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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 March 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 mars 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

VISITORS

Ms. Donna Skelly: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: The member for Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: They haven't arrived yet, but I would like to welcome a number of people from my constituency who are going to be coming from Hamilton today. I have Tracy Foster, who's going to be coming in a little while. Dan Muys is also in from my constituency.

I'm also going to be welcoming a number of people who are going to be touring—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the member for Flamborough–Glanbrook offering the introduction of her guests. We're going to be doing introduction of guests later on.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(b), the member for Timmins has notified the Clerk of his intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 81, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019. The order for second reading of Bill 81 may therefore not be called today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH CARE
ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LES SOINS DE SANTÉ
POUR LA POPULATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 18, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: It gives me great pleasure to rise today with the opportunity to speak in support of Bill 74, the proposed People's Health Care Act. This landmark

legislation promises to put Ontario patients first and bring an end to hallway health care. For that, I wish to thank our Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, who has worked tirelessly to protect and transform our health care system to put patients, their families and caregivers at the centre of care.

I wanted to say a special hello to my nursing colleagues at Etobicoke General Hospital who are watching right now and have completed their morning patient rounds. You are doing an incredible job being the backbone of our health care system and caring so selflessly for our loved ones.

I'm not sure how many here will recall their maiden speeches, but I certainly recall mine as it was a monumental moment in my life and a very personal one. I remember it because it was so much more than just a significant occasion; it was the first time I shared with everyone here my background as a registered nurse and what motivated me to become a member of this Parliament.

I spoke about the realities of hallway nursing and how I have had to treat patients in overcrowded and narrow hallways, public spaces in which their privacy and dignity are non-existent. I told the story of a young woman who had miscarried her unborn child in a hospital waiting room in front of dozens of strangers because we had no rooms or beds to put her in; because we were experiencing a service gridlock. As my colleagues can certainly attest, this story is not unique and was not a singular occurrence in our health care system. Nurses like me carry similar stories about their patients each and every day when they report for duty at the crack of dawn, when most of us are still in bed or just waking up. Inadequacies, misaligned priorities, lack of foresight, and burdensome and expensive bureaucracy is what led our health care system to fail that young woman on one of the most difficult and tragic moments of her life. The health care system was troubled then, and although progress has been made, much work remains.

Mr. Speaker, I remember my maiden speech today because in it I pledged to the people of Ontario that our government would work tirelessly to do whatever it takes to end hallway health care, to end hallway nursing in Ontario. Our leader and our team made a pledge to the people of Ontario during the campaign: Ending hallway nursing was, and still is, one of our most important priorities. And our government has moved remarkably quickly on keeping that promise, which is why I'm so proud to be standing here today, only eight months later, supporting Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act, and commending our Deputy Premier on her unparalleled commitment to ensuring we have an accountable and well-integrated system,

centred around the patient; a system that is efficient and reliable in its delivery of health care and, more importantly, sustainable for future generations. We need our health care system to be there for Ontarians not just today or tomorrow, but also 10, 20 and 50 years from now.

For patients, one can only imagine how frustrating it is not to be able to receive the care you need in a timely manner, to have to wait for hours on end before seeing a physician; and once you're finally called, to be treated in a cramped hallway for everyone to see. It is mentally and physically exhausting to have to retell your medical history over and over to every new care provider you meet or to be given the runaround in finding and understanding the services that you need. Patients already endure the discomfort of their symptoms. Why must our health care system make their lives even more difficult by being so disconnected? We live in the 21st century, and technology is our friend. We have instant access to so much information, and we can connect people around the world. But for some reason, in our province, we still can't access our own health records. Not even our health care providers are able to see the full picture of our medical history.

Bill 74 will change that. This legislation will put patients first by giving them the option to securely access their digital health records whenever they need them, to seamlessly view all available health care providers and book appointments online, or to speak to a specialist virtually. It will also put health care providers first and result in large cost savings. When physicians will be able to log in and review their patient's entire health history, the need for repeat and redundant tests will decrease.

Mr. Speaker, how is it possible that in the 21st century Ontario does not have one streamlined platform where all our health care records would be housed? Some institutions and care facilities have recognized this need a long time ago and took it upon themselves to develop such platforms for their patients. This demonstrates the incredible leadership we have in our health care communities. However, the situation is now such that there are multiple platforms across health care institutions in Ontario which do not talk to each other and are not integrated. In practical terms, what this means—and I've seen this first-hand—is that emergency physicians in Toronto or Peel must try to log into up to five different platforms to look up their patient's history, previous lab tests or diagnostic results. In addition, family physician health records are not available to physicians in hospitals. In emergency and trauma situations, having quick access to previous health records can make the difference between life and death.

Our institutions simply cannot do this alone. They're looking to the government to lead this health care transformation and finally develop an electronic health care record, which our patients and providers need and deserve, and hopefully once and for all put our hospital fax machines out of business.

0910

Le projet de loi 74 créera des équipes de santé axées sur la communauté, composées d'un éventail de fournisseurs de soins connectés, capables de coordonner leurs efforts et

d'optimiser leur efficacité de manière à maximiser le soutien des patients, tout en éliminant toute la bureaucratie inutile qui drainait nos ressources pendant des années. Monsieur le Président, 42 centimes de chaque dollar d'impôt des contribuables vont à nos soins de santé. Il est temps que nous commençons à tirer le meilleur parti des investissements de la population ontarienne dans notre système de santé public et universel.

Right now in Ontario, there are simply too many agencies, oversight bodies and service provider organizations that fail to seamlessly provide a unified approach to health services. This fragmented collection of health organizations only serves to confuse patients and delay their treatment. By its very nature of being so poorly diffused, the current system lacks accountability. Over the last 15 years of Liberal government, we've had to witness our health care pulled apart in a number of different directions. We've had to sit and watch the creation of disconnected agencies, working towards promoting patient health without any sort of coordinated vision. It's a broken system that makes no sense. It's precisely why our Premier created the Council on Improving Healthcare and Ending Hallway Medicine: so that we have the necessary professional expertise to develop the most accessible, accountable and sustainable solutions.

Just last week, I had the opportunity to work an ER shift, which I do on occasion in order to maintain my standing with the College of Nurses and my professional registration. I worked the infamous hallway shift. Ten patients came through my care that day, stuck in a hallway bed for hours, or days for some of them—a broken hip, pancreatitis, altered level of consciousness, dementia, internal bleeding, chest pain and even a bomb blast wound, to name just a few. Very few of these patients were what we would call "hallway appropriate," but they ended up in my care simply because there was nowhere else for them to go.

Every day in Ontario, health care professionals like me put their licence and safety on the line when they show up to work in our fragmented and mismanaged health care system. Our proposed legislation, Bill 74, will change that. It will create a better-connected system. One single agency, Ontario Health, will facilitate a seamless delivery of services under one harmonized vision.

Through a carefully planned, holistic approach, this legislation will establish, in phases, Ontario health teams that are able to provide a coordinated response for patients that ensures smooth transition between care providers. Instead of a system that works in disjointed silos, we'll have Ontario health teams that bring together local health care providers, hospitals and mental health and addictions services, all under one modernized and cohesive agency. In practical terms, this means that when I discharge my patients from the emergency room, I will not have to worry whether their CCAC or care coordinator will show up in time to provide the home care that they need, because the care will be centred around the patient and not around the brick and mortar which they happen to find themselves in. This is a much-needed change.

The Premier's council issued a report recently. In it, they listed a number of flaws, such as how difficult it is for patients to understand and navigate our current health network and how Ontario needs a system that maximizes value for money through increased efficiency and coordination. Some patients actually hire patient advocates to come to emergency rooms and to help them navigate our health care system. That's how dire the situation is. Our government is listening and it is acting. Our government is listening to professionals. We're taking the advice of doctors, nurses and front-line care providers. And, most of all, our government is listening to the patients.

When I say our government is listening, I mean that we're doing it in multiple ways. We're not just holding meetings with professionals, we're going out into our local communities. We're having conversations with constituents. We're visiting our hospitals and seeing for ourselves what our current health care system looks like. Every day, we're hearing stories from doctors, nurses, pharmacists, porters, technicians, dietitians, physiotherapists and all health care professionals, as well as their patients, about our health care's current state of despair.

The mother of one of my staffers is a nurse who has worked in several hospitals. He asked her if she had any stories about hallway health care, or hallway nursing, as I like to call it. She replied, asking if he wanted to hear the good stories or the bad ones. Confused, he asked what she meant by "good stories." After all, how could any hallway health care story be a good one if the minimum standard for quality care is for patients to be treated in private rooms? She explained that the good stories are when they actually have room in the hallway to treat all the patients. Speaker, what does this say about our health care system when Ontario's nurses are telling us that a good hallway health care story is when there's enough room in a hallway to place a patient?

When asked about the bad stories, she spoke about the complete lack of privacy and dignity patients must endure. She spoke about how, normally, patient rooms are equipped with proper beds that can be adjusted so that patients can sit up or lie down comfortably, but how, in the hallways, there is only enough space to have the most rudimentary of stretchers.

She spoke of having to treat senior patients, some of whom are unable to walk, and how they needed to be changed in the hallway because there were no available rooms for them. Imagine, Speaker, having lived your whole life with respect and dignity, only to have it robbed from you in a hospital hallway as people walk by and see you being changed.

She spoke about patients not having the privacy they deserved to hear their diagnoses, some of which are heartbreaking, or to be able to speak privately with their families about their health care decisions. Again, Speaker, I ask you to imagine finding out you have a terminal illness and wanting to make final arrangements with your family, wanting to spend time with them in peace, only to have to be interrupted by the constant traffic of people walking around you, hearing your most intimate and private conversations.

These experiences are heartbreaking, but they are the realities of Ontario's health care system. These patients are already going through some of the most painful and stress-filled times in their lives. We cannot let our system continue to function like this. We simply cannot.

This is why our government has acted so quickly in its mandate to address these systematic problems. It is why I'm so proud to be a part of this government that is creating 6,000 new long-term-care beds towards a total goal of 15,000 over the next five years.

I'd also like to address some of the criticisms we've been hearing from the opposition about our new plan. I'd like to do so by asking them: When was the last time they were a patient in a hospital? When was the last time they were given medical treatment in a hallway? Because if they haven't gone through the long wait times and been treated in narrow, overcrowded hallways, then either they're in really good health or they must be getting their health care somewhere else. Because the unfortunate truth, which our critics fail to appreciate, is that having to wait for hours just to be treated in a hallway has just become the new norm.

So, I'd like to encourage all the members opposite to support Bill 74, because in doing so, they will also be supporting Ontario's health care providers and, most importantly, supporting our patients, families and caregivers.

I would also like to thank again our Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, who has lived experience as a patient in our health care system and has been Ontario's Patient Ombudsman for six years. She knows better than anyone the kind of changes that are needed to make sure our health care system becomes accessible, accountable and sustainable.

Speaker, I am looking forward to the day when hallway nursing becomes a thing of the past and the dreaded hallway shifts are no longer. This is my wish for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to follow on the remarks of the member for Mississauga Centre—another Centre. I respect the fact that she's coming from a place of working inside the health care system, but I want to take her up on her challenge this morning when she asked us: When was the last time we had to deal with hallway health care, hallway medicine?

0920

I just want to remind the member: This is something that our critic, France Gélinas from Nickel Belt, has been mentioning for years, so I don't think we advance the argument much further if anybody in this House claims we aren't aware of the way in which our health care system is suffering. That's not helpful. What is helpful, though, is us having a collective acknowledgement of what health care transformation should be, because if we're honest and we listen to the people on the front lines, like the member from Mississauga Centre, the kind of health care transformation we've been talking about in this place for far too long is one that lets administrators of large health care institutions talk about economies of scale, combining massive institutions, while people on the front lines don't get the support they need.

Last week, I met with Cynthia. Cynthia is a personal care worker. She works with people with developmental disabilities and people living at home in our city, funded formerly by the local LHIN in our area. What she is terrified about—she and over 300 members who work with some of the most marginalized, disadvantaged people in my city—is that the health care transformation for her is going to mean amalgamating to a larger existing unit that has lower wages and doesn't get compensation for travel between clients when cars are used. We are dealing with a situation in which people caring for people who are the most marginalized people outside of hospitals—where you want to send people to free up those hallways—the workers, the people doing the caring professions, are facing massive deterioration in their working conditions. Let's focus on that. Let's focus on something real and not building massive economies of scale for hospital administrators. We need more money in our system. We need to rescind the tax cuts that are hurting our public purse and invest in front-line care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I just wanted to also thank the member for her comments. She is obviously somebody that we, in this caucus, turn to. She's somebody who has dealt with health care on the front lines and of course is a fount of information for us when it comes to how we deal with many of the situations that are confronting our health care system, whether it is hallway health care, whether it is the crisis in some of the emergency rooms across our community, or how that transition happens from the emergency room back into the community and into long-term care. So again, I just wanted to thank the honourable member for that.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity last week to visit with my local hospital and to hear some of their comments, not about the administration of the hospital but some of the front-line workers in all of the departments across the hospital: doctors, nurses—we visited the emergency room and we talked to midwives in what is one of the most exciting new clinics at Markham Stouffville Hospital, which brings midwives right into the hospital, working closely with staff. They're excited by what they see. They're excited by what the minister has brought forward.

The Markham health team is an extraordinary health team. It's a large group of doctors, nurses, mental health workers and nutritionists. They have been doing this for many years in Markham. They handle a large group of people. They are also excited. They are very much the model by which the entire province will be shaped around.

I encourage all members: If you don't truly understand what it is that the government is trying to do here, it's about bringing better care into homes and making it seamless—fewer emergency room visits. Because when people get discharged and they don't know what the next steps are—in particular, seniors—it will be handled by one call, one visit and one health care team. This has the ability to transform our health care system for the better. I hope the honourable members will take an opportunity to really investigate what it is we're trying to do here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to start by talking about my uncle Harold. Harold is 97 years old. He lives in Sudbury. Last week, he started to not feel too good, and was transported by ambulance to our local hospital, Health Sciences North. He spent close to three days really, really sick, first in the waiting room and then in the emergency room of Health Sciences North. He finally got a room. I went and visited him. He is as sharp as ever. He is as funny as ever. I just love him to death. But this is one more example of what it looks like at Health Sciences North in Sudbury when you have 80 more people sick enough to be admitted but no beds to put them in. It's not good. It's not good for a 97-year-old to be in an emergency room surrounded by sick people. As much as he's a strong man—he's a Second World War veteran, and he's a big man; he has always been strong and healthy—when you're 97 years old, you should not spend over two and a half days in an emergency room surrounded by sick people. Nothing good will come of that, but that's all we had to offer. The staff was wonderful. They tried really, really hard. There was just no room.

We don't argue that hallway medicine needs to be stopped. But this bill has nothing to do with this. This bill has nothing to do with ending hallway medicine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Will Bouma: I wanted to start by commending our member for Mississauga Centre for her insight into this issue. One of the great things about our team here is that we have so many members who have such great insights into what's really going on on the ground in Ontario. I really appreciate her comments and the ability that she still has to keep up her nursing licence and to be right in the thick of it, as it were, and to give us real insights into that.

What we need is a patient-first philosophy when it comes to our health care. I think what sets us apart from the members opposite, especially in the comments from the member from Ottawa Centre, is that we can't just continue throwing money at this problem and hope that it will go away, because the fact of the matter is, we don't have any more money for this right now. We're already spending 42 cents of every dollar on health care. We need to make that money well spent so that we can actually tackle hallway health care as it happens.

To make the issue of people lying on stretchers in hallways about the worker, I think, is somewhat disingenuous. I have to reject the premise of that sort of argument, because what we're really dealing with is people who are waiting in hallways in order to get care. So when we come up with a timely, measured response to end hallway health care by putting patients first, I would encourage the opposition to be joining us in that so that we can try a different approach, as opposed to just letting the bureaucracy endlessly grow, and to try to cut out some of that and to put more money back into the front lines. I think that's how we can take care of our workers, but more importantly, that's how we'll be taking care of the patients. In reality, that's who we're all here to serve.

I look forward to support from the members opposite as we move forward on Bill 74.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return to the member from Mississauga Centre to give her an opportunity to wrap up this part of the discussion.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I would like to thank all of the members for their insights and their comments.

I am truly honoured to be able to speak to this bill today. I am really looking forward to the day when hallway nursing is no longer in Ontario and when we have one streamlined electronic health care record so that our patients can access care where it's needed, how it's needed, and they can make their own decisions about health care. I'm looking forward to the support on this bill.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: A Mushkegowuk–James Bay constituent has faced a horrendous experience with our current health care system. This bill will make things worse, not better. Home and long-term care are already dealing with labour shortages and the peril of a private health care industry. This bill opens the way to further privatization of health care, and that will eventually put patients, especially in northern communities, at risk.

Madame Lillian Deschamps, for example—91 years old—cannot care for herself. She currently resides à la Résidence Lefebvre in Moonbeam. This is a privately owned home that provides assisted living. She broke her hip in December, was transferred to Timmins for a hip replacement, and eventually discharged from the hospital in late December. She received good care at the hospital, but her discharge from the hospital left her family appalled. Her granddaughter was told, literally, that Madame Deschamps would be discharged because they needed the bed. She wasn't ready, but they needed the bed.

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Madame Deschamps's granddaughter said that on January 9, Madame Deschamps had an evaluation by the community care access centre. During the evaluation, which lasted 45 minutes, Madame Deschamps was told that her name would be added to the list for a manor or nursing home.

You have to realize that in Mushkegowuk–James Bay, waiting times are two to three years. This is why they had to put her in a privately owned home. She was also told that she would qualify for two visits per week, mostly for personal hygiene. Mr. Speaker, she was without a proper bath for 74 days—74 days without a proper bath. Why? There are not enough PSWs to do that. That's a reality in my riding. That's a reality in northern Ontario. This is not a unique story. It's a reality.

While she has been put on the priority list, she's still waiting. Her family is currently paying out of pocket for personal support workers.

So now families are paying—because when they realize what they have to go through, they pay out of pocket.

Madame Deschamps and her family do not deserve to go through these hurdles. She has worked hard for all of us, and for our province, to earn the care and the dignity

all elderly people deserve, and she qualifies for that service. As her granddaughter told me, she has paid her share of taxes during 91 years and she should be entitled to these services.

The example of Madame Deschamps shows that there is a lot of work to be done on the health and home care systems. Lack of personnel, lack of beds and lack of rooms and home care forces her family to seek out private aid. It is a great idea to develop a home care system, but it is disingenuous to do so when there is no personnel available. When we should be investing every dollar in front-line care, this bill opens the way to private and for-profit companies that can bid on forming Health Ontario teams, and these Health Ontario teams can also contract out services.

Let's recap: Madame Deschamps was discharged because they needed the bed, and was without a bath or proper care for 74 days. Her family is paying a private service and manor. We are putting the weight on people's shoulders, and the bill is no help. The Liberals let Madame Deschamps down, and now the Tories are doing plainly worse. Where is the dignity in all this?

And let us not forget that we are next in line. Our people, the people of Mushkegowuk–James Bay, are caught up in a two-tiered health system. The Conservatives are leading us down the same path. Change will make it harder for local concerns to be heard and acted on, especially in northern and rural Ontario. Granted, the LHINS created a layer of bureaucracy between patients and front-line care workers, but by concentrating our health care system into a watertight super-bureaucracy, we are pulling our front-line care away from our people. People like Madame Deschamps deserve better and more care.

Monsieur le Président, je peux vous dire que quand j'ai entendu l'histoire de M^{me} Deschamps et quand j'ai parlé avec sa fille—on peut dire que M^{me} Deschamps mérite mieux et mérite plus de dignité que ça.

Quand la famille s'est fait mettre dans une situation où il fallait, peut-être, qu'eux autres doivent laver sa grand-mère, je peux vous dire que ce n'est pas évident pour une famille de se mettre dans une situation où une personne qui a grandi avec cette personne-là—et puis la grand-mère, je peux vous le dire, n'est pas intéressée à se faire laver par ses enfants. Elle a besoin de quelqu'un professionnel pour ça. Puis, elle qualifie, en passant, pour ces services. C'est un droit qu'elle a, à 91 ans. Elle a payé des taxes; je pense qu'elle mérite le moindre des services. Le problème, c'est qu'on n'a pas assez de monde pour délivrer les services.

On entend le gouvernement qui dit : « On a un nouveau programme qui va marcher et ça va être la plus belle affaire sur la terre. » Je peux vous dire, monsieur le Président, que si tu n'investis pas dans les personnes qui vont délivrer les services, comme les « PSW », dans les personnes qui vont délivrer ce système-là, les vraies personnes qui vont aller voir les personnes âgées et qui vont délivrer les soins dont ils ont besoin, et si on n'a pas l'argent pour les payer—parce que j'ai eu la chance de parler à la personne qui gère ce programme et qui fait certaine que les « PSW » sont là. Elle m'a dit : « Guy, on n'en a pas—pas capable d'en avoir. Je

viens d'engager une. Je viens d'engager une pour être capable de délivrer les services. Elle est en training. »

M^{me} Deschamps est la 10^e sur la liste. Ils ne sont pas capables de délivrer les services. Elle a le droit à deux services, deux fois par semaine, et elle a le droit d'avoir des services pour son bien-être. On n'est pas capable de délivrer parce qu'on n'a pas les personnes pour délivrer les services. C'est la réalité dans le Nord qu'on a tous à traiter avec et que le monde est obligé de traiter avec.

Puis cette personne, je lui ai demandé : « Écoute, et si t'avais une chose que le gouvernement pourrait dire, qu'on pourrait te donner pour aider à délivrer les services nécessaires? » Elle a dit : « Guy, j'ai besoin de l'argent. J'ai besoin de l'argent dans mon budget pour être capable de payer ces personnes-là, parce qu'on les paye des salaires dégradants. Puis, la première chance qu'ils ont, ils partent. Ils s'en vont travailler à une place qui a de bons salaires et de bons bénéfiques. »

Mais on demande à ce monde-là, par exemple, de délivrer des services, de ne pas être payé pour voyager des distances—parce que les distances qu'on a dans ma circonscription sont énormes. C'est une réalité qui existe, mais on semble l'oublier : loin des yeux, loin du cœur, dans le Nord. Le plus que tu vas au nord, le pire que c'est. Dans les communautés des Premières Nations, c'est pire. On dit quoi? Qu'ils n'ont pas droit à ces services-là? Ce sont des Ontariens comme nous. Ils ont droit à ces mêmes services. Si on pousse le privé—un pas en arrière.

