of us who are sitting around that dish. With that in mind, I just want to set a tone for this discussion.

First off, my role as the critic for anti-racism is to support the development of racial equity across Ontario. In order to do that, I have to ask questions that are going to be uncomfortable. Some of those questions include the ones that I ask today: Will funding and resourcing go towards the Black Youth Action Plan? Will the Anti-Racism Directorate be provided with the resources that are needed to be able to support this important work?

The second piece of this that I also want to make sure is read into the record is that anti-racism work is non-partisan. There should literally be no reason why we're disagreeing with the need to do this work. And if we're not able to disagree with the need to do this work, then it only makes sense that we have to set aside resources, transparently and openly, to get the work done.

Some in the House, some outside of the House, might know the name Rosa Parks. A quote from Rosa Parks: “Racism is still with us. But it is up to us to prepare our children for what they have to meet, and, hopefully, we shall overcome.” I bring your attention to that quote because it’s important, again, for us to have a plan of action so that our children and our children’s children can actually live in a world and help to create a world where racial equity is at the centre of what we do when we live in a community.

Unfortunately, not too long ago I checked online for more information on what the current government was planning to do with the Anti-Racism Directorate and the work that had been set out by the previous government. I was told that certain sections had now been archived. One of those sections was the three-year anti-racism strategic plan, and the other is the Anti-Black Racism Strategy. Without a plan or a strategy, we cannot do the work.

The reason I will continue to stand up in this House and ask these questions is because it is my duty to actually follow through with what those who have elected me have asked me to do, and that is to ensure that we live in a world where inclusion is central, and that we live in a space where open debate and transparency about this is shared and experienced in this House.

I’m hopeful—I’m going to remain hopeful, because I am an eternal optimist—that the government will take seriously my offers to provide support for this work. My background is in equity and diversity work and anti-racism work. That’s the reason I’m the critic. I’m not standing here to just be critical of the other side; I’m actually offering a way forward. What I would hope for is that when it’s my turn to sit down and my colleague on the opposite side stands up, there will be a real acknowledgement that (a) the work requires a strategy, (b) that strategy must be funded and well resourced, and (c) there’s an understanding that anti-racism work is non-partisan—and so taking me up on my offer to provide the support will be something that we say yes to, something that this House can agree on.

Part of why I do the work that I do is because of my commitment to marginalized communities. Black communities are marginalized in the province of Ontario—overrepresented in prison, overrepresented in child welfare, and over-represented in disciplinary actions in schools.

We can do better, we have to do better, and I’m sincerely offering my services and my support to make that happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the member from Brampton South, may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to begin by reassuring all members of this House that our government takes racism very seriously, and we remain committed to improving and enhancing public safety across this beautiful province.

I can assure all members of this Legislature that, along with the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, we have been hard at work trying to identify where any systemic barriers across sectors in government or in this province may exist, and how our government can help make evidence-based decisions to shape policies, programs and services.

I can assure the member opposite that the Anti-Racism Directorate is continuing its important work and continues to fulfill its mandate of taking a whole-of-government approach to addressing systemic racism by implementing its strategic plan. This includes the implementation of anti-racism data standards.

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These data standards will assist our ministry and our government in the collection of reliable and usable data that will help our government identify any systemic barriers across sectors and assist us in making evidence-based decisions and informed decisions on how we can best shape policies, programs and services, all for meeting a goal of improving how the people of this great province are serviced.

The Anti-Racism Directorate is and will continue its important work—an integrated approach across government to identify initiatives that will help remove systemic barriers.

As I have stated, our government for the people takes racism very seriously. There is absolutely no room for racism in this province, and we are committed to enhancing and improving public safety for all Ontarians, and that includes all of Ontario’s youth as well.

Ontario is an inclusive province, and racism of any kind will not be tolerated by this government. Hate and racism have hurt individuals and communities. Hate and racism are used to humiliate, intimidate and frighten, and there’s absolutely no room for that in this great province.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is committed to tolerance and equality throughout the province. These are the building blocks that allow every person in this beautiful province to contribute and flourish.

Improving and enhancing public safety continues to remain one of our government’s top priorities, and we will continue to work hard to create a safer and more secure future for everyone in Ontario.

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

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Please be seated. I’d like to thank both members for their contribution to debate this afternoon.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Guelph has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

The member from Guelph has up to five minutes to debate the issue, and the minister, or in this case the parliamentary assistant, may respond for up to five minutes. I now turn it over to the member from Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to further the conversation about the threats posed by the climate crisis we face. I think it's so important to have this conversation because I'm deeply concerned that the government doesn't fully appreciate the costs or the urgency of the crisis that we face.

While we were all enjoying Thanksgiving just a month ago, the IPCC released a report showing that if we don't act, literally in our lifetime, in the next 12 years, we will be facing a climate catastrophe of unprecedented proportions.

One thing that is really important to understand about that report is that the scientists said that if we don't start reducing emissions by 2020, which is a little over a year from now, we will unleash what is going to happen in 2030. Some people think we can wait until 2030, but we can't.

And we're already experiencing the cost, Mr. Speaker. The Insurance Bureau of Canada was here just yesterday at Queen's Park, and they indicated that in the first nine months of this year alone insurable losses due to extreme weather events cost us \$1.2 billion.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has shown that that is the equivalent of \$350 per household in Ontario, and the costs are only going to go up. As a matter of fact, the Environmental Commissioner indicated yesterday in her report that due to the inaction of the previous government, there were 1,327 incidents of raw sewage dumped into our lakes and rivers.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Shame.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: A total shame; absolutely.