Si tu veux qu'un système tombe, si tu veux structurer un système pour qu'il ne fonctionne pas, tu t'arranges pour qu'il ne marche pas. C'est exactement ce que le gouvernement fait en ne pas donnant d'argent aux personnes qui délivrent les services. On a besoin de donner de l'argent aux « PSW », aux personnes qui gèrent ces services, pour qu'on puisse donner des services et de la dignité aux personnes comme M^{me} Deschamps, comme ma mère, qui est dans le système comme c'est là. Ma mère va être obligée d'aller à l'hôpital et puis payer comme si elle était dans des soins à long terme, parce qu'il n'y a pas de place. Les deux ans ou trois ans d'attente sont inacceptables pour les personnes de cette génération, qui ont tout donné pour la province, qui ont payé leurs taxes pour faire sûr qu'on prenne soin d'eux. Il ne faut pas oublier aussi que notre style de vie nous apporte—dans l'exemple de M^{me} Deschamps, c'est sa petite-fille et le mari de sa petite-fille, qui ont deux travaux. Puis, ils sont obligés de traiter avec ça, quand on est une province riche où on devrait être capable de délivrer des services. C'est une honte, monsieur le Président. C'est une honte, comme province, qu'on n'est pas capable de délivrer des services à ce monde-là.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Merci. Questions and comments?

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Merci au député de Mushkegowuk–James Bay pour ses paroles.

Notre gouvernement s'est engagé envers la population de l'Ontario pendant la campagne électorale de mettre fin aux soins de santé dans les couloirs, et nous nous sommes pleinement engagés à tenir cette promesse. Moderniser notre système de santé prendra du temps, mais nous

continuerons à écouter les médecins, les infirmiers et les agents de première ligne, alors que nous mettons en oeuvre notre stratégie de santé publique.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what we will not do: We will not invest in further bureaucracy. We need to put our health care dollars in the front lines. I would actually like to see how much of the \$1 that gets spent in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care goes into the front-lines. This is what our government has done.

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We are going line by line through every ministry to look where the money is spent, because where it's needed is on the front lines. It's needed to help nurses not have to look for a thermometer around the emergency room when they need to take their patient's temperature. It's needed to buy new linen hampers in our emergency rooms and across our hospitals. That's where the money is needed. That's why we're streamlining the bureaucracy into one system that will work for all patients and all families in Ontario.

The people of Ontario have always been our government's priority and focus. We will create a public health care system that works for everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments.

M. Michael Mantha: C'est avec plaisir que je me lève de mon siège et prends ma position de la part des gens d'Algoma–Manitoulin. Je veux remercier le député de Mushkegowuk–James Bay. Puis, je veux laisser savoir à M^{me} Deschamps : vous n'êtes pas la seule, madame Deschamps. Il y a plusieurs personnes qui sont comme vous. Il y a plusieurs M^{me} Deschamps à travers le nord de l'Ontario et à travers cette province.

Je veux reconnaître aussi tous les « PSW » qui travaillent à travers mon comté, à Little Current, Wikwemikong, Gore Bay, Thessalon, Blind River, Elliot Lake, Espanola, Wawa, Manitouwadge et Hornepayne. Vous êtes les soldats. Vous êtes les personnes qui délivrent et qui prennent soin de nos mères, nos pères, nos grands-pères et nos grands-mères : merci, merci, merci. Il faut qu'on mette une attention, mette un investissement nécessaire pour faire certain que vous êtes capables de continuer à faire le travail que vous voulez faire.

Vous voulez aider M^{me} Deschamps. Vous voulez aider tellement les gens, mais vous êtes brûlées, vous êtes à bout de vos heures. Vous êtes en train de prendre soin de 20 à 29 personnes sur un « shift ». C'est quasiment impossible, l'ouvrage que vous faites, mais vous savez quoi? Jour après jour, vous êtes en train de faire l'ouvrage.

Madame Deschamps, vous n'êtes pas la seule, et puis on ne va pas vous oublier. On va continuer comme parti, le NPD, à faire certain que les investissements sont mis en place.

I just heard the previous speaker. Something that just resonated in my ears is that front-line workers, the PSWs that deliver those services, are the ones that we need to target to provide the investment so that those services are brought to them. They're not a level of bureaucracy; they are individuals that care, that have a conscience, that believe in the work that they do. We as a government, you

as a government, have to believe and make that investment so that they can continue caring for the individuals that we have in our hospitals, in our long-term-care homes and in their homes, which will save us a lot of money. So let's refocus and let's look at making investments in the areas that it is actually required.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments.

M^{me} Goldie Ghamari: Je voudrais, premièrement, remercier le député de Mushkegowuk—James Bay et tous mes collègues pour leurs commentaires.

Notre gouvernement s'est engagé à édifier un système de santé public interconnecté et moderne que méritent les patients, les familles et les fournisseurs de soins. Pour mettre en place un système axé sur les patients, nous devons favoriser la collaboration et la coordination, de l'échelon supérieur à l'échelon inférieur. Ensemble, nous devons tirer le meilleur parti de notre système et jeter les bases d'un système de soins de santé fortement intégré pour l'avenir.

Notre loi permettra le transfert de multiples organismes provinciaux existants vers Santé Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, Bill 74 is committed to integrating our health care system. What it does is it takes the best pieces of what we have and it combines them. It creates one interconnected system that patients can easily access—and not just patients; it's about their families, it's about caregivers, it's about front-line workers and it's about health care professionals. It's about coming together to have one coordinated system that everyone can access and everyone can use. What this will do is put more of our money and more of our resources to the front-line workers. Because if we want to end hallway health care, we have to see what's happening on the back end that's bogging everything down and what we can do to ensure that these services are being used more efficiently, that they're being streamlined and that patients have quality and timely access to health care. The way that we can do that is by looking at our system and reworking it and fixing it to make it better. That's why I support this bill to end hallway health care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: The people of Ontario have been waiting for the Ford government to introduce a piece of legislation to deal with health care. I'm sure the public thought that this bill would recognize the aspects of health care that have been deemed problematic, such as long-term care, lack of beds and ending hallway health care, yet this bill seems to just introduce a privatization of health care services and provides more convenient ways to book an appointment with your physician.

I think it's quite obvious that the level of irrelevancy in this bill is very high. This government has not been listening to their own constituents. Have the true concerns of the people in Ontario been addressed in this bill? The People's Health Care Act should be about the people and their needs.

Hundreds of constituents in my riding of St. Catharines have emailed, or they have called my office, begging us to

oppose Bill 74. One of the main arguments is that this PC government did not consult Ontarians, nor gather input from the front-line health care workers, those who deliver crucial services to all types of people on a daily basis. Residents in St. Catharines know very well what a P3 hospital looks like, and that's what this bill is leading to: \$60 more on their municipal taxes, more cuts, longer wait-lists in hallways, hallway medicine and lack of care for our loved ones.

You cannot have an inclusive and comprehensive piece of legislation without consulting the people who represent and literally care for Ontarians on a daily basis.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll turn to the member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I want to thank my colleagues from Mississauga Centre, Algoma—Manitoulin, Carleton and also St. Catharines for speaking, and also for your comments.

Monsieur le Président, comme vous avez entendu dans mon allocution, je pense qu'on entend, du côté du gouvernement, qu'il y a certaines bonnes intentions que le gouvernement veut faire, mais je prie que le gouvernement fasse la bonne chose quant aux personnes de première ligne, les personnes qui délivrent les services. On parle de bureaucratie. On réalise qu'il y en a qui peut nuire, mais je pense qu'il faut réaliser que les personnes qui délivrent les services et les personnes aussi qui gèrent ça ont besoin de certains argents pour être capable de délivrer les services nécessaires pour que ce monde-là ait la dignité et les services pour avoir le bien-être qu'ils méritent pour le reste de leurs jours. On parle des personnes âgées.

N'oubliez pas : dans ma circonscription, on a beaucoup de services—on est limité dans la province pour les services en français. Je pense que c'est très important qu'on puisse délivrer ces services dans une langue qui n'est pas toujours évidente à délivrer, parce que, veux, veux pas, il y a du monde de ma circonscription qui parle seulement français, aucun mot en anglais. C'est important, ça. Je sais que, dans la région de Mike—excusez, du député d'Algoma—Manitoulin—c'est la même chose, et à Sudbury et Ottawa-Centre. On est tous dans une situation similaire. Je pense que c'est important de reconnaître ça. Mais le plus important, c'est qu'il faut que les personnes qui délivrent les services soient bien payées pour qu'elles puissent rester. Le problème, c'est qu'elles ne restent pas parce qu'il n'y a pas d'argent, donc elles ne sont pas bien rémunérées. Je pense que c'est une erreur qu'on fait si on ne corrige pas ça.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to contribute to the debate on Bill 74.

I want to begin by just saying that I know that the Minister of Health and Long Term Care cares deeply about improving our health care system, but I'm deeply worried that Bill 74 does not accomplish that. I keep asking myself this one question: Will Bill 74 improve patient care and health outcomes for the people of Ontario? At best, the answer is that we won't know for a number of years; at worst, the answer is no.

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I don't think the solution to every problem is to blow it up, but that seems to be what the Ford government does on most issues. This tear-down approach increases costs and creates chaos—chaos that we cannot afford when we need solutions to the hallway health care crisis right now.

A new org chart over the next few years will not hide the fact that we need investments now, while restructuring health care for the future. So before the government centralizes decision-making in a big bureaucracy in Toronto, has the government studied the experiences of Nova Scotia and Alberta, which have undergone similar dramatic transitions to a centralized super-agency?

In 2017, an expert panel in Nova Scotia evaluated its super-agency and found reports of a system that is a non-system—disconnected, not communicating, non-agile, non-people-centred—as well as front-line staff and managers who feel helpless and unable to effect the changes they know have to happen. Alberta's experience has been similar: chaos and dysfunction in front-line care as money and resources are sucked towards rearranging the bureaucracy.

Given this experience, has the government consulted with front-line health care workers in Ontario? Because what they are telling me is that we need primary health care reform, with more investments in family health teams, community health care centres and Aboriginal health centres, and we need more investments in long-term care, home care and alternative levels of care for seniors. We need more investments in mental health care and addictions care. That's what's driving the pressure being placed on hospitals and creating the hallway medicine crisis that we currently face.

I don't see how centralization, and possibly privatization, will fix that crisis today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Donna Skelly: I have to agree with the member from Guelph on one thing, and that is that our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is deeply committed to improving health care right across Ontario.

During the election campaign, our government committed to the people of Ontario that we would end hallway health care, and we truly are committed to delivering on that promise. The fact is, Ontario's health care system is broken. It's on life support. Patients are forgotten on waiting lists, more than a thousand patients receive care in hallways every single day, and the average wait time to access a bed in a long-term-care home is 146 days.

Let me share with you a conversation that we had in our constituency yesterday. We had a gentleman whose wife has been waiting to get into a home for over eight months, and found out again that she cannot access that bed. This is going on in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook. It's going on in ridings right across Ontario. We are doing what we can, and our minister is committed to ensuring that that change comes as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, we envision a public health care system where patients and families will have access to faster,

better and more connected services—a system where family doctors, hospitals, and home and community care providers work in unison, as a team; where, within these teams, providers can communicate directly with each other, creating a seamless care experience for both the patient and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we can end those stories that I shared with you this morning where families can actually find quick, safe and great health care for their loved ones.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I would like to agree with one statement that the PC member from Flamborough–Glanbrook said, and that is that the health system is broken. In my strong opinion, the PC government is taking it from bad to worse with their health care scheme which, quite frankly, opens the door to potential privatization.

I'm very big on consultation, and from speaking with front-line workers in my riding—people such as the chair of the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario, friends at Epilepsy Ontario—what I'm hearing from them is that they need more services, not less. They need more front-line workers, not less. In the case of Epilepsy Ontario, they need 40 community epilepsy educators. If you're going to put services in the community, does that mean a centralized plan is best? I think they'd say no.

What we need are our front-line workers. We need people who are able to work the job and are able to do so in a healthy and safe environment, not people who are on a shift with themselves alone and 40 patients to take care of. When that happens, it's impossible to give each patient the 100% service that every Ontarian knows.

I've had the unique experience myself of experiencing hallway medicine, and I must say, Mr. Speaker, there's a great loss of dignity. There's also a great loss of sleep, as it's quite difficult to sleep in the hallway under fluorescent lights and signals going off and codes throughout the night.

I just want to circle back on the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario. For people who are waiting, Speaker, it can literally be a matter of life and death. People are dying in ER rooms, waiting, so rather than centralizing, let's talk to actual Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I rise today to support Bill 74, to have better-connected public health care for our patients. I want to express it through my personal experience and also as a board member for my local hospital, Mackenzie Health. My mother-in-law was admitted into hospital. Since January, she has been in and out of the hospital. When she got admitted, they were not able to connect her with further health care. It ended up that she was there for a few weeks and then, when she got back home, things were not coordinated. Now, I really, really saw the difference when she was finally dismissed from the hospital for the third time. This time around, the PSWs as well as long-term-care people are really connected with her and our family members to start planning for a few things that are going

to happen to her. What a difference. That's why I support this, when we see that this is really patient care.

When I was having my meeting with the CEO from Mackenzie Health just two weeks ago, he let me know how he supports this plan. In the past, if he finished off with a patient, it was really off his hands. He cannot do anything else. Perhaps a CCAC will be coming into play, or perhaps they will have to connect to a few other people, but it is off his hands. But now everything is all coordinated, and he's very supportive of that.

I want to get back to the members in the opposition when they say that we have no consultation. I want to tell you that there has been a lot of consultation. They have been consulted, and then they were telling me how this has been supportive of what they plan. Actually, our deputy minister has been—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, anyone who wondered whether this bill actually does open the door to privatization might have been interested to read the London Free Press last week. There was a story entitled, "London Surgeon Pitches Province on Funding Private Operating Rooms." This is a surgeon who works at Advanced Medical Group. This is a for-profit health care facility that is headed, not surprisingly perhaps, by somebody who wanted to be a candidate for the Conservative Party in the provincial election and is a nominated candidate for the Conservative Party for the coming federal election.

This private health care facility sees an incredible opportunity with the health care restructuring bill that we're dealing with today and has written a letter to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and to the Premier's Council on Improving Healthcare and Ending Hallway Medicine to put out-of-hospital operating rooms on the government's radar. This enterprising business sees this as an opportunity to increase their business by allowing patients to come and access the operating rooms that are onsite.

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Speaker, one of the concerns that we have highlighted consistently is the fact that this bill says nothing about the kind of entity that can be designated as a delivery system. This bill allows for-profit providers like Advanced Medical Group in London to apply to have public dollars siphoned off into the profits of this organization under the guise of providing patient care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return to the member from Guelph for his summation.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to appreciate the members participating in the debate. I will have to say I do agree with the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook that our health care system is broken and it does need to be fixed.

But I will have to remind the members opposite that an org chart reorganization is not going to put resources into our system right now—the kinds of supports we need with primary health care reform, with more supports for mental health and addiction services, and better supports for long-term care, home care and alternative levels of care for seniors.

Let me tell you what people in my riding are saying. I know the member from Richmond Hill talked about consultation, as well as the member from Toronto–St. Paul's. Members in my riding are deeply concerned about the lack of consultation. They have, quite honestly, mixed feelings about the opportunities this bill presents. On the one hand, people want more integrated, local care. They want to see our health care system more integrated, which is why primary health care reform is so important, which is why family health teams and community health centres are so important. But they're deeply concerned that centralizing decision-making in a bureaucracy in Toronto is not going to provide and listen to the local needs that people have in Guelph or in North Bay, Thunder Bay, Windsor, Ottawa or anywhere in the province. That is why so many people are concerned about the experience in Nova Scotia and Alberta, where a centralized agency hasn't delivered the kind of patient-centred, front-line reforms that are needed at the local level.

I ask the government to go back to the drawing board with Bill 74.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good morning. This morning, for those viewers who might have joined us just now, we're debating Bill 74. What Bill 74 speaks to is building a connected public health care system for the patient, Speaker—for the patient.

Modernizing the health care system is going to take time. We all know that. But we continue to listen to the people who plan and work on the front lines, and that includes nurses, doctors and other care providers like people who work in public health units.

For a period of time, I was the president of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies of Ontario. Out of that experience, I know that patients, families and caregivers experience frequent gaps in care. They have to reiterate their health concerns over and over again—you've experienced it; every MPP in the Legislative Assembly has experienced it—because of a lack of digital tools and care continuity. For health care providers like public health units, they are each paid out of different funding envelopes and are discouraged from working together in teams. I've seen it in the region that I represent, the region of Durham.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care was in Pickering last week. There were several front-line providers in a room, and we were listening very carefully to their advice and counsel.

Speaker, I know that you agree that this is no way to deliver health care in our great province. One of the most frustrating aspects of all is the fact that Ontario is home to some of the world's best doctors, nurses and health care teams, but we have left them to do their best with a patchwork system. It's simply not built to help them do their jobs. You hear it, Speaker; I hear it regularly in my constituency office that they're absolutely ready for a system that encourages collaboration, partnership and finally

frees them from a system slowed by the bureaucracy constructed within it.

We know it happened. It happened over 15 years. We've seen the results. The outcomes are plain. Our health care providers work very hard to provide the best possible care. They work hard to connect us to the services we need, and they do it in spite of the fact that they have few tools to make those connections.

Speaker, our providers should be able to easily link us to that care, and they're not able to do that now. Once they make that connection, they should already have your health care history so you don't have to repeat it. Imagine this, Speaker: We can book appointments online; we have access to our own health care records. And what could we do if we connected the best of what's happening across the system and leveraged those successes for everyone's benefit? Imagine that. We can't do that now. We will be able to do that. Efforts are not coordinated toward a common goal but are dispersed and diluted across a system that competes for rather than realizing the value of every health care dollar.

Speaker, we have thousands of dedicated Ontarians working to deliver better health care in Ontario, but the structure of the system is flawed. It's just fundamentally flawed. But that ended a week and a half ago with Minister Elliott's introduction of Bill 74 and our government's commitment to the fundamental right of Ontarians of universal access to a publicly funded health care system. That is why we're building a public health care system centred around the patient, and redirecting money to front-line services, where it belongs, to improve patient experience and provide a better and connected care model. That's what we all aspire to.

The People's Health Care Act improves both access to care and the patient experience, and it does so, Speaker, in several ways. I want to highlight some of them. A key element within the legislation is Ontario health teams made up of local health care providers and organized in a way that will enable them to work as a coordinated group. These teams will be built to guide patients between providers and shepherd Ontario families through transitions. We all know about those types of transitions that families experience. These teams will share responsibility for care plans, service provision and outcomes, and Speaker, most importantly, they would take the guesswork out of navigating the health care system. You know, out of visits to your constituency office, and many other members here know, that one of the frequent inquiries we get in our constituency offices is help to navigate the health care system.

Through Ontario health teams, patients would finally have a say in their health care journey. With safeguards in place, of course, to protect information, patients would have an option to securely access digital health services such as making online appointments and talking to a specialist virtually, or having access to your own electronic health records.

A great part, Speaker, about the Ontario health teams is that they will rely on leadership that already exists in the

community—your community, my community, my colleagues' community—rather than create another level of bureaucracy and management that we've seen evident with the local health integration networks.

Another striking example is the integration of community care access centres within that framework and, in effect, creating sub-LHINs—too much bureaucracy.

Speaker, who among us has not sat with a family member in need of serious medical treatment and discussed and debated internally, or openly with loved ones, about how best to access the health care system? Well, help has come. Help has at last arrived, due to the hard work of our Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and her parliamentary assistants.

Meanwhile, multiple provincial agencies will be integrated. Specialized provincial programs will be melded into a single agency, providing a central point of accountability and oversight for the system. It's so long overdue.

At the outset of my remarks, I said that it's going to take time to reform a health care system that was put together over the last 15 years. It's fragmented; we know that. It's going to take time to bring the agencies that I just referred to together to form a new and more effective organization, but clearly it's the right thing to do. If we're truly serious about finally building a health care system centred around you and your families, we need to roll up our sleeves and put in the hard work to get there. This government is prepared to put in the hard work to build a better health care system for all Ontarians.

Speaker, we owe a better health care plan to Ontarians. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and Deputy Premier and her team have examined the system and concluded that we can do better and we must do better—and we will. As the minister has so eloquently stated, if we expect real improvements, where patients will experience positive change first-hand, we need much better coordination of service. It must be better organized around the needs of people and around the desired outcomes.

I'm conscious of my time running out, so I'm going to sum up.

Speaker, change is never easy. You know that. Every member in this Legislative Assembly knows that. Some build their lives around a process, no matter how haphazard or ill-conceived that process might be. Little or no time is ever spent examining what could make it dramatically better for the provider or better for the patient.

Our visionary Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and her parliamentary assistants have not fallen into that trap. They knew that we needed and deserved different results, and they challenged themselves to look at an aging system in a dynamic new light. They're not afraid of change; they have embraced it. A better health care system is on its way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We won't have time for questions and comments this morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you all for your good behaviour this morning.

We'll now stand in recess until 10:30, when we'll resume with question period.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for the introduction of guests, I wish to introduce some of the guests who are with us in the Speaker's gallery today: David Adjei, Elizabeth Teo and Michael Tolkunow. These students from the University of Toronto will be participating in the job shadow program run by the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians and are joined today by our friend, former Speaker and chair of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians, David Warner. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature today.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to welcome amongst us Chris Stigas, all the way from British Columbia, who works with the credit union movement and used to work for Carole James as her director of communications.

Mr. Ross Romano: I would like to welcome, from my constituency office, my constituency office assistant manager. Christina Spears is here with us today.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my privilege to congratulate the McMaster Marauders for becoming this year's Canadian university women's basketball champions. Their coach, Theresa Burns, led to them a thrilling 70-58 victory over Laval University to win the Bronze Baby for the first time. Congratulations, McMaster Marauders.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, without my glasses I pulled the wrong card and introduced the right person under the wrong name. I'd like to apologize. It's Sara Goldvine, not Chris Stigas, who I saw yesterday at a reception.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's a real honour today to welcome Shona and Norm Litchfield from Guelph to Queen's Park. They are the parents of Mirren Litchfield, who is our acting page captain today. Welcome.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'd like to welcome Charissa and Lynda Levy, two visitors from my riding in Eglinton-Lawrence, who are in the members' gallery. More importantly, they are the family of our page Erynn.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I'd like to welcome Chief Rudy Turtle, all the way from Grassy Narrows, and also David Sone, Athena Pheasant and Anne Chabot. Meegwetch.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I'd like to welcome members of the Canadian Solar Industries Association who are in the gallery today. They also have a reception after question period today in the dining room, if you have a chance to come out.

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to welcome representatives from the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects. We have here visiting today Aina Budrevics, who is their executive director, Tim Dobson, Bryce Miranda, Kendall

Flower, Sheila Boudreau and Howard Brown. Thank you very much, and welcome to the people's House.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm pleased this morning to have two guests here. We have Ronnie Gavsie, who is the president and CEO of the Trillium Gift of Life Network, and Jennifer Allan, also from the Trillium Gift of Life Network. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome Ross Robinson from Niagara-on-the-Lake. I'd also like to welcome his son Scott Robinson from Niagara-on-the-Lake. He's vice-president of finance for the McMaster University student union. I'm looking forward to having lunch with you today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the members for keeping their introductions of visitors brief today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would now ask our group of pages to assemble.

It is my pleasure to introduce our legislative pages who are serving in this first session of the 42nd Parliament: from the riding of Brampton South, Aaryan Joharapurkar; from the riding of Oshawa, Alma Mahmuda; from the riding of Peterborough-Kawartha, Arthur McLeod; from Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas, Benjamin Wark; from Mississauga-Lakeshore, Elizabeth Becke; from Eglinton-Lawrence, Erynn Levy; from Markham-Unionville, Gajan Suthakar; from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, Greyson Hope; from Don Valley West, Gwenyth Chasson; from Scarborough Centre, Ishwarejan Balaratnam; from York-Simcoe, Julia Gobio; from Ottawa-Vanier, Julien Bélanger; from Oakville, Kaitlin Bowie; from Vaughan-Woodbridge, Katherine Trimboli; from Etobicoke Centre, Mathew Bitondo; from Guelph, Mirren Litchfield; from Richmond Hill, Nicholas de Souza; from Markham-Stouffville, Nikolaos Diplas; from Simcoe-Grey, Olivia Gregersen Curtis; from Etobicoke North, Saad Naseer; from Willowdale, Saniya Khan; from Scarborough-Guildwood, Sanjayan Sarmenthiran; from Flamborough-Glanbrook, Stella Duncan; and finally, from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Virginia Will.

Welcome to our legislative pages.

Applause.

RICHARD ALLEN

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand that the member for Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas has a point of order.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a point of order. I seek the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence to acknowledge the passing of former MPP for Hamilton West Richard Allen.
1040

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment's silence

upon the passing of former member Dr. Richard Allen. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

BIANCA ANDREESCU

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I see the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sports. Do you have a point of order?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Yes, a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I would like to congratulate Bianca Andreescu on her recent, and first, WTA title win at the Indian Wells Masters this past weekend.

Ms. Andreescu was born in the beautiful city of Mississauga, Ontario, and is the youngest woman to reach the finals of the Indian Wells Masters in 20 years. On behalf of the members of the Legislature, congratulations to this amazing Ontario athlete.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The government announced deep cuts to education that will strip a billion dollars out of our kids' classrooms over the next four years instead of investing in our schools to tackle the \$60-billion school repair backlog or ensuring children with autism have the supports they need to thrive at school. The Premier's cut will mean 10,000 fewer teachers and more students squeezed into crowded classrooms. Why does the Premier think our kids' education is not worth the investment?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, what we're doing is we're actually modernizing the school system. I am so proud of what the Minister of Education did. Revamping the education system—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: —a plan that won't cost one teacher their job. Not one single teacher will lose their job because, after 15 years of Liberal nonsense, testing out failed ideology for our kids, letting math scores fall to the lowest in the country—I know the Leader of the Opposition is all right with our grade 6 math students; half of them are failing math. One third of our teachers are failing the same test, but we're fixing that problem because we know we have the greatest teachers in the world. They just need the support that they haven't had in 15 years.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I can assure this Premier that most of us think there is nothing modern about him or the backward way that he's taking this province.

In just four years, there will be 10,000 fewer teachers in our schools because of this government's cuts to education. In high schools, as many as one in every five teaching posts is in jeopardy as class sizes balloon and students are forced to take classes online—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —taking classes online instead of in-person instruction. That means less one-on-one attention for students and teachers who are stretched even thinner. Why is this Premier choosing to balance the budget on the backs of our kids?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, we consulted with over 72,000 parents. Over 72,000 parents told us what was important, and unlike the previous government, we actually listen to the parents.

What they told us—95% of parents do not want their children to have cellphones in the classroom. Those are staggering numbers. The students will not have cellphones in their classrooms. We're ensuring that health and physical education are taught at an appropriate age and that the most important people to teach them are their parents.

We're increasing the focus on skills training in math, sciences and financial literacy, because I know, my friends in this room, that there are some people who don't understand finances. Some people don't understand budgets. Some people can't put a budget together. Some people missed that course in school. But I can tell you, we're going to have the brightest students in the entire world—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Education refused to rule out future changes to full-day kindergarten that could see fewer teachers or early childhood educators in those classrooms. Instead, she said, "There's no stone unturned at this stage of the game. We are reviewing all of our options."

Speaker, our kids' education is not a game. It's not a game for the government to play. Our kids' education is important. It's important to them now, it's important to their future opportunities and it's important to us as a province to be competitive. That's what the importance of education is. They obviously don't know it.

Will the Premier commit right now to keeping full-day kindergarten the way it is?

Interjections.

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

The question is to the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my earlier comment, we're going back to the basics, going back to the basics on math and sciences, making sure reading, writing and arithmetic, something that we forgot over 15

years—again, Mr. Speaker, we are here to support, number one—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition side, come to order. Please, Premier, take your seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. We just got started. We've got 55 minutes to go. The opposition parties have the opportunity to ask their questions, as do all members. Government ministers have to respond.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Okay. We can start the clock. I'm going to ask the Premier to conclude his response.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I can assure you, we will never take the advice that the NDP and the Liberals, who failed our kids for years and years and years when it came to math—we won't take lessons from the NDP or the Liberals, who supported these failed policies for 15 years. We're turning the corner when it comes to education. Again, we will have the brightest students in the whole country by the time our term is up.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Yesterday, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston came forward with a disturbing allegation that Dean French, the Premier's hand-picked chief of staff, and other senior operatives within the Premier's inner circle were allegedly engaged in “possible illegal and unregistered lobbying by close friends and advisers employed by Premier Ford.”

Can the Premier tell us if he or his chief of staff, Dean French, were lobbied by individuals not registered to lobby in Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I find this so rich and ironic coming from the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition just sent a mass email out to all her downtown elite friends, heads of the public unions—and, by the way, the poor people who are part of the public unions and actually don't support the NDP policies are having to pay for these tickets. They sent out an email: “Come and join the leader of the NDP, Andrea Horwath, for \$800. It's an open bar.” And you will actually get a reward. That is what it said in the letter: You will get a reward by having access to her highness.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

1050

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

I'm going to ask the Premier to withdraw that comment.

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier withdrew the comment. Start the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. There is a difference between legal and illegal, though; there is.

Was the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston removed from the PC caucus because he raised concerns about the Premier's chief of staff, Dean French, engaging in illegal lobbying activities? That's the question.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Once you get to pay your \$800 to have access to the leader, there's this celebration: It's called a celebration for being the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the NDP for 10 years. Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to going to the next celebration for 20 years of her being the Leader of the Opposition. I will go there myself and celebrate.

But what they forgot is to follow the rules like they usually do. You're supposed to send out your email blast seven days before, but guess what, Mr. Speaker? They broke the law. They sent it out four days ago, so it doesn't meet the seven-day qualification. Why don't you look in your own backyard and clean out your own closet?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I'm going to ask the Premier to withdraw again.

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker, but I can assure the Premier that he won't be invited, so he'd better not hold his breath. He won't be invited.

The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston went on to say, “Even when the government”—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I have to be able to hear the members who are asking the questions. It's pretty simple. I ask all members to allow the Speaker to do that.

Start the clock. The Leader of the Opposition can conclude her question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston went on to say—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for King–Vaughan will withdraw. Start the clock.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member over here said the same thing. You have to withdraw. Stand up, member for Brantford–Brant, and withdraw.

Mr. Will Bouma: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Start the clock. I apologize. The Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston went on to say, “Even when the government is in violation of the law or engaged in unlawful activity, I must accept these decisions as a team member and neither dissent in caucus nor speak publicly of these illegal/unlawful actions.” Was the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston removed from the PC caucus because

he objected to the government allegedly engaging in illegal activities?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please take your seats, Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: In this chamber, we know the only thing that's going on that was illegal was sending out a letter four days prior to a fundraiser. You need to send it out seven days prior to a fundraiser. And it's \$800 to have access to the leader. No one has to pay to have access to Doug Ford. They just call me on my cellphone. I'll show up at their homes. I go to people's houses. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who you've got to pay \$800, all you have to do is call me on my cellphone. That's the difference.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. It raises a lot of questions when we have a Premier who was caught participating in fundraisers that were in violation of the law before he was even elected, Speaker, and now a senior member of his inner circle is accused by a veteran PC MPP of engaging in illegal lobbying activities.

Will the Premier tell this House if he has any knowledge of Dean French or of his senior staff's involvement in illegal lobbying activities? Just answer the question.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has thrown out names, serious accusations. Rather than sitting here cowardly in this chamber, why doesn't she go outside and name the names? Because she knows that she'll be sued. She knows that she will be sued and that she doesn't have a leg to stand on.

It's unfortunate that they throw these false accusations here in this protected chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the Premier to once again withdraw.

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the Premier has nothing to hide, and Dean French and other members of the Premier's senior staff have not engaged in any illegal lobbying activities, will the Premier then fully co-operate with any investigations the OPP chooses to launch?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, through you, Mr. Speaker: I find it ironic that we have an \$800 cash-for-access to sit down and have a couple of cold beers with the Leader of the Opposition. That is illegal. You can't be asking for cash-for-access four days before, sending out emails, going to all your top union buddies and the leaders—because I differentiate between labour and labour leadership, public and private sector unions.

I support the front-line people. But I'll tell you one thing: The front-line people do not support their hard-earned tax dollars going to these \$800-a-night fundraisers to have a few drinks with the Leader of the Opposition.

TAXATION

Mrs. Amy Fee: My question is for the Premier. Environmentalism and conservation are key components to the identity of Ontario, and Ontario has already made significant progress. Meaningful efforts of individuals and industry have paid off, and because of this, we have already reduced provincial emissions by 22%.

Local Ontario businesses like Challenger Motor Freight in Cambridge are taking it upon themselves to reduce emissions.

Mr. Speaker, could the Premier please share with us why he and the Minister of the Environment, myself and my colleagues from Waterloo region were in my riding of Kitchener South–Hespeler last week?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I want to thank the champion of all champions, Kitchener South–Hespeler MPP Amy Fee. She has more courage than anyone in this room. What a true champion—for the question.

We had a great visit out in Cambridge last week. We went to Challenger, one of the largest freight companies in the country. We went there with the Minister of the Environment. We went there with a couple of other MPPs.

This is what we heard from the front-line truck drivers: They are terrified about this carbon tax. They know that everything in the country will go up in cost because everything gets delivered by a truck. Gas prices will go up. Everything will go up in the household. Taking your kids from point A to point B will cost you more. Going to the grocery store will cost you more.

But the NDP supports that. They support higher taxes, higher carbon taxes, higher gas prices. That is their socialist mentality—

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

Mrs. Amy Fee: Back to the Premier: It's clear that through great sacrifice and the meaningful efforts of businesses like Challenger, Ontario has worked to make significant greenhouse gas emission reductions, without a federal carbon tax.

Ontario can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change without a federal carbon tax, yet Justin Trudeau is continuing with his plan to force this tax on the people of our great province.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier elaborate on what the federal carbon tax would do to the hard-working men and women of this province?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, thank you to the member for the question.

We went there. What a positive, positive response. Do you know what was just as positive? When we heard the job numbers.

We have built an environment here in Ontario that people have confidence in. Owners of companies small, medium and large have confidence to hire people—41,000 new jobs were created; the month before, 37,000; the month before, 17,000. Almost 100,000 new jobs were created in Ontario in the private sector. It doesn't cost the taxpayers anything at all.

Revenues went up a billion dollars in the province because everyone in the world knows Ontario is open for business and open for jobs—

Interjections.

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

1100

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): What's in the water today?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm happy you showed up today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Essex will withdraw.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I withdraw, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order so I can hear the next question.

Start the clock.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, in his explosive letter from yesterday, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston indicated that his expulsion from the government caucus is a direct result of “raising concerns about possible illegal and unregistered lobbying by close friends and advisers of the Premier.” Did the Premier remove the member from caucus because he raised these concerns—yes or no?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: There's absolutely no truth to any of the allegations that the member from Essex has been accusing people who are totally innocent yesterday and today.

The member from Essex walks around here like he's a real tough guy. He thinks he's a big tough guy, but why doesn't the big tough guy walk outside and make those accusations outside this door if he's so tough? He's not tough. He knows he doesn't have a good enough lawyer to walk outside those doors. He walks around as a tough guy, but he's nothing but a coward. He is nothing but—

Interjections.

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

I wish to advise the House that the intemperate language is getting out of control and I have no choice but to start warning members. Personal insults are not helpful to the dialogue or the discussion, and I would ask all members to keep that in mind in terms of the language that they're using in the context of the remainder of question period.

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I guess we know why the Premier wanted his buddy to head up the OPP so badly. That's a telling answer by the Premier.

Expelling this member from caucus for—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Essex to withdraw.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member can conclude his question.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Expelling the member from caucus for trying to speak out is just the latest of a string of revenge plots that this Premier has been obsessed by. From Brad Blair to Alykhan Velshi to the city of Toronto councillors whom he could never get along with, this Premier attacks anyone—anyone—who steps out of line.

I ask again: Did the Premier remove the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston as a revenge plot for refusing to conceal alleged illegal activity—yes or no? Yes or no, Premier? Stand up and give us an answer.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, the accusations are absolutely ridiculous. Again, I find it so rich, so ironic, that they're holding an \$800 access-to-the-leader bar free for all, whatever you want to call it—drink all you want for \$800. Once you drink all you want, then you have the access, and once you pay the \$800—again, we don't believe in that. We believe that anyone who needs our help can make the phone call and pick it up. We believe in the \$25 spaghetti dinners that we've been doing all across the province. We've had great turnouts speaking to communities and listening to their concerns.

The number one comment I hear is, “Keep going. Do not deter from what you're doing. Keep moving.” I can promise the people of Ontario, we will keep moving this province forward and make sure everyone prospers—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

JOB CREATION

Mrs. Nina Tangri: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Our government came into office on a commitment to create and protect good jobs for the hard-working people of our province. We promised to make Ontario open for business and open for jobs, and our plan is working. Last month Ontario led the way in job creation by adding 37,000 new jobs, and in just the last three months we've created over 95,000 jobs, including many in my riding of Mississauga–Streetsville.

Can the minister outline for the House how we are making our province an engine for job creation and economic prosperity?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member. I had a great tour yesterday of a business in the member's riding.

Ontario is leading the way in job creation because we finally have a Premier and we have a government that understands business. As the member alluded to, we've created a lot of jobs since becoming government. In January, we created 41,000 jobs, and then this month we got more great news. Last Friday, Stats Canada reported that Ontario was the sole province with a notable employment gain in February.

Speaker, the United States created 20,000 jobs; Ontario created 37,000 jobs. It's a testament to the quality of our workforce, of our job creators and of the work that this

Ontario government is doing to reduce red tape, lower taxes, make Ontario open for business, make Ontario open for jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the minister for his answer. I know my constituents want to see Ontario become the economic engine of Canada once again, and I know that our government is creating the environment necessary to make that happen. We promised to create an environment where businesses can grow, thrive and create good jobs, and we are doing exactly that.

I know the minister and our entire team have been hard at work reducing red tape and burdensome regulation. Could the minister please inform how important it is to continue creating good jobs for the hard-working people of our province?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the member from Mississauga. We had a great tour yesterday with GlaxoSmithKline in her riding, finding out how we can reduce red tape to ensure that they stay here and create good jobs in Ontario.

When Stats Canada made the announcement last week that we had created 95,000 jobs in the last three months, all the member from the opposition, the NDP from Waterloo, could do is shrug her shoulders.

We think that 95,000 jobs is great news, Mr. Speaker, for the people of Ontario. That's why we're doing everything we can to continue to create jobs so that families can put food on the table and they can send their kids to university and college and make sure that we have the workforce of the future.

Our government is continuing to make sure that we have that skills match that works in our post-secondary and our public education system for the jobs of the future. We're going to cut red tape, we're going to cut taxes and we're going to continue to create jobs in Ontario.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Minister of Education. But before I go to that, the Premier has talked a few times about how he always answers his cellphone. I sat with a group of parents yesterday of children with autism who said they have been calling his cellphone repeatedly and have received no response.

Yesterday, teachers, education workers and allies across the province wore black to protest the government's plan to jam more kids into overcrowded classes and rip a billion dollars out of Ontario schools. But as school boards and educators continued to assess the damage of these sweeping cuts, it seems the minister might already be setting her sights on full-day kindergarten, telling reporters yesterday that "we are reviewing all of our options" when it comes to staffing. Speaker, given this minister's track record, why should parents believe that those options are anything more than cuts, cuts and more cuts?

1110

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, I'm pleased to rise in this House and talk about our government's vision on how we're going to make education work for everyone in

this province, because we know that over the last decade and a half, it completely went off the rails under the leadership of the Liberal government. The Liberal government, over 15 years, failed our students with experiments and ideology that saw math scores and overall scores plummet. The resiliency of students absolutely plummeted as well, and the confidence that parents and employers had in Ontario's education system absolutely plummeted as well.

Therefore, the narrative that the opposition party is trying to create is, quite frankly, offensive, Speaker, because we're doing what we said we would do. We've consulted, we've listened and we're modernizing and building an education system that is absolutely going to see success for our students.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm so sorry the minister is offended, but we are going to continue to stand here every single day and oppose these massive cuts to our classrooms.

Increases to class sizes, forcing students to take more classes online, eliminating 20% of teaching positions in secondary schools alone—that's 10,000 fewer adults in our schools and less support for every single student. Small and rural schools are particularly worried about keeping their doors open, and not just the small high schools, but elementary schools too. We know from hearing from communities and teachers in Renfrew, Arnprior and elsewhere that they are looking at class sizes in elementary schools of at least 32 children.

With fewer supports, school boards continue to struggle with all of these inadequate special needs budgets. Can the minister explain how eliminating thousands of front-line jobs in education is in keeping with the Premier's promise to Ontarians that—

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, first of all, we need to be crystal clear: There is no involuntary job loss happening under my watch—none. Again, I'm going to repeat that, for all our listeners and everyone in the House today. The plan we have pulled together is actually getting good reviews from parents, from teachers and from students. Again, I repeat, to be crystal clear, so that nobody gets caught up in the ridiculous narrative that the opposition is trying to create: No one is going to involuntarily lose their job, because we know we have some of the best teachers around the world, and we are standing with them. For once, teachers know that they have a government that is going to be standing with them, to make sure they have the best learning environment in Ontario and across Canada. Because again, it all comes down to making sure we create pathways—

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

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Deputy Premier. When I was coming to Queen's Park very early yesterday morning, I met a cab driver. His name was Jessim.

We got to talking. He asked what I did, and then he said to me, "Can you tell Doug Ford something for me?" I said, "Sure."

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You have to refer to the Premier by the expression "the Premier."

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Speaker—"the Premier." I said, "Sure."

"Tell him I have a son who is six years old. He has autism. He started saying his first few words with the help of therapy. On April 1, he's going to lose that therapy. I don't know what we're going to do. Schools don't have the support that he needs. Tell him my family needs his help."

Speaker, we are 12 days away from a little six-year-old boy and many other children losing services their futures depend on. Through you to the Deputy Premier, I'm asking again: Will they hit the pause button, meet with families and work with them?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South for bringing this to the floor of the assembly and for bringing Jessim's story here.

I must say that the last month has been very emotionally charged for many people across the province. It's been a very difficult time for many families as they come to terms with our policy. I will say that my parliamentary assistant, Amy Fee, and I continue to consult with families. I have been working with the Minister of Health, as well as the Minister of Education, so we can ensure that there are wraparound supports for families across the province of Ontario. I'm going to continue to work with those families. I'll continue to work with the stakeholders in the field. We're going to make sure that where we can make some enhancements, we'll do that.

But let me be perfectly clear: The system that we inherited from that member's party was broken and broke. We had to go to Treasury Board not once, but twice, in order to get over \$102 million to sustain a broken system. We're going to continue to make historic investments into autism in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm not going to comment on the response; I'm just going to let it speak for itself.

Speaker, through you to the Premier: What the government needs to do for these families is to walk their very difficult path with them. What they're hearing from the minister and the Premier is, "We're giving you money. Just go away. You're on your own."

I know that across the aisle, there are other members of the government caucus who have met with families, listened to them and want to help them. I don't know what's going to happen in the government caucus room this afternoon, but I do know we're 12 days away from many children losing the things they need.

I know that some members of the government caucus have had the courage to do the right thing. Through you, Speaker: Will the Premier have that same kind of courage and do the right thing, pause the program and sit down with families? Yes or no?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Look, the previous Liberal government left us with a broken system that did not support 75% of the children in the province of Ontario. We will continue with our plan on April 1 to clear the wait-list so that the 23,000 children—

Miss Monique Taylor: She's a trophy on the shelf.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain is warned.

Minister, please respond.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Our commitment to the 23,000 children who are presently on the wait-list is to move them as quickly as possible over the next 18 months into the direct funding model so that they get the service they need.

We have made additional investments in the education system. I'm working with the Minister of Health so we can have stronger standards. We are open and committed to an effective dialogue that is respectful and one that we can move forward on. We have empathy in our government with families who have been dealing with this diagnosis, but our commitment today is to clearing the wait-list in the next 18 months for those 23,000 children.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As everyone in this House knows, good things grow in Ontario. Under the previous government, farmers in my riding faced burden after burden that made it more difficult for them to produce the local food we all love.

Our government is committed to increasing access to local foods by removing redundant and outdated regulation, while also implementing exciting new initiatives. I know that increasing sales of local food will create jobs in Niagara West, increase economic growth and ensure rural communities like mine remain sustainable.

My question is simple: Can the minister please tell the House how the new goal of the Local Food Act he announced this week is proposing to increase local food purchases in the public sector?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member from Niagara West for his question. Yesterday, I was proud to announce that our government has established a new goal under the Local Food Act that will help the broader public sector increase access to local food in their institutions and daily operations.

Public sector organizations, including universities, colleges, school boards, hospitals, long-term-care facilities and municipalities, are being encouraged to serve locally grown, made-in-Ontario foods, including in cafeterias and to patients. We've launched new tools, such as the interactive local food hubs map, that will make it easier for organizations to find and purchase the local food they want.

I want to thank all those organizations that worked with us to help identify some of the barriers and red tape that were making it more difficult to purchase local food.

Our government wants to see the agriculture industry in Ontario expand, and by making it easier for those in the public sector to increase access to local food, we are doing exactly that.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you to the minister for his answer. Local Ontario food plays a vital role in our province's economy. Local food encourages job creation, strengthens economic growth and supports our hard-working farmers.

It's encouraging to see Ontario farmers, food processors and distributors coming together to increase the presence of local food in our large market, and I look forward to seeing more food grown locally in my riding across public sector institutions in my community.

Could the minister please elaborate on the various initiatives our government is developing to ensure that Ontario food is seen in the broader public sector?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Once again, thank you to the member for the question. In speaking with stakeholders, it was clear an increasing number of public sector institutions are looking to increase their local food. Some of the initiatives our government is proposing to increase access to local food in our public institutions include:

- new and informative videos to promote local Ontario food;

- a recognition initiative to help public sector institutions who succeed in achieving their food targets; and

- sharing tracking documents to help organizations set goals and measure their success year over year.