Part of what's causing that is, we've seen a loss of green space, in particular wetlands, from 25% to 7% in southern Ontario. The low-cost solution to preventing these storm overflows affecting our lakes and rivers—which, by the way, is the water we drink, the water our kids swim in, fish in, go paddling in. Do we really want raw sewage in that? The least expensive way of addressing that is to prevent the problem in the first place. So the reason I asked the Premier whether he would commit today to protecting the greenbelt is that the financially responsible approach to this issue is to stop paving over our green space and to begin to protect our water.

That crisis is only going to get worse because of the climate crisis, so we have to act to prevent it, which is what led to the second part of my question. People clearly want action; 11,000 Ontarians commented on the EBR related to Bill 4, the cap-and-trade bill. In 24 hours, I received 3,000 emails from people saying to me, "Mike, can you please tell the Premier that we want climate action now?"

I released a strategy this morning. I'm happy to have the government steal every idea in that strategy. It was based on five principles:

—that we base our plan on science, science that will allow us to fulfill our obligations to the Paris accord, because I believe that Ontarians are problem-solvers, not problem-deniers;

—that we establish targets—legislated, binding targets—that bring Ontario to be carbon-neutral by 2050, because that's what the scientists tell us we absolutely have to do;

—that the foundation of any plan has to require carbon pricing—and I know that we've disagreed on that.

I'll tell you what; I agree with them that we should get rid of cap-and-trade and replace it with carbon fee and dividend, putting money back in people's pockets. But the foundation of any plan is carbon pricing. I want to just quickly say that we need to address the myths that are out there. Carbon pricing works, and it's good for the economy. Let's look at Sweden, the very first country to bring in a carbon tax, in 1991. They've lowered their emissions by 23% and experienced 53% economic growth since then. The five provinces in Canada with carbon pricing are the five best-performing economies. Unfortunately, Ontario isn't one of them anymore. So let's end that myth.

The last two points are that any plan needs to be about creating jobs in the clean economy, and it needs to be based on efficiency, so that we can help people save money by saving energy. I'm simply asking the government to commit to targets to achieve our obligations under the Paris accord.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the member from Barrie-Innisfil, may reply for up to five minutes.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I appreciate the passion that the leader of the Green Party has related to our environment. I would say that instead of mansplaining climate change—I think we all understand climate change in this government. Let me assure you that this government agrees that man-made climate change is threatening our environment.

We don't, however, agree that a carbon tax is the solution. A carbon tax does nothing but punish the hard-working people of Ontario. It's a tax that will charge you more to heat your home. It's a tax that will cost you more to feed your family. It's a tax that will drive up the price to fill up your car. Ontario has been a leader in climate change. We will not tax the hard-working individuals of Ontario.

The closure of the first coal-fired generating plant was initiated by none other than the previous Progressive Conservative government, with the full coal closure supported by other governments since. So they had led by example. This has led to the single biggest reduction in greenhouse gases not just in Ontario but in Canada.

The scientific numbers, Mr. Speaker, speak for themselves. Since 2000, while Canada's total emissions declined by 1.5%, Ontario made a 20% reduction. And since 2005, while Canada's emissions increased by 3%, in Ontario it was reduced by 22%, which is why Ontario is on track to meet our Paris 2020 targets.

The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has been very clear: His plan will be a plan suited to the specific needs of our province and designed to ensure that we protect and conserve our land, air and water. It will address urban litter and waste. It will balance resilience to the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather events. We will do our part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure that polluters are held accountable and that we help communities become more resilient.

The member mentioned the overflow of sewers into our waterways. I can assure you that this is a concern that we all share. This is a problem that was not properly addressed by the previous Liberal government, and we are prepared to ensure that we are making improvements. The ministry is working with municipalities to ensure that municipal sewage works are able to meet today's standards and minimize the discharge of untreated or partly treated waste water to Ontario waterways.

I have seen this first-hand, Mr. Speaker. I saw this first-hand in my local community of Barrie–Innisfil when we had worked to protect Lake Simcoe. It's an issue near and dear to my heart. In fact, Lake Simcoe—now we have had quite the accomplishment. The spring phosphorus has decreased and the oxygen that is available in the deep, cold parts of the lake, compared to 30 years ago, has much improved. Originally, we had an issue with the cold-water fish that were unable to survive, but thanks to the participation—something that I had worked on and something many community members have championed. We were able to reduce the phosphorus levels and also increase our water sewage treatment plant in our local community and make sure that we have clean water to live, play and be around.

That's why we will continue to work with our municipal partners. Municipalities continue to invest millions of dollars on plants and systems to upgrade and to minimize bypass and overflows. We are encouraged by the partnerships that we have with municipalities and are looking forward to continue alongside them in their efforts.

To address the member's other question related to the greenbelt—a history lesson, Mr. Speaker: It was the Progressive Conservatives who created the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment, things we can all be proud of. Our idea was so grand and so great that the Liberals copied us by having the greenbelt. So I assure you, and the government will assure you, that our government is serious in our commitment to protecting as much as of our environment and protected lands as possible. We've seen that with the Living Legacy fund, where we increased green spaces and protected areas and parks. Our record speaks for itself.

And we welcome ideas. We welcome ideas to build our environmental plan. That is why we launched consultations that are currently open. We urge everyone to provide their comments at ontario.ca/climatechange.

Mr. Speaker, we are—

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

I would like to thank both members for their contribution to debate this evening, but there being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to have been carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1833.

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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
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