I also encourage everyone to look at the Foodland Ontario logo to know they are choosing the good things that grow in our Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to promoting the good things that grow in our province, and I'm excited about all these initiatives and look forward to continue working and promoting Ontario food.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Education. More than half of the approximately 3,700 students in the Thames Valley District School Board who currently require school-based rehabilitation therapy are on a wait-list for those services. Some have been waiting years for the occupational therapy, physiotherapy or speech-language pathology they need to be able to learn. Without additional funding, many of these students may never receive the essential services they require to be successful at school.

Instead of ripping a billion dollars out of our education system, will the minister commit today to eliminating the wait-list for in-school rehabilitation therapy for Thames Valley students?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I find it kind of rich because, just a couple days ago—even just moments ago—when we talk about eliminating wait-lists, this party opposite loses their mind.

Hon. Todd Smith: Give them what they want, they go nuts.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: You give them what they want and they go crazy.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You're cutting services when you're doing that. That's the difference.

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: The fact of the matter is, we of course are taking a look at what we need to be doing in our classrooms and in our school system.

I hear from occupational therapists and speech therapists on a regular basis. They're providing a lot of feedback. In fact, I'm thinking of one right now, and she supports getting back to the basics.

Ms. Jill Andrew: What's her name?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Her name is Jenna. If you want more details, I'd be pleased to speak to you about it later.

Jenna was sincere of heart because she applauded us getting back to the basics in math. She said, "Don't stop there. We need to get back to phonics." That is exactly what Jenna told me. And you know what? I certainly—

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

Interjections.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, eliminating the wait-list means adding services, not cutting them. The transfer of responsibility for school-based rehabilitation therapy from health care providers to children's treatment centres was supposed to improve access for children with special needs and ensure seamless support from birth to 18. Instead, what we are seeing in the London area is even less timely service, wait-lists that are getting longer and more children being denied the supports they need to learn.

How does this minister expect students to be successful at school when they don't have the basic physiotherapy they need to hold a pencil, the basic occupational therapy they need to sit in a circle or use the washroom or the basic speech therapy they need to communicate in the classroom?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: You know what? What we just heard from the member opposite are more examples and more results of a failed Liberal government and how, for this past decade and a half, the Liberal administration failed our students across Ontario.

But I'll tell you this, Speaker: We're going to get it right. We're investing in an education system across this province that's going to work for everyone. We're going to be addressing the success factors that students need in order to feel confident and resilient when it comes to being out in the world of work.

Speaker, I can tell you this: Again, what we're doing is, we're listening to our parents and we're listening to the teachers. We're listening to the 72,000 people who participated in our consultation, because constructive feedback has just been invaluable.

Again, I want to talk about Jenna, who sincerely sent me examples and clips and research that showed, not only do parents and occupational—

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

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Ma question est pour la ministre des Affaires francophones.

Demain, on célèbre la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Ma question est très simple : est-ce que la francophonie en Ontario est une priorité pour elle, oui ou non?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Bien sûr, la francophonie ontarienne est une grande priorité pour moi et pour notre gouvernement.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Je remercie la ministre pour sa réponse. Mais d'après les évidences, mis à part des petits slogans ici et là, ce gouvernement ne s'occupe que de leurs amis, et définitivement pas de leurs dissidents.

Les coupures d'un gouvernement ne doivent pas se faire sur le dos des francophones ou encore des enfants avec des besoins spéciaux, dans les soins de santé ou en éducation. Ce gouvernement est tellement mal pris qu'ils ont désespérément eu besoin de l'approbation d'un ancien premier ministre conservateur, à une émission québécoise, pour justifier les actions de la ministre des Affaires francophones.

Alors, ma question est vraiment simple pour la ministre : quels sont les gestes concrets—et je dis, les gestes concrets—que vous allez prendre pour augmenter le support à la francophonie de l'Ontario?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Bien sûr, la francophonie ontarienne occupe une place très importante. Notre gouvernement oeuvre tous les jours pour supporter et appuyer la francophonie ontarienne de façon durable, de façon différente que le gouvernement libéral précédent, qui avait 15 budgets pour supporter la francophonie ontarienne de façon durable—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Fifteen budgets.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Quinze budgets sans appui durable.

Nous oeuvrons tous les jours pour s'assurer que l'Ontario soit ouvert aux affaires, pour appuyer nos entrepreneurs francophones et franco-ontariens. Nous travaillons sur les refontes de la santé pour nous assurer que les besoins des Franco-Ontariens continuent de s'améliorer, que l'accès aux services de santé s'améliore.

En éducation, je travaille de très près avec ma collègue. En tant que procureure générale, on continue à améliorer l'accès à la justice en français pour les Franco-Ontariens. De façon différente que les libéraux, nous faisons ceci de façon durable.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to being more efficient while improving service delivery. That means reviewing old systems to find what is and what is not working. We are delivering on this commitment through the regional government review currently under way. It is putting the people of Ontario first and making sure that they are getting the services they need in the most effective way.

1130

Last week, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing had some great news to announce regarding the review. Mr. Speaker, can the minister update the House on the status of that review?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for Oakville North–Burlington, not just for that excellent question, but also for her tremendous advocacy in her riding.

Speaker, I want to be clear. The goal of our government's regional government review is to make sure that regional governments are working harder, smarter and more efficiently. The review is focused on those eight regional governments and also the county of Simcoe and their lower-tier municipalities.

Last week, as the member notes, I was pleased to announce the launch of the online consultation for our government's regional government review. The participation of the people who live, who work and who spend time in those municipalities covered by the review is going to be vital for the recommendations that my two special advisers will provide me this summer. I encourage everyone who lives and works in those regional areas to share their thoughts at ontario.ca/regionalgovernment.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

The constituents in my community of Oakville North–Burlington are excited to have their voices heard by this government. After 15 years of neglect and lack of consultation by the previous Liberal government, it is a refreshing change to be able to provide input and know it is valued. It is an honour to be part of a government that is looking out for the people of Ontario and that is committed to restoring trust and accountability in our governments.

Can the minister please explain to the House how those who live, work and spend time in the municipalities covered in the review can participate?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to again thank the member for that very important question. She is absolutely right. The previous Liberal government had a history of not consulting with Ontarians but, instead, imposing their changes on municipalities and the people of this province. Speaker, our government is different. We are consulting and, more importantly, we are listening.

Residents of the municipalities captured in the review are encouraged to go online at ontario.ca/regionalgovernment and share their thoughts about our regional government review. The deadline to provide comment is April 23.

In addition to the public online consultation, the special advisers will continue to meet with key municipal stakeholders and members of the public in each region and also

in Simcoe county. Details of this phase of Ontario's regional government review will continue, and it will be available in the weeks and months ahead.

Thank you again for the wonderful question.

TRAINING SCHOOLS

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Attorney General. For decades, the provincial government used the Ontario training schools as a place to send troubled youth. At these facilities, youth were subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse on a daily basis. The survivors of this barbaric system have asked the government for an apology or support or other remedies. This government has turned them down, and the minister is actively avoiding them.

Will the Attorney General do the right thing and apologize for the abuse survivors experienced at training schools?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member opposite for the question. This is a sad chapter in Ontario's history. I wish that I could say more on the topic, but Ontario was served late in 2017 with a statement of claim. It was certified as a class proceeding and, as such, I cannot speak to the case as it is a matter of active litigation. I'm sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, as many as 20,000 children were sent to training schools and were subjected to systemic, daily abuse. These children were the responsibility of the crown, and they were failed by their government.

For decades, the survivors have lived with the trauma. What they want is an acknowledgment of the horrific experiences that they endured, but instead they're getting silence.

Will the Attorney General stop ignoring the training school survivors and, instead, acknowledge that their trauma is real?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, I just previously acknowledged to the member opposite and to this House how difficult this chapter was for so many people in our history—and for those experiences—but as I've said, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this. That is not meant to negate the pain and suffering that so many people in this province have felt and experienced, but unfortunately, I cannot comment any further.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Roman Baber: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Our government for the people made a promise during the election to get the people of Ontario moving, and we're doing just that. We value input from our partners and the people of Ontario so that we can provide the best possible transit services.

Recently there have been a lot of questions and attention surrounding the GO buses that were taken off the loop at York University. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Transportation for his leadership on the issue and for always putting the interests of students

first. I also want to thank Metrolinx for their ongoing conversation with York University in trying to find a solution that works for students. Can the Minister of Transportation kindly update the Legislature on the conversations between York University and Metrolinx?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the member from York-Simcoe—or York Centre; excuse me—for that question. He's been a strong addition to our team here at Queen's Park, and we look forward to working together for years to come.

The issue at York University regarding the GO buses is very unfortunate, but I want to be very clear with the Legislature here that myself; my parliamentary assistant, Kinga Surma; the Ministry of Transportation; and Metrolinx have worked very hard to keep the buses on the campuses.

However, York University requested that GO buses be removed off the bus loop. Metrolinx intervened and had them stay until the end of January. However, at that time, York University removed the buses and closed the loop that they went to. It's only recently, when their students and faculty complained, that York University changed its tune and wanted the buses back. However, Mr. Speaker, they've closed down the loop. There isn't safety for the students and faculty to get off. That's what we're focusing on: safety for the students and faculty. We're going to continue to work with—

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

Mr. Roman Baber: Speaker, through you back to the minister: Thank you, Minister, for that response. As a York University alumni, this is an important issue to myself, my colleagues and, more importantly, the students at York University.

I know that the Minister of Transportation and Metrolinx have been working hard to find a solution that works for everyone. It's truly unfortunate that the university made a request to remove the buses only to retract the request later on. Minister, it is also regretful the university is not interested in working out solutions for students. I know there has been much correspondence between Metrolinx and the university, but it is difficult to find a solution when York University cannot offer routes for buses that are a safe alternative to the York Lanes bus route.

Can the Minister of Transportation tell us more about what Metrolinx is doing to ensure student interest is at the forefront of these discussions?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks again to—since I mispronounced it last time—the York Centre member for that question. I just want to set the record straight here on the GO buses, because it's apparent some members of the opposition don't have the clear story of what went on with regard to Metrolinx and York University.

Metrolinx sent letters to York University with reasonable solutions outlined in the document. However, York University was not interested in working on any of the solutions put forward by Metrolinx for the students.

Mr. Speaker, not only has Metrolinx offered reasonable solutions to meet all the needs of all parties involved, but

they have also offered to reduce fares for those travelling from the new location and transferring to the TTC.

Mr. Speaker, the MTO, Metrolinx and myself and my parliamentary assistant, Kinga Surma, are willing to continue to find solutions that work for students and faculty. It's my hope that York University will join us in keeping students' interests safe and keeping the faculty safe—

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

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Premier. Last year, members of the Black Ontario Public Service Employees Network spoke out against anti-Black racism in the Ontario government. They shared their experiences with the former Liberal minister responsible for the Anti-Racism Directorate, and they demanded a moratorium on the suspension of racialized employees until these issues were addressed. Within a week, 52 cases of racialized employees who were suspended or off work were identified.

In July 2018, just over a month after the new government came into power, the moratorium was quietly lifted. The government claimed the investigation was complete. Can the Premier please tell the people of Ontario what they uncovered in their investigation that allowed them to believe that they had solved the problem of anti-Black racism within the OPS?

1140

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the question. My ministry and my deputy minister have been working very aggressively on the Anti-Racism Directorate. There are many issues that we are reviewing and studying. There are a lot of inputs, frankly, that we need to review to make sure that we get this right. This is not a fast pathway to a quick solution. We want to study it, get it right, do it carefully. We're doing that now.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Back to the Premier: Jean-Marie Dixon and Hentrose Nelson are both Black women who were employed by the Ontario Public Service. They're suing the provincial government and allege that their experiences of ongoing anti-Black racism throughout their public service careers have resulted in PTSD. The OPS has admitted that they failed to address the concerns of racialized employees and specified that Black and Indigenous employees were part of that group. So why did this government quietly lift the moratorium on the suspension of racialized employees, and what is this government's public plan to address anti-Black racism?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: To the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I want to thank the member for the question on this very important issue. Discrimination and harassment clearly have no place—may I repeat, no place—in any workplace, and I know that the Ontario Public Service is committed to achieving and maintaining an inclusive and respectful workplace. The Ontario Public

Service is always striving to foster a more diverse, inclusive, accessible, equitable and respectful workplace. We've made these values a cornerstone of our ongoing efforts to transform and modernize government.

As this matter is before the courts, the appropriate venue to respond to the specific allegations will be through the legal process. As a result, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the specific allegations cited by the member opposite.

MUSIC INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Speaker, did you know that the minister attended the 2019 Juno awards this past weekend in London? I was very pleased to learn that he did attend those very special awards, highlighting music in our province and in our country.

Speaker, as you know, the Junos recognize the best in Canadian music, and I was pleased to see that another Ontario city was able to host the awards show this year. Events like the Junos stimulate our local economies and bring people in from across Canada to see our world-class cities.

Can the minister please update the House on his visit to London—and on your experience, Minister, at the Juno awards this past weekend?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington for that question. I also want to congratulate him publicly for the two Canadian gospel awards his daughter received this year. Congratulations.

Mr. Speaker, it was truly an honour to attend the Juno awards and the gala on behalf of the government of Ontario in beautiful London, Ontario, this weekend. I want to commend the city of London, its mayor, Ed Holder, and its residents for making this a great weekend—a great week, but a great weekend as well—that I was able to participate in. It was truly an amazing event at the Forest City's first ever Juno awards. The city was bustling. It was an incredible opportunity to meet incredible people who are contributing to Ontario through the music industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm humbled by your comments, Minister. My daughter Brooke works very, very hard. I'd like to say that she gets her music talents from her mother, but she doesn't. But don't worry; I won't break out into song. I promise that.

Again, Speaker, I think I can speak for all of the members in this Legislature when I say that we're proud of the homegrown talent that was on display at this past weekend's Junos. Whether it was Pickering's Shawn Mendes, who took home five awards, or Napanee's own Avril Lavigne for winning the Juno Fan Choice award, this year's edition of the Junos showed that Ontario artists are among Canada's best.

Can the minister explain to the House the steps that our government for the people is taking to support music in the province—

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you again for that supplemental question. I'm pleased that our government for the people was able to provide support for this year's Junos through Ontario Creates, which is an agency that supports the province's cultural media cluster. This includes book publishing, film and television, interactive digital media, magazine publishing and, of course, the music industry.

Our government for the people has also invested in other important initiatives that will strengthen Ontario's music industry. We've invested in the revitalization of the iconic Massey Hall and in supporting the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, which, by the way, also won a Juno award this year for recording Vaughan Williams: Orchestral Works. The sector contributes \$25 billion and supports 270,000 jobs—

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Minister of Health. The people of Niagara Falls have been promised a new hospital. They have been told that this hospital is coming. We've had not one but two unveilings of billboards. We were told that the mental health unit and the labour and delivery unit were taken out of a Niagara Falls hospital because it would be replaced by a new state-of-the-art hospital. If you can imagine, you can go to Niagara Falls and make babies; we just can't deliver them. And yet, years later, residents are driving across the region for services they need.

There is no reason why we can't put a shovel in the ground on this hospital today. The government is in the process of dismantling the LHIN, outsourcing those services. How can they also now be planning the necessary services in the new hospital? Can the minister confirm that we will not be losing any services? When will the first shovel break ground and when will the residents finally see their hospital go up?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. As the member, I'm sure, well knows, there are many, many capital projects that are waiting to be advanced in the province. There is a mechanism and a specific process for dealing with that. Your hospital, as with many others, is going through the process. When it gets to the point where the construction can start, it will, but we have to go through the necessary steps.

I know to many people it seems like it takes longer than they would like it to, but the due diligence has to be done, and that's what's happening with every capital project in the province of Ontario, because we know, as you know, that hospitals cost a lot of money and we need to make sure that there is the need, that there is the ability for the local fundraising to happen, and the entire project has to be ready in many respects in order to proceed. So it is progressing, but I'm sorry it's not going as quickly as you would like.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has told me he's got a point of order.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes. I always like it when one of our caucus members tries to fly under the radar. I want to wish the member from Brampton Centre a very happy birthday.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain maybe has a point of order?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome one of my guests who is here with us today. Jaime Santana is a BCBA and he is a resident of Etobicoke North. He's with us today in the gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport has a point of order.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to give a quick shout-out to page Katherine Trimboli, who joins us from Vaughan-Woodbridge, and her mom, who is here today, Christine Fiorini. Welcome to the House.

NOTICE 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 racism in the OPS. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1500.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services concerning the Ontario Autism Program. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'd like to welcome Ahmad Gaied from the Ontario Federation of Labour to the House. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I too would like to welcome the executive vice-president of the OFL, Ahmad Gaied, to the Ontario Legislature. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MINING EXPLORATION

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: The members of the Moose Cree First Nation are concerned about a type of backroom deal

this government does. On January 30, the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines awarded NioBay Metals Inc. an exploration permit for drilling and eventually developing a niobium mine. The exploration is to take place on the shore of the South Bluff Creek watershed, by the North French River in the James Bay area.

The area in question plays a critical role in the lives of the Moose Cree for spiritual, cultural and environmental reasons. And time and again they have made it very clear that they oppose this drilling project.

Mr. Speaker, Moose Cree's opposition to this mining exploration development in the area is not new. In 2003, a different company tried to drill in these sensitive wetlands, and the community said no. Now the Conservatives are bluntly approving an exploration permit with no serious consultation with Moose Cree chief or council. Their right to oppose the drilling must be respected. We are talking about an extremely sensitive ecosystem with one of the very few untouched watersheds in Ontario. People drink directly from the water source.

Let me make one thing very clear: The role of the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines is not to issue exploration permits as he pleases; his role is to consult, mediate and fact-check projects, especially those that are as sensitive as the South Bluff Creek watershed.

FUR BALL GALA

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to talk about an event that we had in Peterborough just a couple of weeks ago. It was held by the humane society of Peterborough. It's called the Fur Ball Gala. The humane society has started a project to construct a new building for it on seven acres. We're really excited about this because it will give enough land that there will be an area for the pets—the dogs, the cats—to explore outside. We raised \$50,000 at the Fur Ball Gala.

One key thing I'd like to talk to you about, though, from that event: We had a specific fundraiser referred to as "Snoopy's balls." They are Christmas ornaments that have been decorated, for cats and dogs. Sue Dunkley, the organizer of the event—it's named after her dog Snoopy. Eighty-two per cent of women who have a pet and are in a domestic violence situation refuse to leave for fear of what will happen to their pet. Snoopy's balls—that fundraiser—provides a safe night for the pet of a woman trying to escape domestic violence.

I think it's a fabulous fundraiser. I'd like to see more people do those types of things because it does so much for our community.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I stand today in solidarity with teachers, education workers, students and parents who know that our children deserve a quality education in our provincial schools.

I was a teacher for over 10 years and was proud to do some of the most rewarding, important work that I will ever do: helping our children reach their full potential.

Our educators and education workers love what they do and should be appreciated and supported. Instead, this Premier and his minister have come out of the gate swinging an axe at our public education system, undermining our boards and painting our teachers as incapable. Well, they aren't.

Is this government incapable of recognizing the need to invest in our schools and students? We have a \$16-billion repair backlog. This government is ripping funding away from families of children with autism, who will be funnelled from needs-based therapy into our schools without transitions and without support. This Premier thinks the way to improve is to cut.

Here are some constituents' thoughts for the Premier:

Tracy says, "Austerity measures are never an excuse for harming our most vulnerable population: our children. Your proposed changes are inequitable and dangerous."

Cristina says, "With class sizes increasing, online courses being mandatory and the threat of removing university educated teachers from K to 3 that only means one thing for me. My job, which I love, is at risk."

Melanie says, "This isn't what's best for our children. I support low class sizes for all Ontario students and implore you to consult before making such sweeping changes."

Stephen invites: "I would love if some politicians came into my class to get a first-hand account of education."

Tammy says, "We can't afford to 'find efficiencies' at the expense of students by taking teachers and support staff out of classrooms and cutting funding for programs that help kids thrive. Our schools are the heart of our communities and of our democracy and must be fully funded now."

This Premier must stop the cuts to education and start caring about our future.

ONTARIO 55+ WINTER GAMES

Mr. Norman Miller: I rise today to recognize the volunteers who made the Ontario 55+ Winter Games happen earlier this month in Huntsville, Muskoka.

Some 898 Ontarians between ages 55 and 86 came together in friendly competition to encourage healthy, active lifestyles. They took part in alpine and cross-country skiing, skating, badminton, volleyball, table tennis, hockey, curling, bowling and duplicate bridge.

Events like this don't come together without a lot of hard work. I want to thank the organizing committee chair Fran Coleman and general manager Sheri Renaud for all of their work.

I also want to thank volunteer co-chairs Wendy McConnell and RuthAnn Cook, events chair Kelly Haywood, sport technical co-chairs John Cowan and Jonathan Percival, accommodation co-chairs Steve Carr and Jennifer Brockett, and medical co-chairs Emma Love and Angie Paulsen.

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The work of these volunteers was supported by local businesses, including gold sponsor Drive Muskoka dealerships, silver sponsors YourTV and Hunters Bay

Radio, bronze sponsors Downtown Huntsville BIA, Lake of Bays brewery and Bullock's Your Independent Grocer, and so many more.

Finally, I want to recognize Huntsville mayor Scott Aitchison and the town council for their vision in applying to host the games for the second time. While Huntsville was host, events took place in Burk's Falls, Bracebridge and Gravenhurst, as well as in Huntsville.

The games were a great success both for the athletes and the community. The event brought added business to local hotels and resorts, restaurants and stores at a traditionally quiet time of year.

Congratulations.

MEALS ON WHEELS

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to rise and talk about Meals on Wheels of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie.

Last Wednesday, I had the incredible opportunity of riding along with them as they did their deliveries—deliveries of food to the elderly, to the disabled, to veterans, to anyone who needs meals with dietary restrictions.

They deliver hot, nutritious meals five days a week to those in need. They deliver cold foods, run a lunch program and arrange for dining in apartment buildings.

Over the course of a year, they deliver—listen to this—42,000 meals. But they do more than that. When they show up at the door of a senior who can't go outside, they're a friendly face. They check on them. They build lasting relationships. And they do this all as volunteers.

It's services like this that show how caring communities work. I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart to every single volunteer who does this for our community.

I want to thank Roger Schmidt for showing me firsthand what it looks like to build a compassionate society.

Lastly, I want to say—this is the most important part, and I want my colleagues to listen—they're only able to do this work because of the funding provided by the Ministry of Health. That funding has been frozen for eight years. I can think of fewer things that provide a better service for our community with provincial tax dollars than supporting the volunteer work of Meals on Wheels.

Today, I'm asking this government to unfreeze and increase this funding. Do it for the elderly, the disabled and the veterans who depend on the friendship and services offered by some of our communities' most dedicated members.

If you want to keep people in their homes, support Meals on Wheels.

NOWRUZ

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thursday, March 21, marks the beginning of spring and a new day for the Iranian and Persian community. I would like to take this opportunity to wish them Nowruz Pirooz, a prosperous new year.

After spending almost the entire month of February attending events celebrating the Chinese New Year, I can

now look forward to sharing the celebration of the new year and welcome spring with the Iranian and Persian community.

I've already had the privilege of attending three events last week to celebrate Nowruz, and I was particularly touched by the celebration organized by the Iranian-Canadian Teens Club. I want to thank the dedicated parents and leaders for gathering teens and young children to celebrate, perform and learn about their customs and culture—I learned from that, too.

The Nowruz celebration includes the custom of setting the Haft Sinn table.

I purchased some Senjed, which is dried fruits representing love and affection. I also bought a bowl with goldfish, which symbolizes new life.

For all Canadians, Nowruz provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on the tremendous contributions that people of Iranian and Persian heritage have made to this country's rich and diverse heritage.

Nowruz Pirooz.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais vous souhaiter une bonne Semaine de la Francophonie, monsieur le Président.

Je commence en remerciant l'Assemblée législative pour son appui envers ma motion pour modifier les pratiques de notre législature lors de la rédaction de textes de loi en français. En ce moment, le masculin est traité comme neutre par nos rédacteurs législatifs ou, comme on nous l'a dit pendant bien des années, le masculin l'emporte sur le féminin. Ma motion vise à faire progresser l'équité entre les sexes pour modifier cette pratique en adoptant un langage inclusif des femmes connu sous « langage épïcène ». J'aimerais également remercier les greffiers et les greffières pour leur engagement envers ce changement. J'ai bien hâte de voir le premier texte de loi qui parle de « la ministre » et de « la députée ».

J'aimerais aussi partager ce qui se passe dans ma région durant la Semaine de la Francophonie. J'invite tout le monde à Sudbury en fin de semaine, au Collège Boréal, pour la Nuit sur l'étang. Nous aurons droit à un hommage à M. Robert Paquette, chanteur, compositeur, membre fondateur de la Nuit sur l'étang, du Festival Boréal et de la Coopérative des artistes du Nouvel-Ontario, et l'auteur de « Bleu et blanc », une de mes chansons favorites. Le talentueux Daniel Bédard est le directeur musical et, comme maître de cérémonie, ça sera Stef Paquette. Ça promet d'être tout un party. J'invite tout le monde à Sudbury.

Bonne Semaine de la Francophonie.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Last week, my fellow Mississauga members and I had the honour of hosting the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport at the Living Arts Centre. Together we announced more than \$2.6 million in grants to organizations across Mississauga through OTF. This funding will go a long way to support a number of

initiatives that promote art and culture, as well as strengthen our local NGOs. We heard from a number of organizations about how crucial these funds are in sustaining and improving their services aimed at some of our most vulnerable.

One of the grant recipients is Interim Place, a shelter and 24-hour crisis centre for women and children fleeing domestic, often sexual, violence. The funds Interim Place is receiving will be invested in developing their peer support program. This initiative is a peer-led workshop which will explore harm reduction from the unique lens of women who use substances.

Speaker, the work of Interim Place is instrumental to protecting women from abuse and to building inclusive, equitable and diverse community spaces in Mississauga. Their efforts resonate with our government as we move forward in addressing sexual violence in Ontario. That is why I was so honoured when the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, responsible for women's issues, called on me to co-chair a provincial task force with her PA, the member for Cambridge, on combatting human trafficking. We are both looking forward to meeting with survivors across this province and listening to their lived experiences. We will be seeking insights from front-line workers, such as those working at Interim Place, Hope 24/7 or Voicefound, and other experts in the field.

Speaker, our government is committed to supporting our art and cultural communities, as well as the most vulnerable members of our society.

GREY CUP

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm thrilled to rise today to recognize the city of Hamilton for being chosen to host the 109th Grey Cup championship in 2021. The Grey Cup is a national institution and one of the largest sporting events in Canadian television. It will be the first time the iconic Canadian Football League championship game will be played at the new Tim Hortons Field. The last time Hamilton hosted the Grey Cup was the legendary Snow Bowl in 1996, when the game was played in a blizzard.

Hamilton has a long and storied history of involvement in the Grey Cup. During the early years in the 1950s and 1960s, the Hamilton Tiger-Cats were a Steel Town dynasty. They went to the Grey Cup 10 times. They were first in the east 13 times. Joe Montford, Ben Zambiasi, Danny McManus and Rocky DiPietro are just a few of the Ti-Cats inducted into the Canadian Football Hall of Fame. And then there are CFL legends Bernie Faloney and Angelo Mosca, whose Ti-Cat numbers have been retired. Both Faloney and Mosca played in multiple Grey Cup championship games.

The Grey Cup will be a wonderful opportunity to showcase what Hamilton has to offer, including its world-class restaurants and entertainment venues. Hamilton is beginning to plan the week-long festivities, which will feature gala concerts, parties and fan festivals. Mr. Speaker, the economic impact is expected to be huge for both Hamilton and the province of Ontario.

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

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 19, 2019, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON ISLAMOPHOBIA ACT, 2019 LOI DE 2019 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE COMMÉMORATION ET D'ACTION CONTRE L'ISLAMOPHOBIE

Ms. Berns-McGown moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to proclaim a Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia / Projet de loi 83, Loi proclamant la Journée de commémoration et d'action contre l'islamophobie.

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 Beaches–East York like to explain her bill?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you, Speaker. The bill proclaims January 29 in each year, the anniversary of the terrorist attack on the Islamic Centre of Quebec, as a day of remembrance and action on Islamophobia. In the wake of the attack, the Ontario Human Rights Commission called on governments, communities and each one of us to ask again: What can we do, what must we do, to eliminate Islamophobia?

This bill is a significant step in that direction, and I hope and trust that all members will support it.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SOCIAL WORKERS TRAVAILLEURS SOCIAUX

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Today is World Social Work Day, as we celebrate more than 20,000 social workers in

our province. This year's theme is called Promoting the Importance of Human Relationships.

In Ontario, we often look out for people in need, and I think that's what makes us such a great community. This year's theme is especially important for us, because we recognize that the best social safety net is a compassionate society. We understand that the best social circumstances are when our social workers can encourage more people to participate in our economy and in our society, we know that the best social program is a job, and we know that social workers on our front lines within our ministry are at the heart of making sure that happens.

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services is the heart of the government for the people. When we say "for the people," let me be clear: That includes every single person in the province of Ontario, from those leading comfortable lives to our most vulnerable. That's why, in November, I announced our government for the people's plan to reform our social assistance program to restore dignity, encourage employment, and empower the province's most vulnerable to break free from the cycle of poverty.

However, government cannot and should not do it alone. We need neighbours to help neighbours, and we couldn't ask for any better neighbours than the social workers in this province. Ontario's social workers make a positive difference in the daily lives of countless people across our province. They help people from all walks of life.

Through our plan, we will lift more people out of challenging circumstances. We work together with the private and not-for-profit sectors to be part of developing solutions to the problems that we all face.

Prior to our announcement in November, social assistance in Ontario was ineffective. It was a disjointed patchwork of supports that trapped people into a broken system. Our plan is about a more effective, sustainable approach to helping people find and keep jobs and achieve better outcomes.

Moving individuals into jobs is a priority that will include reducing administration and paperwork, so people who are receiving Ontario Works, and the front-line staff focusing on those individuals, can best create a path to health, wellness and preparations to return to work.

Our social workers have told us that the system that we had before is far too focused on red tape, administration and government oversight. Speaker, I have never met a social worker who got into their profession so that they could create more paperwork. They got into their profession to help more people.

For example, there are currently over 240 income support rates and combinations, a web of over 800 rules. This makes navigating the system confusing and time-consuming for recipients and caseworkers. It simply isn't working for the people we need the system to work for. They say that the system takes a one-size-fits-all approach that ignores individual needs, and Ontario Works feels like it's more about policing the people of Ontario rather than truly empowering them.

Every person who comes through Ontario's social assistance system will be met with dignity and compassion, promoting human relationships and individual action plans that will lift people out of poverty. We will help more people stabilize, find a job and build better, more independent lives. Social workers are important partners in our social assistance program, and we will work with them and individuals to solve and cope with the problems that they feel and experience in their everyday lives.

Social workers give a listening ear. They are patient, they are empathetic and they are resilient, and they take the time to focus on the person in front of them. This government's social assistance plan understands that. It will free up caseworkers' time to focus on the client, and caseworkers will focus on the creation of individual action plans, not proof of eligibility. It will embrace a true wrap-around model that is customized to the needs of the individual, with the social worker at the heart of this for the individual training, jobs placement, mental health and addictions services, or life skills supports. It will be tailored to the individual.

Our social workers also play an integral role in treating mental illness and help people experiencing trauma, relationship challenges, addiction, self-esteem issues, stress, and parenting difficulties. As we all know in this assembly, mental health does not discriminate. By the time Canadians reach 40 years of age, one in two will have had a mental health issue. Social workers create a caring, understanding and empowering environment for individuals. They demonstrate kindness and empathy, and they are the driving force behind breaking down the myths and stigma associated with mental health issues.

Statistics Canada recently found that one in five Ontarians aged 14 and older reported they were quite to extremely stressed on most days. Many Ontarians are providing care to a chronically ill, disabled or aging family member, and they're feeling the pressures of being a caregiver.

When the government and social workers work hand in hand, we can make a difference for individuals with developmental disabilities, children with autism, children in care, and the individuals, parents and caregivers looking after them. Social workers identify the source of stress or difficulty, help people to develop coping skills and find effective solutions to issues. Whether you work in a hospital, a mental health clinic or one of the many other community agencies funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, with responsibilities for women's issues, poverty reduction, immigration, refugee resettlement and a number of other issues, I've been inspired by their dedication.

I'm inspired by the social workers who help women who are escaping domestic violence and who are escaping sex trafficking in the province of Ontario—which is, by the way, Ontario's dirty little secret. Social workers were the ones to first identify a young woman in the city of Ottawa who had been trafficked, whose family had abandoned her and thought that she had been nothing more than a drug addict. But when a friend of hers from high

school found her years later, saw her on the street and said she was textbook sex-trafficked, that is the value of a social worker in the province of Ontario. Speaker, I have listened to and learned from many social workers and those on the front lines who are the first to help women and girls fleeing violence.

I was very happy to be in Brockville with my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs a few months ago to announce that our government for the people is investing \$1.5 million in funding for rural front-line agencies. For far too long, women escaping domestic abuse and women escaping sex trafficking in rural and remote Ontario have not been given the supports that they need, and it is this government that will deliver on that hope. It is this government that has delivered on that message, and it is this government that has delivered on that investment. And that investment will increase collaboration, strengthen service delivery and improve culturally relevant supports for Indigenous people. It will reduce geographic and transportation barriers.

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We'll also fund services and supports such as emergency shelters, counselling, 24-hour crisis lines, safety planning, transitional housing and referral services, much of which is staffed by professionals—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt, Minister. I'd like to remind all those in the House that if you were warned in the morning, that warning carries over to the afternoon, and if a certain member keeps it up, she'll be gone. Thank you.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Speaker. This is far too important an issue for us to be discussing to have those types of interjections from the member opposite, but she has been doing this all day. It is quite sad.

But let me continue to speak about the increased funding to these front-line people, because, in turn, they ensure that those who are affected by violence and exploitation receive the support they need to heal.

Social workers are also on the front lines of our efforts to help those in sex trafficking, as I mentioned. When women escape sex trafficking, or when their trafficker is finished with them, they're often destitute, with no credit. They are alone, broken, and they are dealing with intense psychological issues. At this critical and desperate time, social workers listen to and support survivors of human trafficking, helping them to start putting their pieces back together, hopefully to be able to put their life back on track.

Social workers truly are making a difference and they have our government's full support. They help Ontarians with everything from solving everyday issues to managing complex needs, and turn issues into answers.

So, to all the social workers in the province of Ontario today, all 20,000 of them, on behalf of Premier Ford and the government for the people, thank you for supporting the people in need in this province, especially vulnerable Ontarians, in difficult times. As the minister responsible for this area, I'm grateful for the work that they do in their

communities, the reach that they have across this province, and the ability for them to make us a stronger Ontario. They truly are making a difference.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Responses?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Today it is my privilege to say a few words in honour of World Social Work Day. I know that there are a number of social workers watching us here in the Legislature today, so to all of you, thank you for that you do to support and strengthen our communities.

World Social Work Day is an annual campaign led by the International Federation of Social Workers, or IFSW. This year's social work day theme is, "Promoting the Importance of Human Relationships." To begin my remarks, I want to read a quotation from IFSW secretary-general Dr. Rory Truell:

"There was a famous moment in recent history when politician Margaret Thatcher ushered in the current global period of conservatism and the dismantling of state services when announcing: 'There's no such thing as society, there are individual men and women'. Thatcher's view continues to have devastating effects as it remains dominant over many aspects of world and national politics. This 2019 World Social Work Day theme directly addresses this false and brutally conservative dogma."

I couldn't agree more with Dr. Truell. Dismantling social services, in my mind, is exactly the opposite of what governments are fundamentally elected to do. Government is supposed to take care of people. They're supposed to support people who cannot support themselves and to help people in crisis. That means providing supports for the most vulnerable: children, seniors, the LGBTQ+ community, those experiencing domestic violence, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, those who are working and living in poverty, people with mental health concerns or addictions, and more.

These are the people that social workers support every single day. But I said it last year during Social Work Week and I'll say it again this year: Social workers need support too. We can't expect social workers to provide excellent care to vulnerable people if we are cutting services at the same time.

When our families, friends and neighbours are in crisis and they go to a social worker for help, where is that social worker going to refer them, now that the 33% increase to rape crisis centres has been scrapped? How are we going to be able to deal with the escalating opioid crisis if we put a hard cap on overdose prevention sites? How will we make sure that our young people get the mental health support they need, when this PC government has already cut \$330 million in mental health funding, and youth are waiting 18 months for services?

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The member from Eglinton-Lawrence shouldn't be heckling me while I'm talking about something so serious.

How can people with disabilities thrive when they have virtually no funding for services and supports, and their ODSP payments keep them in poverty?

The problem is that this Conservative government doesn't understand or simply doesn't care how interconnected our society is. They don't seem to understand or care about the value of preventative care, that if we are able to support members of our community from the outset, with no wait-lists and complete care, those result in huge cost savings to taxpayers down the road. Those are the people that are going to be able to get healthier sooner. They're not going to end up in a dire crisis situation which requires more and more support. This government doesn't understand or seem to care that if we don't invest in these social services and in front-line social workers, that hurts everyone—absolutely everyone.

Before I close, I want to go back to what Dr. Truell said about the theme of this World Social Work Day. It's not too late for this Conservative government to step away from dogma. They can still reverse the drastic cuts they have made to social services for vulnerable people. They can support social workers and, by extension, the people they serve, by investing more in Ontario's social services.

On behalf of the entire NDP official opposition caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, I again want to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to social workers across Ontario today for the vital work that they do. We will continue the fight for better social services alongside you. We will stand shoulder to shoulder with you, with the goal to give those in need a hand up.

Speaker, what social workers in this province want and what they need is a government that is investing in the people of this province, that is investing in the most vulnerable—not what this Conservative government is doing, which is actually attacking them.

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

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It's really a pleasure, actually, to respond and speak about social work and social workers.

La contribution, monsieur le Président, des travailleurs sociaux et travailleuses sociales au sein de l'Ontario est immense. Je dois vous dire que je suis un petit peu biaisée parce que ma formation initiale était en travail social. J'étais travailleuse sociale pendant quelques années au tout début de ma carrière à l'aide à l'enfance.

I was a social worker at the very early-on stage of my career at the Children's Aid Society; at CHEO, our children's hospital of Ottawa; and the Ottawa Hospital. During my time in those various sectors, I must say that I saw first-hand the professionalism, the compassion, the energy and the support that social workers provide to organizations.

Par la suite, monsieur le Président, je me suis redirigée dans le secteur des aînés en résidence, et je dois vous dire que ma formation m'a donné les outils nécessaires pour aider les aînés—et aussi en gérance.

In many sectors, Mr. Speaker, social workers are actually part of the fabric of employment. One thing is that we do not realize their contributions, so this is a good day. But let's not forget that there was a week of social work,

from March 4 to March 10, that just passed, where we needed to recognize the work that they do.

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Let's talk about what they do, in which sectors. If you go to a shelter for women victims of violence, you will find social workers. If you go in our community organizations, agencies and resource centres, you will find social workers.

They also help, Mr. Speaker, our most vulnerable individuals, those who are more often marginalized: people dealing with mental health, addictions and drugs. I have to say, as a former Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, I actually saw the great work done by social workers within our police services, inside our correctional institutions and in communities through our Ontario probation and parole offices.

I was just reminded by the interim leader, John Fraser, MPP for Ottawa South, that his father was actually a social worker also. I quote, Mr. Speaker—because I think it's important, and that was something he felt he had to say as a social worker. He said, "People can and will change, and the effort to help them is important and it's worthwhile." This is what John was having a conversation with me about: his father dealing with the justice system. We also find social workers within our justice system, helping people dealing with issues that they may be facing.

I also know the importance for a social worker to support families, children, youth facing adversity in everyday life. And, I have to say, I know they also support seniors, Mr. Speaker.

Les travailleurs sociaux sont, à mon avis, indispensables au sein d'un Ontario qui veut investir dans ses gens.

I was listening to the minister, in her comments, reflecting on that importance, and I was reminded that, just recently during Social Work Week, unfortunately, social workers were laid off in this province because of the lack of funding inside some organizations and inside hospitals. I urge the government to look at social workers as an investment. They help. They can actually achieve great outcomes dealing with and supporting families.

Donc, je veux vous remercier pour tout le travail que vous faites, chers travailleurs sociaux, chères travailleuses sociales, au sein de l'Ontario et dans vos organisations. Je peux vous dire que nous sommes là pour vous appuyer. We are here to support you. Merci.

PETITIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: This is the second batch of these petitions that I will be tabling today. It's from the Alliance Against the Ontario Autism Program.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the PC government of Ontario recently announced plans to overhaul the Ontario Autism Program,

implementing a two-tiered age- and income-based funding model, and effectively removing funding for any significant duration of comprehensive applied behavioural analysis (ABA) from all children living with the autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and....

“Whereas ABA is not a therapy, but a science, upon which interventions including comprehensive treatment is founded and duration and intensity of treatment are the key components in predicting outcomes—not age; and

“Whereas accredited peer-reviewed empirical evidence in the treatment of children with ASD has repeatedly shown that for some children with ASD, comprehensive ABA therapy is best practice....; and

“Whereas wait-lists for services have increased in length as a result of the 66% increase in costs to administer direct service compared to direct funding, as reported by the Auditor General in 2013, and with the direct service model being eliminated with the Ontario Autism Program reforms, the PC government has a chance to build a needs-based system that will help every child reach their full potential; and

“Whereas it is unacceptable for the Premier of Ontario or his government to drastically reduce essential supports for some of the province’s most vulnerable children without consideration of their individualized needs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to immediately reassess the changes to the Ontario Autism Program and redesign the direct funding model to be administered with a needs-based approach in order to ensure that all children with ASD for whom continuous or comprehensive therapy has been prescribed by a qualified clinician are able to obtain these services in a timely manner regardless of their age or family income.”

I couldn’t agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to strong page Mathew to bring to the Clerk.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

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

“Whereas the government for the people was elected on the promise to put more money in people’s pockets; and

“Whereas the former Liberal-NDP stretch goals on auto insurance failed to deliver results; and

“Whereas auto insurance rates continue to rise disproportionately in different geographic areas throughout the province; and

“Whereas auto insurance rates are often set based on arbitrary geographic guidelines;

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

“Support the Ending Discrimination in Automobile Insurance Act, 2018, introduced by the MPP from Milton to combat rate discrimination in our auto insurance system.”

Of course, I’m happy to affix my signature and give it to page Gajan.

CHILD ADVOCATE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I’d like to thank my constituents in Parkdale–High Park who have signed this petition. It’s titled, “Protect the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Doug Ford government to reverse its decision to close the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.”

On behalf of the children and youth of Parkdale–High Park, I will endorse this petition and add my signature to it.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Will Bouma: I’d like to read in this petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government created a special-purpose account (SPA) in 1997;

“Whereas the SPA”—or special-purpose account—“pools together all revenues from hunting and fishing licensing fees, fines and royalties;

“Whereas the funds in the SPA are legislated to be reinvested back into wildlife management to improve hunting and angling across the province;

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

“That we support the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry in completing a review of the spending of the SPA expenditures and revamping the account, ensuring revenue is directed towards conservation management.”

Mr. Speaker, I can wholeheartedly endorse this petition, and will be affixing my signature and giving it to page Greyson.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier ma bonne amie M^{me} Germaine Paquette d'avoir soumis ces pétitions. Ça commence « Respectez la communauté francophone. »

À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Considérant que l'énoncé économique d'automne du gouvernement a annoncé l'élimination du Commissariat aux services en français et l'annulation des plans pour l'Université de l'Ontario français; et

« Considérant que ces décisions constituent une trahison de la responsabilité de l'Ontario envers notre communauté francophone; »

Ils pétitionnent l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de « demander au gouvernement de maintenir le bureau du commissaire aux services en français, ainsi que son financement et ses pouvoirs, et de maintenir l'engagement de l'Ontario de financer l'Université de l'Ontario français. »

J'appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer et je demande à Virginia de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Norman Miller: I have a petition with regard to hunting and trapping, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I sign this and will give it to Katherine.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant supports staff recruitment and retention in licensed child

care, increases income security among registered early childhood educators and child care workers, and begins to recognize their contributions to Ontario communities;

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, sign it and give it to page Arthur to deliver to the table.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. Will Bouma: This is a petition entitled “Petition in Support of Constructing a Memorial to Honour Our Heroes.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I heartily endorse this petition and will be affixing my signature thereon and giving it to page Julia.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This petition is entitled “Fund Our Schools.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I will certainly be supporting this and affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Mathew.

EPILEPSY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have many petitions, sent by a couple of hundred folks, entitled “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario,” from Epilepsy Ontario.

“Whereas there are over 95,000 people living with epilepsy in Ontario, including 30% who do not have effective seizure control; and

“Whereas Ontario’s community epilepsy agencies provide education and support programs to people living with epilepsy and their families, including seizure management and how to address the many physical, psychological and social challenges that come with living with epilepsy; and

“Whereas epilepsy education and support programs provide a valuable contribution to Ontario’s health care system, but community epilepsy agencies receive no core government funding for these programs; and

“Whereas, by funding epilepsy education programs, the provincial government could reduce unnecessary emergency room usage, help alleviate Ontario’s hallway medicine crisis and save the health care system money;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for education and support programs through Ontario’s community epilepsy agencies in the 2019 provincial budget.”

I wholeheartedly support this, will affix my signature, and send it with page Erynn.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms. Doly Begum: I’d like to thank Miranda Taylor and the rest of the folks who signed this petition. This petition is to maintain the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for registered early childhood educators and child care workers in licensed child care.

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant supports staff recruitment and retention in licensed child

care, increases income security among registered early childhood educators and child care workers, and begins to recognize their contributions to Ontario communities;

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Katherine.

WEST LINCOLN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It’s a pleasure to be able to stand in the Legislature and bring a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, a petition that has now been signed over 22,000 times by constituents of mine, and reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas:

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

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

“Whereas:

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

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

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

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

Speaker, I have to say that it has been excellent to see the work that the Minister of Health has done on this file. I fully support this, will affix my signature to it and give to page Saniya to bring to the table.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Ms. Jessica Bell: “The TTC Belongs to Toronto.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the TTC has owned, operated and maintained Toronto’s public transit system since 1921; and

“Whereas the people of Toronto have paid for the TTC at the fare box and through their property taxes; and

“Whereas uploading the subway will mean higher fares, reduced service and less say for transit riders; and

“Whereas the TTC is accountable to the people of Toronto because elected Toronto city councillors sit on its board;

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

“Reject legislation that uploads any aspect of the TTC to the province of Ontario, and reject the privatization or contracting out of any part of the TTC.”

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The time for petitions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOMS ACT, 2019

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 6, 2019, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I am pleased to stand in the Legislature today and add my support to the passing of the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, which if passed at third reading will make some very important and long-overdue changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act, the Teaching Profession Act and the Education Act.

Let me start by saying how impressed I am with my colleague the member from Huron–Bruce and the outstanding work she is doing as Minister of Education. I also want to recognize her parliamentary assistant, the member for Niagara West, for his outstanding work and contributions to this file as well.

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The education portfolio is an incredibly important file for constituents in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, as well as all of Ontario. I think that the initiatives and changes that the minister is putting forward, both those in Bill 48 and those that were just announced last week, are really going to help us as a province to renew and protect our world-class education system for the students of today and in the years to come.

As the title of this act indicates, Bill 48 is all about ensuring that we have supportive classrooms right across our province. Bill 48 will do that by making overdue updates to the several acts that pertain to the regulation of the teaching profession in Ontario. Specifically, Bill 48 will require the discipline committees of the Ontario College of Teachers and College of Early Childhood

Educators to revoke an educator's certificate for committing any acts of sexual abuse of a student or child when the discipline committees of the colleges have found educators guilty of any such act. Bill 48 will also provide regulation-making authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to prescribe other acts of a sexual nature prohibited under the Criminal Code. This would result in the mandatory pulling of an educator's certificate.

These are changes that I think are long overdue, and I think they will serve to bolster the truth and trust that Ontario residents can place in both the professional educators in our province and in their regulating body, the Ontario College of Teachers.

Bill 48 is going to help this government to support new teachers to be better prepared to teach the fundamentals of math. It will do this by requiring new teachers to pass a content knowledge test in math in order to become certified to teach in Ontario's publicly funded schools.

Bill 48 is also going to allow for the government to respond to the governance review under way now by the Ontario College of Teachers, and Bill 48 will make the necessary changes to support students and their families when making requests to bring service animals into schools and classrooms across the province, further supporting students with special needs.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has demonstrated that this government is absolutely dedicated to strengthening our publicly funded education system for years to come. Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, will ensure that students and children are learning in a safe and supportive space. This is something that all members of this Legislature should be supporting.

Unfortunately, the previous government failed to act when they had the opportunity to strengthen legislation and make changes to prioritize the health, safety and well-being of children and students in Ontario. This government will take action through Bill 48 to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act to make it clear that there is absolutely zero tolerance for sexual abuse of Ontario's students. We, Mr. Speaker, will use every tool in the legislative toolbox to ensure that students and children are able to learn in an environment in which they feel safe.

Currently, the law in Ontario states that the mandatory revocation of a licence could only occur if a sexual abuse falls within a predetermined list of sexual activities. Acts such as groping or inappropriate sexual comments, among others, are not included on that list. If Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, is passed, it will amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act to ensure that educators who are found guilty of any act of sexual abuse by either a court of law or by their regulatory college's disciplinary committee will be subject to mandatory revocation of their certificates of registration.

This government is proposing these changes while recognizing the unique nature of professional educators and the significant position of trust and authority that they hold in and over the lives of young people. I also want to

reiterate an important point put forward by the Minister of Education herself about this legislation, specifically that “the proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act and the Teaching Professions Act would clarify that sexual abuse of a student or child does not include touching or behaviours that are a necessary part of an educator’s professional responsibilities, specifically those acts that are necessary for the purposes of diapering, toileting, washing or dressing”—an important point, Mr. Speaker. These are just some of the very important changes that we are making.

Our government is also demonstrating with Bill 48 how we are committed to improving the educational success of Ontario students. Bill 48 is going to help support teachers to be better prepared to teach the fundamentals of math. This is something that I know my constituents in Sarnia–Lambton are very eager to see.

The petrochemical and biochemistry industries in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton are going through a very strong period of growth and investment, thanks to many of the changes that our government has made to reduce regulatory burden and scrap job-killing taxes.

From engineering to the skilled trades, there is opportunity in Sarnia–Lambton right now for young people who want to work. But those opportunities require a strong foundation in math. Unfortunately, under the previous government and other governments before it, only half of Ontario grade 6 students are meeting provincial math standards, and more than half of grade 9 applied math students in our schools are failing to make the grade. That, Mr. Speaker, is simply unacceptable.

So, as was announced last week, we are getting back to basics on math. The Minister of Education made a number of announcements last week that will focus on strengthening math skills for students in Ontario.

But she also made an announcement, as part of Bill 48, that will bolster the confidence of all new teachers in delivering math lessons and those concepts to students. In turn, the confidence of students and their parents will also increase. That’s always a good thing.

If Bill 48 passes, new teaching candidates will be required to pass a math content knowledge test. Globally, this is not a new concept for prospective teaching candidates. In fact, our distant cousins in Australia and Great Britain already conduct literacy and numeracy testing on their new teachers.

The reality is, parents and students are concerned about their math scores. More and more, we are seeing tutoring businesses opening to provide extra support for students. In fact, there is a tutoring business specializing in math right next door to my constituency office in Sarnia–Lambton, and I can attest to the fact that it’s very busy, day and night. I’m all for private sector business creation, but not at the expense of our most important public services, like education and health care.

With this change that is proposed in Bill 48, we are making sure that math will become a central focus of education. I know this was mentioned before in the debate

over Bill 48, but it’s worth repeating: A recent study in our province shows that 70% of the jobs that will be opening to young people in the next four years are going to require strong math skills. That is certainly true in Sarnia–Lambton. Now is the time to start preparing our students with the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow.

On that point, Mr. Speaker, I just want to note how important the Minister of Education’s announcement was last week that we are now going to be doubling our efforts to highlight the skilled trades as a career opportunity for students in our elementary and high schools. We are going to encourage students to explore career paths they’ve never considered before, like the skilled trades, and we are going to work with our guidance counsellors in the schools to ensure that students are able to access all of these opportunities.

Speaker, I think it’s well known by a number of people that before I came to Queen’s Park over a dozen years ago, I had a 30-year career—I started when I was a child—in industry back in Sarnia–Lambton, and I enjoyed it very much. It was a great career, very rewarding, and I would recommend it to anyone. Young members of my family and nieces and nephews have also considered that, and I would certainly urge the public at large to think about a career in the skilled trades.

That’s why I was so glad when the minister included that aspect, because coming from my area, I know how important it is, and I think it would be important to Windsor and other ridings across the province—London as well, and many others.

I still meet regularly with members of the trades, construction and labour community in my riding—on a weekly basis. I can speak with confidence and experience when I say that young people can have a very exciting career in the trades and make themselves a wonderful life through this type of work. The work is challenging but rewarding. I know many folks from Sarnia–Lambton who have travelled around the world on projects. We are going to focus on showing young people that jobs in the skilled trades can be a real opportunity for them.

I know that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities are going to be working on this initiative as we go forward. But, really, they have to look no further than the work that is going on right now at Lambton College in Sarnia–Lambton—one of the foremost colleges in Ontario, I might say. Lambton College was recently awarded as the top applied research facility associated with a university in Canada. Its graduates are being snapped up by the petrochemical and biorefining sector faster than they can actually graduate and matriculate.

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That’s why I’m really excited about all the work that the Minister of Education and her parliamentary assistant are doing on the education file, starting with Bill 48. This act, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, if passed, will also address some issues with the current governance structure of the Ontario College of Teachers.

As we have all learned in this Legislature, there have been some concerns raised by the public, questioning the

value, role, accountability and transparency of the Ontario College of Teachers. As such, the Minister of Education has proposed amendments that will result in changes to the Ontario College of Teachers governance structure. Specifically, provisions in the Ontario College of Teachers Act will be amended to address the size and composition of the governing council; the statutory committees and panels of the council will be repealed; and the number of elected and appointed members of the council will be prescribed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council's regulation. The council would also retain the authority to prescribe and subject to the review of the minister and approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council the size and composition of the committees of the council and panels of this committee. The appointment of the chair of the council and additional duties of the chair would also be prescribed in regulation.

Finally, I want to touch on a section of Bill 48 that will give our school boards guidance in developing policies that will accommodate service animals in schools. The families of students with special needs deserve a clear, transparent process for requesting that service animals be able to accompany their children to school no matter where they live in this province.

In my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, the two largest school boards, the Lambton Kent District School Board and the St. Clair Catholic District School Board, both have policies on their books allowing for the use of service animals by students, staff and community members. I'm very happy to see that. I know that many other school boards also have developed policies for the use of service animals. However, not all school boards have gone through this important process. In fact, according to information given to me by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, only 39 of the 72 school boards across this province have developed these service animal policies.

The other issues that have been brought to the attention of the Ministry of Education are that the process for requesting a service animal at school can vary significantly from board to board. Our government is aiming to create a consistent policy across school boards and to bring those boards without this important policy already in place up to speed. Bill 48, if passed, will amend the Education Act to provide the Minister of Education with the authority to establish those policies and guidelines respecting service animals in schools for school boards to follow when creating service animal policies that support students with special education needs. School boards will then be required to comply with these guidelines in creating their own policies, with the expectation that all publicly funded school boards would have a locally developed and publicly available service animal policy in place by September of 2019. The changes that the Minister of Education is proposing through Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, will not only make a difference for students and families but will also provide clarity for school boards that turn to the Ministry of Education for guidance on this important subject.

I'm also pleased that when speaking with both the Minister of Education and her parliamentary assistant about this subject, they informed me that if Bill 48 passes they will be going out to the public for feedback on how best to design the province-wide guidelines for access to service animals in schools. The Minister of Education is going to be consulting with students, parents, teachers, educational assistants, administrators, the school boards, the unions, community agencies and many more on this initiative. The minister's willingness to consult doesn't surprise me one bit. It's her nature to listen and listen closely to what people have to say. In fact, she just wrapped up one of the largest consultations, if not the largest, in the history of our provincial government, with over 72,000 responses to the consultation on education and curriculum that informed the minister's announcement last week. The Minister of Education and this government are truly listening to the people of this province and acting on that advice.

I'd like to say that teachers, and I know many of the teachers I met with in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, are a very dedicated lot. I grew up with many people who went on to teach after high school and who are in that profession now. I have family members who are also in the teaching profession, and I know how valued they are to the families whose children they teach.

My own grandchildren did very well in French immersion and they've prospered. They have some great teachers in French immersion, both in the public school and—my granddaughter is now in high school and doing very well, and I'm very proud of the contribution she's going to make in the future. My grandson just announced the other day that he's going to be the valedictorian of grade 8, something that I never achieved in my days in the halls of learning. I was focused on other issues at that time. I'm sure that my grandchildren will do far better than I've been able to accomplish in my lifetime, and a lot of it has to do with their teachers and the surroundings, and of course the great work that their parents did, and their grandmother—not necessarily their grandfather; I wouldn't give him any credit.

The Minister of Education and this government are truly listening to the people of this province and acting on that advice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today to Bill 48. I will be supporting this bill, I should add, at third reading, as I hope all members of this Legislature will do. I certainly think that this is an important bill that addresses the need for overdue changes that have been identified in this province.

Bill 48 also underlines, through action, that the health, safety, well-being and academic success of children and students is the number one priority of the Minister of Education, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, and this government as a whole.

I sincerely thank the minister, the parliamentary assistant and everyone—her staff—who worked to bring forward this important legislation for their efforts on behalf of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to extend my congratulations to the grandson of the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

We can all agree to the provisions pertaining to sexual abuse here. I'm sure every single person in the chamber would agree to those. But the elements that talk about mathematics proficiencies and the teachers—I would put the mathematic proficiencies of Ontario's teachers against anybody in this room. I don't think it's helpful. It is just the time-honoured ability of the Conservatives to bash teachers, which started in their government in the late 1990s and seems to continue on today.

There are many elements to safety in schools. One of the elements, certainly, is the state of schools. For instance, a petition that I read asked for a repair of the billions of dollars of the backlog in capital funding that's required. But we're not talking about that, of course. What we are talking about these days, under this government, is the elimination of teachers' jobs and the reduction of the number of professional, adult teachers in schools, who provide a safe environment for students, who are teaching them, and the purpose that they are there to learn. We are losing those adults. We are losing those educators.

We are not seeing our schools fixed, but what we are seeing is populist legislation that in some parts here goes after teachers and goes after the credentials of teachers, which is not helping. If this government is serious about improving schools, improving education and improving safety, they shouldn't be going after educators, and they shouldn't be doing the things that they're doing which are resulting in thousands upon thousands of parents and protesters, like repealing laws that would help kids feel protected, and all the stuff that they're doing that will actually promote bullying in schools.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: As always, it's a pleasure to be able to stand, and I wish to thank the member for Sarnia–Lambton for his contributions to the debate in this House. They're always interesting to listen to, and it's always good to hear from someone who has had over a decade of experience in this Legislature. I admire him for his leadership and his fighting for his constituents.

The piece of legislation that he spoke to today is a really important one, and it comes out of our government's belief that it's important to listen to those who are involved in education—front-line workers, students, teachers, parents—about what they're seeing.

What we heard loud and clear from organizations such as the College of Early Childhood Educators were concerns around, for example, sexual abuse and the fact that there wasn't a clear laying out of all the things that needed to be completely condemned. So we brought forward a zero-tolerance policy on sexual abuse of children—something that front-line workers in education asked for, something that our government listened to and took action on because we respect educators and we respect the work they do day in and day out with our children and our students across this province.

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It also comes out of a desire to listen to those who are fighting for those who have special needs when it comes to ensuring that we have access to service animals in the classroom, that there are supports for those families that are impacted by autism and they have that ability for one more support in the classroom, such as the service animals—that this bill will create, finally, a standardization across the province.

And of course, the introduction of a math test to ensure that our students are being taught by front-line educators who are proficient in math—that's something that our announcement last Friday also really placed a lot of emphasis on.

I wish to thank the member for his contributions and for giving me the chance to respond to his debate this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I think it's very clear that we agree there is no place for sexual assault in classrooms across Ontario. As the parent of a young daughter, I want to make sure that when she goes into a classroom she is safe, and that she comes home after having a great day, and that I know she's going to be safe throughout the entire day. No one disagrees with that.

What I do have concerns about is the overall focus of this bill and the overall focus of this government's approach to education. I fear that we are taking our education system from bad to worse.

One thing that comes to mind for me is around the math curriculum. This government says that they want to improve the quality of teaching in schools, but at the same time you're cutting funding that would enable teachers to upgrade their ability to teach math in the classroom.

This government talks a lot about providing a safe and supportive classroom experience, but you're cutting \$100 million from the capital repair backlog program when they already need \$16 billion just to maintain our schools to a safe standard, so that the classrooms are a reasonable temperature in the summer and are a warm enough temperature in the winter.

You're also increasing class sizes for high schools from 22 to 28, and that could lead to up to 10,000 teachers' and educators' positions being removed from the school system. There's nothing safe and supportive about that.

Then, starting April 1, families whose kids are on the autism spectrum will be entering our school system, and there are no critical supports to make sure that they have a good experience. That's not safe and supportive. That's dangerous.

I encourage you to go back to the table and invest in schools and treat our kids' education with the quality and the care and the respect that it deserves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: C'est un plaisir de parler en soutien du projet de loi 48. Je remercie le député de Sarnia–Lambton pour son discours.

Notre gouvernement a annoncé son plan pour l'avenir de l'éducation en Ontario, une éducation qui travaille pour vous. Notre plan modernisera les programmes d'études, modernisera les salles de classe et donnera aux éducateurs les moyens de mieux préparer les élèves aux réalités du monde moderne. Le gouvernement précédent nous a laissé un système obsolète qui ne préparait pas nos étudiants à la réalité d'aujourd'hui. Nous allons investir dans l'éducation d'une manière qui soit axée sur le rendement et le bien-être des élèves.

Au cours des consultations que nous avons menées depuis la formation du gouvernement, y compris la plus vaste consultation sur l'éducation de l'histoire de l'Ontario, nous avons entendu toute une gamme d'opinions sur un certain nombre de questions. Notre programme de consultation comprenait plus de 72 000 engagements sur trois canaux de consultation différents.

Depuis le début, notre gouvernement a clairement indiqué que nous écoutions les parents et consultations nos partenaires en éducation afin de moderniser et d'améliorer le système d'éducation de l'Ontario, de la maternelle à la 12^e année.

Nous avons entendu, fort et sûr, que nous devons améliorer la sécurité de nos élevés. La santé, la sécurité et le bien-être des enfants et des étudiants sont notre priorité numéro un. Le gouvernement a une tolérance zéro pour l'abus sexuel des étudiants. Nous prenons des mesures maintenant, rendant ainsi nos écoles, nos écoles maternelles et nos garderies plus sûres.

Ces changements amélioreront le succès, la santé et la sécurité des élèves et des enfants de l'Ontario et donneront la priorité aux droits et à la voix des parents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Merci, and now we'll return to the member from Sarnia–Lambton and offer him an opportunity to comment on what he's heard in the questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Might I add, it's a pleasure to see you in the chair. I didn't say that before.

I'd like to at this time comment and thank the members from Humber River–Black Creek, Niagara West, University–Rosedale and Mississauga Centre for their kind comments, and informative comments as well, about Bill 48. I'm sure when we get it to committee there will be lots of opportunities for further debate and input and we'll hear from the general public as well at that time.

Also, I did want to add—I didn't have time in my remarks, I guess—that there are going to be major changes to the EQAO. I know that's always been an issue with a number of parents and with teachers themselves, so that will also be in the new bill.

One thing the minister was accused of but that didn't come to pass was changes from kindergarten to grade 3. That was after province-wide input and input from many members of the opposition, members of our own caucus and other people the minister had the opportunity to consult with. She made the decision that, yes, that was something they were going to leave in place. I think the minister did her job. She and her parliamentary assistant

did their due diligence. They reached out, they consulted, they listened to people, they listened to parents, to teachers. I've always said that they should have listened to the students too, because I remember one day I was walking down the hallway with the minister and someone else, and they came up to us. A grandfather said at the time that his granddaughter had said to him, "Grandpa, how come no one ever asks us what we think?" It really impressed me. From the mouths of babes, goes the story, maybe the wisdom comes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and everyone else, for the opportunity to speak today.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I am very pleased to join the debate today on Bill 48, the first piece of education legislation that was put forward by this government. The bill seeks to address very serious issues, as we've discussed already, around sexual misconduct by members of the teaching profession. But it lumps those measures together with a number of completely unrelated legislative changes that deserve to be debated independently of one another.

Those other changes include a policy directive on service animals that was made without consultation with school boards, disability advocates or teachers; a new math proficiency test at the certification level that has no precedent in any other jurisdiction and was universally panned by experts in the fields of mathematics and education; and, perhaps what is the real motivation of the bill, sweeping changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act that jeopardize the self-regulatory model of the college and give the Minister of Education new powers over the structure and operations of the college.

In my remarks today, I'm going to touch on each of those sections of the bill, but before I do that, I just want to register how challenging it is to be debating a bill called the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act at the same time this government is introducing massive cuts to our education system—cuts that will have a long-lasting and negative impact on every classroom and every school in Ontario.

The announcement Friday that class sizes will be increasing beginning in grade 4 will mean less support for every student in this province, with classes as large as 40 students. Some schools can't even accommodate that many students in a single classroom. And we know that classes that are large are anything but safe and supportive. More students means more distractions, more frustrations, and less supervision. For kids with behavioural issues, that can turn into outbursts that put them, their peers and their teachers at risk. That's not just a possibility down the line. It's something that's happening right now in classrooms that are already overcrowded after years of Liberal underfunding of our education system. With a reduction of 10,000 adults in our schools, how can that improve things? How can that get better?

1630

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move now to the section of the act that relates to the service animals. How can we talk

about safe and supportive classrooms as defined in this bill when families of children with autism have been thrown into so much turmoil by the government's callous changes to the Ontario Autism Program? Those changes will see kids lose important therapies in just a little over a week, on April 1. Some will be entering school for the first time or will be there for more hours in the week.

The Minister of Education would have known this timeline much sooner than the public, but it still took weeks and weeks of pressure in this chamber and from families across this province, from school boards and from educators to force her to come to the table with a plan to support those children. For a week straight, the government would only point to this bill as their remedy for this massive upheaval facing kids with autism. Now, it is clear that many students with autism can see great benefits in the use of a service animal in school, but to suggest that this could replace professional therapy is truly shameful.

The minister finally came forward with a plan last week, and it has done little, if anything, to deal with the concerns of parents and educators about the impacts of autism service cuts on kids in the school system. Their plan simply allows boards to get the base funding that all students are entitled to, while providing for a single professional development day for teachers in the coming school year—shameful. There's nothing wrong with giving teachers that added training, but teachers that I've talked to have been very clear: This is no way to replace professional training. Extending the pupil count date does not add trained education assistants or other support workers to our schools. In fact, the minister's announcement came just days after she imposed a hiring freeze on school boards, so it makes no sense whatsoever.

By keeping special education funding stagnant at the same time that the government is cutting thousands of teaching positions, all students with special needs and exceptionalities will be held back from achieving the education they need and deserve. That's a legacy this government will have to wear for years, maybe generations, to come. So you can see why the title of this bill is such a misnomer, and a missed opportunity to show leadership and a real vision for Ontario's education system.

Speaker, one of the most glaring examples of the short-sighted nature of the policy in this bill is the move to introduce a math proficiency test at the certification stage of a teacher's career. The government introduced this bill and its proposed math test before its province-wide consultations on math curriculum had even ended. For a lot of people who participated in that consultation in good faith, this made it clear they weren't really interested in hearing what Ontarians had to say on strategies for improving math scores at all.

But if you want to give them the benefit of the doubt, perhaps there was some kind of overwhelming evidence from experts that made it necessary to get this math test into legislation as quickly as possible. Well, as it turns out, no. No experts were consulted. Ministry staff could not point to a single example of this kind of test improving

student math outcomes anywhere. A conference call was apparently arranged with faculties of education, but only after the bill had passed second reading and had been time-allocated. That time allocation motion reduced the time to hear from witnesses to only two short days, with two more for clause-by-clause. This after the bill had languished on the order paper for weeks and weeks before the holiday break.

Regardless, individuals with a great deal of expertise in teaching math did find time to take time out of their own schedules to come to the committee. Dr. Mary Reid, an assistant professor at OISE with 11 years of experience teaching the math curriculum to teaching candidates—she teaches the teachers—urged the government to consider the success they've had in training teachers as it is. She said, "There's a lot of research that actually shows that there is little empirical evidence that there is a link between high certification test scores and high student achievement."

She also pointed out the dangers that a math proficiency test like this one that's proposed in this bill could further hold back underrepresented groups that may not want to enter the teaching profession as it is.

That same sentiment was echoed by Dr. Ann LeSage and Dr. Robyn Ruttenberg-Rozen from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. They talked about the gatekeeping aspect of a math test like this and how it could actually undermine teacher success and, in turn, student success.

Here's a quote from Dr. Ruttenberg-Rozen. She said this: "The first thing I want to say about this test is, if teachers view themselves as learners, students will view themselves as learners. So whatever this test does, it needs—as the end result, teachers need to feel that they have potential for growth, and so that they could eventually convey that to their students. The people who are in the field—the faculties of education, the OCT, the school boards, the teachers—are the people who know what's going on and know how to support their teachers, and they really need to be part of that development."

When it comes to that piece, working with teachers to get their input on whether a math test like it would even be effective is another area where the government simply did not do their homework. Teachers told us at committee and in their submissions that they welcome additional supports. If any of the members here have teachers in their lives, and I know the minister does, then you know that teachers are in fact lifelong learners. But this government discontinued subsidies for additional qualifications in math earlier in the year. That's an interesting little side note. They discontinued tutors in the classroom who were there to help students in math. I see that with last week's announcement, those subsidies are going to make their way slowly back into classrooms or to teachers, and I hope that some of the pressure we applied here helped the government see the light on that one.

We also heard concerns at committee that this test could be an additional barrier for teachers who want to come from other provinces, or internationally, to teach in

Ontario. That's a particular concern, I should add, for our French school boards, where there is always a desperate shortage of qualified francophone teachers to fill the need. It is not something that this government seems to have considered at all.

Finally, the College of Teachers has said that they will implement this test if the legislation was passed, but they will not be developing the test or funding it, and just like in the case of all the other stakeholders, they were not consulted on the measure and only found out about it when the bill was introduced. So even a passive observer of this bill could see that there is nothing to show that this math test will have any meaningful impact on math proficiency for either teachers or students. But maybe that wasn't the point. What the government was able to do was show that it was taking some action on math, I guess, and now that their actual curriculum plans have been made public, we know that there's not that much difference actually in what they're putting forward compared to what was already in place.

In communicating about this bill, I also wanted to talk about the changes to the College of Teachers. When the government started to communicate about this bill, the government emphasized the math test and the service dog provisions above all else. But by far, the bulk of the legislative changes in Bill 48 are those that substantially overhaul the College of Teachers.

The College of Teachers, as I mentioned earlier, is a self-regulating body for the teaching profession, and all of its members—in other words, teachers—pay an annual membership fee. The college was founded in 1997 following recommendations under the Royal Commission on Learning—1997: Who was in power then? At the time, the commission said, “Our conviction is that teaching should be a self-governing profession, with greater responsibility and greater autonomy for teachers.” The college's mission is, “Placing students' interests and well-being first by regulating and promoting excellence in teaching.” Importantly, it also has a public interest mandate. The system has served Ontario well.

As a self-governing body, the college had already begun an internal review of its governance structures when this government was elected, but rather than wait for the results of that review, Bill 48 sought to dramatically alter the structure of the college and puts new powers—guess where?—in the hands of the minister to shape the committees of the college and their membership. The bill even scraps majority teacher representation on the college council, making the majority into—guess what?—government appointees.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Oh, shocking.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I know, and it completely—and this one really, I have to say, took us by surprise—abolishes the public interest committee of the College of Teachers, something that the government itself announced the summer before that they wanted to see in the College of Teachers. I guess they forgot it was already there and now they're taking it out, and I could never get an answer as to why.

1640

Each teachers' union flagged these changes as a risk to the self-regulation of their teaching profession. The president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Liz Stuart, said this at committee: “Our conviction is that teaching should be a self-governing profession with greater responsibility and greater autonomy for teachers. This section of Bill 48 strikes at the heart of this claim and undermines the very foundation of the College of Teachers and the professionalism of teaching. It has what I hope is an unintended consequence. It sent a clear message to every teacher in Ontario that this government does not respect the teaching profession as a profession.”

I think that quote gets at the very heart of this government's approach to education. They want to undermine teachers. They want to drive a wedge between teachers, parents, educators and students in order to push through an agenda of very deep cuts. We know already that at least \$1 billion will be cut from education. We look at the Friday announcement by the minister, and we know that this is not hyperbole.

Sam Hammond, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, representing 86,000 education workers, told us this: “The changes proposed under Bill 48 would pave the way for the government to not only change the composition of the council but also of the committees of the college, resulting in unprecedented government interference and effectively ending self-regulation of the profession.”

Harvey Bischof, from OSSTF, who represents 60,000 education workers—50,000, if this government has anything to do with it, because they're going to fire 10,000 teachers—said, “With regard to the governance changes to the College of Teachers, restructuring the ratios of appointed and elected members could lead to the OCT no longer being a self-governing body, as it was originally created to be.”

Rémi Sabourin, president of the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, raised the concerns of his members about the potential loss of the three designated seats for francophones on the college council.

We tried to amend this legislation at committee on many of these points, and the government would have nothing of it. They would make none of these changes, which are completely reasonable things to ask.

Bill 48 makes no mention of those francophone appointments, so we know that they didn't—possibly the government didn't realize the implications as they set out to slash the size of the council. Of course, it is added to the long list of examples of this government's disrespect for francophones and Franco-Ontarians.

I want to move on to the question, just generally, around this issue and others. At committee, we, the members of the committee in the official opposition, moved many, many amendments. One of the amendments we moved was to remove these sections of Bill 48, so that the college recommendations could be made in the interest of preserving the self-regulation of the teaching profession. Conservative members voted all of that down.

We also brought forward amendments that would have, I think, improved and strengthened the provisions around service animals, and many of the other provisions in this legislation.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, how many of our amendments were given even the slightest consideration by the government committee members? Zero. None.

Interjection: Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: No, it really wasn't a good thing, actually, as members opposite might think.

I think we can agree that we need to make this legislation work. Why would we try to pass something that is ineffective, that's not going to make our classrooms safer or more supportive?

I want to speak for a moment about the provisions in the bill which involve mandatory revocation of teaching licences for teachers who are found guilty of sexual misconduct. I want to be perfectly clear that those of us on this side of the House fully support measures to ensure that all students are free from abuse or harm at the hands of authority figures, be that in schools or anywhere else. This is an issue that deserves serious and respectful scrutiny. As lawmakers, we should always come to this place in good faith, to make laws that serve the public good. While this is also a place of politics, this is an issue that deserves a level of depoliticization in order to ensure that we get it right. I think that is what parents expect of us.

With respect to the changes included in the bill, I should note that a process already exists for complaints to be brought against teachers who commit acts of sexual misconduct, and that the power to revoke their licences already exists. What we welcome in the legislation, as the official opposition, is the clarity of the definitions related to that misconduct, and the measures to ensure that victims are compensated.

We did raise concerns, again, in committee about why that funding is only coming into force a year from now, because apparently it's pretty much ready to go, but we haven't received answers to those questions. We agree that teachers found guilty of this kind of conduct should not be returned to classrooms. But we do have to take into account that there are other important considerations to be made.

A number of people came to our sessions and expressed some concerns. ETFO, for example, said, "It has been ETFO's experience that both the OCT and the CECE"—that's the early childhood educators' college—"take allegations of professional misconduct very seriously, particularly misconduct of a sexual nature, and have frequently utilized their powers to revoke certificates." They went on to say that the proposed restriction on the disciplinary committees "may have some unintended negative consequences on sexual abuse survivors in how they engage in a disciplinary process," which I think is a really important point to make and something that I would have hoped the government would have considered.

These are the kinds of things that we need to weigh. I speak as a parent whose child was in a school where the children walked out because of some accusations being

made against teachers that they did not feel were being taken seriously enough. I think I can speak on behalf of many people in this House, and certainly a lot of women, in saying that we all experienced something like that in school, probably. We've all been there. I don't want those people in schools any more than anyone else here does, but we have a responsibility as legislators to get it right.

What happened with this bill was that we urged the government to divide this bill up into sections, so that we could meaningfully consult, not through some kind of catch-all town hall thing but with stakeholders, with experts like those people who teach teachers, the educators themselves, and talk to them about how to make this work. What do they need? Nothing like that happened. When this government moved to time allocation, I knew that there would be no attempt to improve this bill, and that's quite heartbreaking for those of us who are new in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wrap up by saying, in light of the cuts and the announcements made recently—again, 10,000 adults being removed from our classrooms—I would hope the government would try to do better than just simply this legislation, to actually try to protect our students and recognize that every adult you take out of a classroom is going to be one student who may get missed. If one student fails to graduate because of your changes, then that's on the shoulders of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Calandra: I certainly listened intently to what the member opposite had to say. If I get it correctly, despite all of the rhetoric that was within the speech, the member wants our students to have better math marks; the member wants our classrooms to be safer—both of which are, of course, in this bill—and the member agrees with us, in terms of service animals, that they're a good thing, which is in the bill.

It strikes me that the parts of the member's speech where she provided most detail and most disagreement were those parts that the big union bosses seem to disagree with, those parts that would actually take away the power from the union bosses, the power that we want to give back to parents and give back to students. Colleagues, it seems to me that that's what the member is most worried about. She, of course, provided many statements from those very same big union bosses who have concerns.

Now, the member for Black Creek-Humber last week gave a wonderful maiden speech. It was a really good speech. He talked about excessive rhetoric. Mr. Speaker, I have been in this place not that long, but this member's speech was just absolutely full of it—full of it, Mr. Speaker. This government is putting more money back to students.

I bring my kids to Mathnasium twice a week. Do you know why? It's filled with parents who are frustrated over the math curriculum. They don't sit here and say, "Oh, my gosh, we need to give more power to ETFO and to the big union bosses." They say, "Damn it, go back there and do something, because my kids shouldn't have to suffer this way. They shouldn't struggle this way. I shouldn't have to

give \$500, \$600 or \$700 a month so that they can do better in math.”

That’s what we’re doing, and if the member focuses on this, on what we’ve done, it is part of a larger government plan to improve math, to improve education. We’re doing it piece by piece, and if the member considers this an omnibus bill, then that caucus has a lot of trouble going forward, Mr. Speaker.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I also would like to address this bill, and I’m pleased to contribute to the debate.

I think there really is a problem when you call a bill the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act when there are so many things that are going on that have made classrooms demonstrably less safe and demonstrably less supportive. They’re demonstrably less safe for marginalized and racialized youth, given cuts to very particular programs that have taken place. They are demonstrably less safe for queer/LGBTQ students because of changes to the physical education component. They are absolutely less safe, month over month, for students who are forced to sit in schools with crumbling infrastructure. The fact that there was money set aside to go towards fixing these schools that this government’s policies have taken away is in itself a crime.

I also want to address this question of service animals. I love dogs. I had an opportunity to stand up and talk to a private member’s bill a couple of weeks ago and talk about how important they are. I think dogs make everything better. I love dogs. But I think that, particularly in light of the cuts to autism funding that have been unrolled over the last few weeks, to argue that the one solid thing that this government is doing is service animals is a cruel joke. Lots of kids are afraid of dogs; lots of kids are allergic to dogs. Dogs are incredibly expensive. When families are already battling to have to pick up the funding that’s now being taken away, the idea of dogs being the answer is really a cruel joke.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Piccini: I wanted to just speak a little more about the bill, but I have to engage some of the comments made by the members opposite.

Symbolic of both of those comments made, sort of the mantra of the opposition today is, “If we say it, it must be true.” They spread falsehoods around Ontario. They fear-monger to Ontarians and just outright spread falsehoods—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member will withdraw.

Mr. David Piccini: Withdrawn—saying things, Mr. Speaker, that are demonstrably untrue and saying it as if it’s a fact—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member will withdraw.

Mr. David Piccini: Withdraw what?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): One more time, and you’ll be down and out. Withdraw.

Mr. David Piccini: Withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Mr. David Piccini: —demonstrably things that are indeed not in this bill, Mr. Speaker.

In this bill, we talk about mathematics. We talk about the facts. The facts are, the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity launched a report showing that investing in teachers to support them with math scores, using tools like testing, is an important tool—utilized by Lakehead, utilized by OISE. Those are the facts. Those aren’t the emotions; those are the facts. We listened to the experts on that. We’ve taken action.

I’d love to address service animals. It’s not a point about loving dogs, Mr. Speaker. This is about supportive animals in the classroom. This is about a supportive device for students. This isn’t about loving animals. This is about having those supports. We’ve heard from people around this province that those supports are needed in classrooms, so that’s why we’ve made those investments.

The most important thing here, though, I have to say, is mathematics. The member from Markham–Unionville spoke so eloquently on that, so I just have to reiterate. I couldn’t have said it any better myself.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to commend the member from Davenport for bringing her experience in the school system as a school board trustee to this debate.

I might add that on almost every single point that she raised, she incorporated academic research, the voices of parent councils, the voices of communities, the voices of students and teachers—the educators who are on the front lines, who should have been consulted before a bill like this was brought forward.

I think that the culture of this place has significantly shifted when we’ve seen our democratic rights as legislators shut down at committee. She accurately pointed out that there was no effort on the government’s side to actually listen to constructive research with regard to Bill 48. And if we’re actually talking about supportive classrooms, we should learn from our past, which she also raised, when the Common Sense Revolution 2.0—which we’re kind of experiencing right now, although it wasn’t as harsh, actually, as what we’re seeing right now in the province of Ontario.

The service animal piece strikes a chord. I remember working with the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler, who was the PC candidate at the time. She was fighting to get access for her son’s therapy dog. That went all the way to the Human Rights Tribunal, where she actually lost because the argument was that school boards need a strategy and a plan in place. Because service dogs are not in and of themselves a solution to autism—which we actually heard in this House. The Minister of Education, in response to a question from the critic, said, “Well, we’re going to get everybody service dogs.” Children on

the autism spectrum require resources and supports and therapy, and they should have the right to access that in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return to the member from Davenport for her two-minute summation of what she heard during questions and comments.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to thank the members from Beaches–East York, Markham–Stouffville, Northumberland–Peterborough South, and Waterloo for your comments.

I'm not going to stoop to the level of the member opposite who talked about rhetoric and union bosses. There was not one person that I quoted here today from the presentations who is not an educator themselves or an expert of some sort in their field, including PhDs who teach our teachers. I just once again find it really unfortunate that the government has such little regard, clearly, for those people. I again would just urge the government to consider listening to the folks that actually know this field and understand how we can improve it.

Everybody is working to do better. Everybody wants our children to learn better. I'm a parent; I have two teenagers. I want to make sure they're doing well in school. I worry about them. I know the shortcomings of our system. It's been underfunded for years by the previous government, by the last two previous governments. But to say that this government is somehow investing more in our children when a billion dollars is about to be cut from our education system—and you can say there are inefficiencies, but there are not many. It is a bare-bones system, and if you spend any time in a public school in our province, you will know that.

The minister clearly needs to go back to school sometimes, because I can tell you—she said recently in a radio interview something about how teachers should go to their closets, where they'll find lots of technology that they're not using. Do you know what? Follow #ClosetFullofTech and find out what's in the closets of our schools, because the technology is, like, floppy disk time.

So if you want to introduce 21st-century math and you want to talk about improving education, you've got a lot more work to do than this piece of legislation.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's a privilege to be able to rise in this House once again to speak on this very important piece of legislation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Education for introducing Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. She's a strong leader in our caucus and I'm honoured to work alongside her and to call her a mentor. I also want to thank all the members of the opposition who have provided their input on this proposed bill, both in this chamber as well as in committee.

I am proud to stand here today, Mr. Speaker, and support Ontario's Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. This bill is going to ensure that classrooms throughout Ontario are safe and supportive for all students.

1700

This bill is designed to protect students from any act of sexual abuse committed by a regulated educator as defined in the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act. It will accomplish this by requiring that the Ontario College Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators discipline committees revoke an educator's certificate if the discipline committee has found the educator guilty of committing any acts of sexual abuse of a student or a child. There will be a zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuse in the classroom. And our government has included sections in the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act that will require the colleges to provide funding for counselling and therapy for students who have alleged that they were the subjects of an act of child pornography or sexual abuse committed by an educator during the course of the educator's practice.

This bill will provide the Lieutenant Governor in Council with the regulation-making authority to prescribe other acts of a sexual nature which are prohibited under the Criminal Code of Canada in order to result in the mandatory revocation of an educator's certificate.

This legislation, if passed, will give parents and the public a stronger voice when it comes to the governance of the teaching profession, by allowing the government to respond to the governance review under way by the Ontario College of Teachers, in order to better serve and protect the public interest in regulating Ontario's teaching profession.

After the disastrous discovery math curriculum implemented by the previous government and years of declining math scores in Ontario, we will finally be supporting our teachers to become better prepared in order to teach the fundamentals of mathematics. Teachers will be required to pass a content-knowledge test in math in order to become certified to teach in Ontario's publicly funded schools. And, beginning next September, there will be a new math curriculum for all students in all grades. Our government will focus on getting back to basics by rolling out a four-year strategy to ensure that our students succeed—not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, but across the globe. The back-to-basics approach will include new online resources to improve student performance in math and to help them solve everyday math problems.

As part of our modernization and commitment to transparency, in September 2019 we will have a centralized digital platform for our entire curriculum. This curriculum will be available anytime, anywhere and on any electronic device, ensuring that it is easily accessible to students, parents and teachers. We need to recognize that e-learning can be a valuable tool to help our students, and that's why we intend to make these changes. We already find e-learning at various university courses all across the province. In fact, my husband created an e-learning course several years ago, and to this day he's still using it to teach his students in an online mathematics and statistics course at Carleton University.

In the 2020-21 school year, we will begin to phase in a requirement for secondary school students to take a

minimum of four e-learning credits in order to receive their diplomas, with the exception of students who can be exempted on an individualized basis. That year, we will also be centralizing e-learning to ensure that no matter where students are located in Ontario, they will have access to the greatest array of programming and opportunities.

We will also be making financial literacy a key part of our revised math curriculum, and it will play a major component of the new grade 10 careers course. Financial literacy is essential to student success, and it is the key to building a well-educated, business-savvy and responsible workforce. Students want to become entrepreneurs, and we are finally giving them the tools that they need to succeed.

Across Ontario, many people benefit from the support of service animals in many aspects of their lives. This includes students in our province who require the assistance of service animals in their school environment. Service animals may assist students with a range of physical and mental health needs, and the types of services provided by these animals are, in fact, diverse. They can include medical, therapeutic and emotional support services. Service dogs perform many so-called invisible tasks that also help contribute to the cognitive function of children with autism. And families of children with autism have reported that having access to a service dog increases the social skills of their child and results in a reduction of social discomfort.

We recognize that a safe learning environment is not only about grades and performance; it is also about a student's overall well-being. As it stands now, there is no legislation in Ontario that actually addresses the use of service animals in schools. Instead, it is up to each individual school board to come up with their own processes for managing service animal requests. Out of the 72 school boards across the province, only 39 have specific policies in place in order to deal with service animals in schools, and these policies vary from board to board.

In my own riding of Carleton, Mr. Speaker, I've already had several constituents come to me with the issues and challenges they have faced with school boards allowing their children to bring a service animal to the classroom. With this bill, I'm hoping that that will change in order to give those students the opportunity that they need to succeed. With the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, Ontario's government for the people has introduced legislation that, if passed, would provide for more fair, open and consistent processes for families when making these requests for service animals to accompany their children at school that would be applicable across all school boards.

Students have been telling us that they do not feel confident that they have been provided with the skills necessary to go out and secure a job, not just in Ontario and not just in Canada but internationally. The Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act will provide our students with the education and help that they need in order to support them on a career path that aligns with their abilities and

interests. Simultaneously, it will enable them to easily adapt to the rapidly changing world around them.

Since taking office last June, our government has been working tirelessly to find ways to put our publicly funded education system back on track. With that goal in mind, we embarked on the largest province-wide consultation in Ontario's history and we engaged 72,000 parents, educators, stakeholders and the people of Ontario in reforming our education system. We engaged everyone on a wide spectrum of topics, including financial literacy, math score improvement, developing an age-appropriate health and education system, and engaging more students in STEM fields. We will be working closely with educators, parents, post-secondary institutions and industry leaders to develop a K-to-12 Ontario STEM strategy to become a global leader in STEM education.

As an immediate measure, we will be updating the grade 10 careers course to include a mandatory focus on STEM, and we will also begin to work to revise the business studies and computer studies curriculum. The consultation, which was launched on September 28, was a tremendous success, and it will help us make further education reforms in the future. Some of the key issues that we heard were about the better management of phones in classrooms and how we can better prepare students with the necessary job and life skills they need. Life skills is an area that is often neglectfully overlooked. A few weeks ago, I hosted Minister Todd Smith for a meet-and-greet with local BIAs, business owners and farmers from across the riding of Carleton. The lack of basic life skills possessed by children and youth is an issue that came up time and time again.

Graham Green of Abby Hill Farms explained that many of the students who come to work on his farm don't have basic math skills, while others are unable to even cook for themselves.

Jeff Morris, owner of the Manotick Messenger and the Barrhaven Independent, noted he knows honour students who can't even read an analogue clock.

Somewhere along the line over the last 15 years we have failed our students. We need to make sure our students are well equipped to cope with stress, well equipped to feel confident in their skills and with hope for a great future in whatever career path they choose. It is important not just to provide students with the right information, but we also need to be fostering the best environment possible in order for them to absorb that information. And in order to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for students in Ontario, for the 2019-20 school year, the provincial code of conduct will be updated to prohibit cellphone use in schools during instructional time. When my husband heard about this, Mr. Speaker, his first comment to me was that he was glad to hear that our government has finally caught up to his genius.

Ontario students need to be able to focus on their learning and not on their cellphones. During our education consultation, we heard that 97% of respondents support some form of ban on cellphones. Heavy use of electronic devices by children can contribute to less sleep, poorer performance in school and a higher risk of depression.

We know that cellphones have the potential to be useful learning tools, and we're not stopping that, but too often they are a distraction from learning and have a negative impact on the classroom experience. It is important to note that cellphones will be available if they are required for educational purposes, for health and medical purposes, or to support special needs.

1710

I want to thank everyone who took the time to take part in our public consultation and provide their feedback. Know that your voice was heard and that the rich data we have collected will provide a pathway forward for years to come.

The Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, if passed, will not only make sure that children are learning in a safe and supportive space, but it will also ensure that we have one of the best education and child care systems in the world.

Our government is sending a very clear message with the proposed changes in Bill 48. The safety, the health and the well-being of children in this province are our government's number one priority.

This legislation would help ensure that students are prepared for a rapidly changing global economy. These proposed amendments would also make our children and students not only learn but, more importantly, make sure they're learning in a welcoming environment that is safe.

The previous government did not go far enough to ensure that students and children are able to learn in an environment where they feel safe, and we are rectifying this wrong. The proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act make it very clear that our government has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuse of Ontario students and children. We acknowledge that some educators will need to discuss physical health, which could include speaking about sex in a manner that is age-appropriate. We also acknowledge that educators may need to assist students with their hygiene and care. With that in mind, the proposed amendments in this bill would ensure that sexual abuse of a student does not include those acts that are part of an educator's professional responsibilities.

We are going to be transforming education in Ontario because parents, students, teachers and concerned citizens across this province have told us that they want change, and our government is listening. Children want to be successful, and it is our responsibility to make sure that they have the necessary tools they need so that they are ready to contribute to the economy, and so that they can get the jobs that are great in the communities close to home or across Ontario.

We need to focus once again on skilled trades. Too many students have told us and too many parents have told us that they are frustrated because, in rural Ontario in particular, especially in my riding of Carleton, our greatest export is our youth. Our youth think that they all have to go to an urban centre just in order to get a job. However, there are so many amazing six-figure jobs in the trades, and we need to encourage our children to stay in their

communities, and encourage them to build their own businesses and create their own jobs, because they need to know that they can have a wonderful quality of life in rural Ontario as well as in urban Ontario.

But that quality of life and that education, Mr. Speaker, start with understanding and showing them that the education they need to qualify for and get the jobs that they want is there and is accessible to them.

We have some of the best teachers in the world right here in this province. That said, other jurisdictions are starting to catch up to us when it comes to mathematics, and these jurisdictions are actually poised to surpass us when it comes to computer skills and technology. It's time for us to right the ship. We owe it to our students. We owe it to the next generation in order to get education right in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really excited to share the announcement that the Minister of Education made on March 15 with respect to our back-to-basics math curriculum.

On March 15, the Minister of Education announced that students and parents in Ontario can finally look forward to the implementation of a stronger math, STEM and financial literacy curriculum.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you.

They can look forward to improved skilled trade opportunities, and a province-wide ban on cellphones in the classroom, as part of the government of Ontario's sweeping new vision for education that works for you.

This is our plan to protect a sustainable, world-class education system for the students of today and the future, and we will make sure that our students are leaving school with the skills they need to build good lives, families and careers right here in Ontario while ensuring that the education system is both fiscally sustainable and respectful of parents.

Our government's plan will modernize curriculum, modernize classrooms and empower educators to better prepare students for the realities of today's modern world. We heard from more than 72,000 parents, teachers, students, employers and organizations, making this the largest consultation of its kind in the history of this province. The people told us what wasn't working and they told us what we need to protect. This new vision will modernize Ontario's classrooms and provide students with more learning opportunities in order to prepare them for success in post-secondary education, for success in apprenticeship and training, and for success in the workforce. This plan will include modernizing classrooms by expanding broadband, developing a new policy that will ban the use of cellphones during class, except for educational purposes, and modernizing the approach to assessment and evaluation with a renewed focus on equity across the province.

It will also introduce changes to education funding that will keep resources focused on students in the classroom. It will also support teacher mobility, greater transparency, fairness, consistency and accountability to school board hiring practices of teachers. It will also maintain class

sizes from kindergarten to grade 3. It will establish a consistent approach to class sizes from grades 4 to 8 and it will align our secondary class sizes more closely with other Canadian jurisdictions, while at the same time introducing a new approach to e-learning and reducing pressure on school boards to put students in portables and split classes.

Our new education curriculum will include a new math curriculum that will focus on the fundamentals of math for all grades. It will have a renewed focus on STEM, skilled trades and financial literacy, and it will also have a modern and age-appropriate health and physical education curriculum that will keep students safe.

There will be clear provisions for parents who wish to exempt their child or children from sexual health education. We will also provide online modules to parents who want to discuss sexual health topics at home whenever they feel—

Interruption.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's an Amber Alert.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari:—whenever they feel their child is ready.

The government is committed to discussing the key elements of the proposed plan, including hiring practices and class sizes, through a consultation process that allows partners to provide the benefit of their expertise, experience and ideas.

I would like to quote our Minister of Education, Mr. Speaker. On March 15, she said, “We welcome conversation with any education stakeholder who is prepared to work with us in good faith to ensure our plan continues to serve the best interests of Ontario students in a way that works for families and school boards and is fair to our educators.”

Mr. Speaker, in saying that, we look forward to working with our many partners to achieve these goals and create the many wonderful opportunities for young people to participate and drive our economy forward like never before and to ensure that teachers have all the tools they need to do their jobs.

We have had two goals in mind with regard to the education system since the day we took office: ensuring that our students are well prepared for the future and respecting parents. This is exactly what this bill will do. It's yet another example of a promise made by our government and a promise kept.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to start off by reminding the member from Markham–Stouffville, I believe it is, and a couple of other members over there—in the past few days, I've heard them mention “Those big unions, those union bosses, those bad unions.” I'd like to remind the member and other members over there that those big, bad unions that he's talking about—trades, labour, teachers, nurses—

Mr. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Point of order, the member for Markham–Stouffville.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I think, just in light of some of your earlier rulings, at no point have I ever called unions “bad.” I have not heard one member on this side ever call a union “bad.” So I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw that, because at no point have I ever called a union “bad.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Every member has the opportunity to correct his or her record, if that member so chooses.

I return now to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

1720

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. No, I won't withdraw.

To the member: I'd like to remind him that trades, labour, teachers, nurses—we built this province. I think your constant attack on unions is pathetic.

In reference to and getting to the bill itself—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, you know, if he wants to speak, he should stand up.

Getting to the bill itself, the bottom line is that a lot of these school boards are afraid to complain, they're afraid to say anything, because they will be cut off from funding. A lot of them are doing that.

Secondly, if you go to a lot of the schools in my area, they are really in need of infrastructure improvements, and they're afraid to ask for that because they will get cut from another program.

So, the member from Davenport is exactly right. You can shift the money around, you can move it around and make it look like you're doing something, when actually there's a lack of funding. The funding formula has been bad for years, and there's no huge improvement to the funding formula. They have to re-address the funding formula if they want to get things right.

I'm very proud to be a union member, by the way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Donna Skelly: I think it's a poignant reminder that we're standing here just after having an Amber Alert, and talking about keeping our children safe in our schools.

I am pleased to stand in support of Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act.

The sexual abuse of a student or a child by a member of the Ontario College of Teachers or the College of Early Childhood Educators is part of and being addressed in Bill 48. The health, safety and well-being of children and students are our number one priority. This government has zero tolerance for sexual abuse of Ontario's students, of Ontario's children. This bill, Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, will help us take action now and help us make our schools, and early years and child care settings, safer for all of Ontario's children. We are taking action to help ensure that students and children who have alleged that they were the subject of sexual abuse, or acts of child pornography, committed by educators actually have access to the supports that they need.

We are also addressing another important issue that parents have raised with us, parents right across Ontario, and that is their concern that their children simply are not meeting the level that they want them to meet when it comes to learning math. Our government recognizes that there is more work to improve student performance in mathematics. Bill 48 will help put teachers in the best position possible for success even before they enter classrooms.

As I said from the onset, Bill 48 will help us guarantee the health, safety and well-being of children and students right across Ontario, because it is our number one priority.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I'm happy today to join the debate. One of the biggest issues that affects Brampton with respect to this issue is in regard to the chronic underfunding of schools.

If we look at Brampton specifically, we have one of the youngest populations in Canada. Brampton is one of the youngest cities, in terms of its demographics, in Canada. The result of it is that we have a huge backlog in schools being built and constructed in communities throughout Brampton, specifically in my riding of Brampton East. The impact ultimately falls onto the families and students. Look at schools that are completely overcrowded; they end up having young people having to study in multiple portables at schools, instead of in actual infrastructure in schools, because they're not being built fast enough.

This comes down to the crux of the issue: If we want to build a future where young people can see and aspire to more, we need to start by funding the most basic necessity for a successful society, which is education. Any sort of action which prevents the proper funding of education is ultimately—we're going to be cutting ourselves off at the feet. We're not properly investing in our future, and that's what we see across the board.

Funding in respect to education is the number one way that we can ensure that we're fostering young minds who can ultimately inherit this earth and take on the issues that we'll be needing a lot of collective impact and change on. That's something that I think is important to highlight in this discussion, important to discuss.

If we really want to build prosperous communities, we need to fund these schools; we need to build schools. Specifically in Brampton, we need to stop this overcrowding by investing in communities and making sure they have the education investment that they require.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Will Bouma: I was wondering: Would it be unparliamentary to say that some of the things that have been said by the opposition this afternoon are just plain hogwash?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I would say that the member is walking a fine line on "hogwash."

Mr. Will Bouma: Okay. Well, I don't suppose you can stop me from thinking it.

I really appreciated listening to the member from Carleton talking about our changes to education that will be happening in Ontario.

We've listened to 72,000 people.

I remember when I sat down with the students who were protesting in front of my office. I really appreciated that time, because it allowed me to see different perspectives than my own. What was great was that I could convey to them to stay in touch with my office, and that their opinions were also very important in this process and that we need to take them into account.

We've listened to parents. We've listened to students. We've listened to educators—most of whom, honestly, because of the unions to which they belong, are probably too afraid to say that they've also given their opinion on this legislation.

To the point of what we were speaking to before, it's unfortunate that there are a few special interest groups that hold such strong sway over the members sitting opposite to us as we discuss this legislation.

We know that we are going to do something that's going to drastically improve student support in the province of Ontario and give them safer, more supportive classrooms. So I look forward to seeing the passing of this legislation.

Again, I appreciate all the members for saying good words on this legislation this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I would counsel the member for Brantford—Brant that the word he used earlier is not a word that he should use on a repetitive basis.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return now to the member from Carleton for her two-minute summation.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for his comments, although I don't really think he was listening to my speech because he didn't directly address it. One of the most important lessons that I learned from my mentor, who is a former city councillor—and prior to that, he was a former reeve, back in 1985, the year that I was born. Before that, he was a principal. And before that, he was a teacher in the public education system. The most important lesson that I learned from Glenn Brooks is to listen with both ears. I would encourage the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek that perhaps next time he could listen with both ears, so that he could actually respond to my comments—especially since I didn't really talk about unions; I didn't really talk about anything else.

My father is a former proud union worker for the IBEW, as well, so I find it a little bit discouraging that he seems to have this idea that we here on this side of the House are anti-union, when that is not the case whatsoever.

Furthermore, I'm a little concerned about his allegations about school boards being afraid to ask for "infrastructure improvements because funding will get cut from somewhere else." I disagree with the premise of the

statement. I would ask the member, if he's going to make such allegations, that he provide us with some proof. Hearsay is not really anything that we can rely upon. Anyone can say rumours, but what matters is facts and evidence.

I can tell you that the facts are and the evidence shows—evidence based on consultation with 72,000 Ontarians—that we needed a new education system. Our education system, right now, is going to bring it back to basics, and it's going to make sure that students are supported. That is a fact, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I guess I get to close it up here on Tuesday.

Before we start: All of us got an Amber Alert during the last member's speech, and I just want to reinforce how important those Amber Alerts are. The last time this happened, obviously, it ended in a tragedy in the province of Ontario, and people were complaining about getting it. It's an important mechanism that the police need to inform people.

1730

For those people who are watching, which is probably just my mother and the past mayor of Peterborough, it's Jannah Jaffri, a young five-year-old girl who was abducted by her father, Soloman Jaffri. He is age 25. York Regional Police are asking for all of our help. Share it with your network so that we can ensure that Jannah gets home safely.

Sometimes there's an overlap in past debates, and before I get into my 20 minutes, I will just tell the member who just commented to the member from Hamilton East that Bill 66, which is going to go through clause-by-clause tomorrow, is an anti-union bill, full stop. Schedule 9, if passed, fair and open tendering—if that passes as it is right now in Bill 66, the carpenters' union told us yesterday in committee that all of their members, with one fell swoop of this government, will no longer be unionized workers. So there's your evidence. Subsequently, after that, once that happens, they will take the government to court. We all know how the government is engaged in various court systems right now. The lawyers in the province of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The lawyers in the province of Ontario are doing well. So you wanted evidence. You called him out on it. I gave you the evidence: Bill 66, schedule 9. Check the Hansard.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: They're a little thin-skinned, you know; it's a little thin-skinned here.

But it's interesting. I first came here, Mr. Speaker, during the original first attack on public education. In fact, it actually inspired a lot of people to become more active

on the education file. I used to work across the street, at the old Toronto Board of Education at 151 College Street. I was a settlement worker, working with parent councils and helping new immigrants acclimatize to the education system, because we know from research that when parents are engaged in the education system and they're welcomed, and it's an inclusive and supportive learning environment, their children do better academically. So there is research and evidence to show the correlation between—that ensuring a supportive and inclusive classroom can have an academic benefit.

That's how I got involved in education, and that's how I came to my first protest, actually, outside of this building, during the original Bill 160, which was the amalgamation of school boards and of their respective cities. That's how I was first escorted out of this place, actually, back in the late 1990s.

For me, public education is the cornerstone of a just and civil society. In so many ways, it is also the great equalizer for society. That is why it is one of our core values as New Democrats, and that's why the debate on education and health care—those are our two principal values, statements that we have as New Democrats, because we believe that when you invest in education and you ensure universal access to health care, people have the potential to reach their potential. That's ultimately what we are talking about as New Democrats.

For me, public education will always be worth fighting for. In fact, we have a number of former school board trustees who are in our caucus. I know that they all became involved in politics because of it—the member from London West. The member from Davenport is a former trustee; the member from Windsor West, Ms. Gretzky, is a former trustee. Who am I missing?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Spadina–Fort York.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Spadina–Fort York. So trustees, actually—I just want to give a shout-out to school board trustees across the province, because I was paying attention to the Waterloo Region District School Board, where I used to be chair; and I used to be the president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and vice-president of the Canadian School Boards Association. So education was my whole world, and it was always worth fighting for.

The Waterloo Region District School Board last night was debating the autism changes, for instance, and they are in a state of crisis. They are in a state of crisis in the province of Ontario because they're wondering what is going to happen on April 1. All of us have our respective school boards—our French public, our French Catholic, our Catholic, our public boards—and they are right now trying to manage and facilitate this new change you have made. Because there are hundreds, if not thousands, of children on the autism spectrum who have been out of classroom receiving IBI therapy, and they've been balancing that off with some exposure in the public education system. What you are essentially doing by spreading that existing funding envelope as far as you can possibly stretch it, so that almost nobody will get anything of value

at the end of the day, is that you are going to also have this trickle-out effect into the public education system, creating a crisis in our system—a system that our critic has pointed out is already stretched to the max. I'm going to give you some examples of what is happening right now.

I also want to say that my husband is a teacher, my daughter is in high school, my sister is a teacher, my father was a teacher. Education is a constant topic around our dinner table every single day. My husband teaches secondary, and all the education announcements, ironically, came out during March break, which is so convenient. We were sort of processing these announcements.

The ban on cellphones is really interesting because there is absolutely no research that shows that banning a cellphone is actually going to positively or negatively affect the education system. Actually, no. What happens right now is that teachers will just become cellphone police in our education system instead of actually focusing on a lesson and engaging cellphones, because almost every student in the province in our high schools has one. You may like them; you may not like them. What my husband does is that he uses those cellphones in the classroom as a teaching tool. They do Google searches and then the student will throw up what they've found on to the screen and that becomes part of the conversation. And so the students who normally don't even participate in the lesson because they're shy—not everyone is a natural extrovert like Mr. Miller—are engaged in the lesson because they're using their cellphone. It's actually a good tool. He uses the cellphone as a critical thinking tool. They talk about what's good on the Internet, what they are seeing on their phones and what they shouldn't be seeing on their phones.

It just seems like we have reached the bottom of the barrel here around how low can you go if you're talking about public education. What we know around 21st-century learning skills is that critical thinking skills are what employers need; communication skills are the strength. Communication skills need people to be in a classroom. Having four compulsory e-learning courses in high school? Where did you even get that? All of the research and the evidence shows that communication skills are fostered by having students in a classroom and by creating safe spaces in that classroom for everyone. So the communication skills—you're compromising that by having four mandatory e-learning courses: mandatory. I mean, some students will actually choose to use it. I know some students, personally, because they missed one credit, need that one last credit and they do it through an e-course. But most students don't say, "Do you know what? I don't want to have any sort of contact with anybody and I'll go through this route." They really don't.

So the critical thinking skills: You're compromising them. You're reducing the opportunity to build communication skills, which employers need and want. The creativity piece: In a classroom of sometimes 40 students, finding an opportunity to have a creative exchange with students and manage those projects will be certainly compromised.

The Minister of Education says that taking the average size from 22 to 28 will not be a big deal. Well, right now

in our system, the average is 22, but my husband has 27 kids in his class, because it's a really popular course and he's a really good teacher. I'm very proud of him. He changes his course every single day, which I think really keeps students engaged. But what I'm saying is that even with an average class size right now of 22, we have classes of 27. So if you raise the average and the ceiling for those classes, you are going to have classes of 40 students.

1740

When the Minister of Education says that no one is involuntarily going to lose their job, well, let's talk about the 5,000 new teachers who are graduating this year. Those students will not have jobs to go to because the system is going to need fewer and fewer teachers every single year, because the classes are going to be bigger, because we're going to have four mandatory online classes.

So you're stretching those dollars, and I use the autism plan or scheme or strategy or whatever you're going to call it as an example. Whatever you're going to call it, it's not going to work.

The education system right now—the failure to fill, for instance, and some people may know this, is that there is such a high burnout rate now because those mental health issues, all of those societal issues, end up in our classrooms, end up in our schools—everything: the poverty; the lack of housing; the stress and the tension in marriages, in families; health issues.

The mental health issue is really big. My husband has seen students over the last 25 years of his teaching career be completely and utterly overwhelmed in the classroom. That's because we have started talking about addressing the stigma of mental health. We have encouraged students to come forward and be honest about how they're actually feeling. But where do they go? They go right onto a wait-list. How ethical is it that here we are in 2019, and we've finally gotten to the point where if you are struggling with depression or anxiety we encourage students to come forward, and then we don't provide the resources and the support for them? It is completely unethical, I would say.

For so many students across the province, that high school, for instance, that elementary school—the first person to recognize a change in behaviour in a class of 20 or 22 is that teacher. That teacher will be able to say, "I've seen a decline in attention. I've seen an increase in emotional outbursts." We have been seeing that. Teachers reach out to the parents and say, "This is what I'm seeing. Are you seeing this, as well?" Are they going to see it when there are 40 kids in a classroom? I ask you that, honestly.

This will fundamentally change the role of an educator in a classroom. It has already changed, because of the language that this government uses when they talk about teachers, when they regard them as essentially disposable, when the Minister of Education says, "One more student in that classroom is not going to matter." I have to say, especially for rural communities—and this is from a teacher from Renfrew county. Rural schools will be adversely affected. Rural schools in the province of Ontario

are already challenged to offer a selection of courses because of enrolment, because the funding formula from the original Mike Harris was compromised by \$2 billion. It has never been fixed. Even over 15 years of Liberal promises to fundamentally fix the base funding model for education, it has never been addressed. Rozanski did a review of the funding formula back in 1999 and said that once you take \$2 billion out, you never get it back in there again. Once the money leaves the system, once the capacity leaves the system, which is what the changes that the Minister of Education has proposed will do—will fundamentally change the public education system in the province of Ontario—it will be so difficult to undo that damage.

This is what the teacher said: She explained that in rural schools such as Admaston, Palmer Rapids, Killaloe and Whitney—this is, again, in Renfrew county—class sizes can dip as low as 15. That means the average class size in centres such as Renfrew, Arnprior and Pembroke, already well above the 24.5, will increase by more than one student for the board to reach the required number, which will result in classes of 32 students in an elementary school. Can you imagine? It's like this government—they haven't been in a classroom for a long time, and they can't remember how important that adult is.

So you cannot fundamentally talk about creating safer and supportive classrooms and completely cut the adults who are in that school system out of the system, and think that you will be making a classroom more supportive or safer. It just cannot be done.

This government is a walking contradiction; they truly are. You cannot speak out of this side of your mouth and say, "We really value student safety, and we believe that mental health is a key issue and that special-needs children should have equal opportunities," and then, at the other side, cut the very resources that they need.

Last night, the Waterloo Region District School Board was asking questions that they have no answers for, because the government has not given them the answers. The critic went to a briefing. The bureaucracy doesn't even have the answers. It's like literally on the back of a bar napkin that this government is making up education policy. It is truly so irresponsible, and it really isn't for the people. It's not for the little people. It's not for the old people. It's not for any kind of people. It's for some of the people some of the time.

What is actually happening is that if the government is truly focused on creating a stronger, more equal, more prosperous economy, you cannot do that by tearing down the public education system. You just cannot do it.

There's a lot of hot-button issues that I think this government—you know, "Promise made, promise kept." Really, it defies all logic when a government says that they are for the people, and then they undermine the very institutions that support people.

When I was talking earlier about the service dogs, it sort of is the epitome of how misguided this minister is, and the Minister of Children and Community Services as well, and the parliamentary assistant.

This is an important part for me, because all of us have relationships here. It's getting harder to be cordial in some instances, because education is such an emotional issue.

Before the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler ran, she and I had lunch, and I said, "Listen, we're not going to agree on a lot of things. We're going to have some serious issues, because we're very far apart on a number of issues. But we're having lunch, and at the end of the day, we can move past it." Do you know what? I never in a million years thought that the issue that would be the fine line where civility is compromised would be on autism, because we were advocates on the autism file together. We fought the Liberal plan in 2016. You remember; you were out there. There were promises made to the autism community, which now feels completely betrayed by that member.

Even I, as a member of this caucus, cannot walk across, because I don't understand how you go from saying \$8,000 is not enough for basic therapy, and IBI is an essential therapy that will actually ensure that children on the autism spectrum reach their potential, and then bring in a plan that brings the entire level down to \$5,000 and reduces the opportunity for therapy to be achieved. This is such a point of tension, actually.

What Bill 48 started off with, and the announcements that the Minister of Education made last week, demonstrate that this government is dead set on creating a crisis in education, so then they can find some kind of a solution down the line.

Playing politics with public education is the most irresponsible thing that any politician can do, followed closely by health care when you compromise the quality of health care. I would put those two issues, education and health care, together.

Where I want to lead with this—because 20 minutes really went fast—is that reducing resources, compromising and undermining school boards, banning cellphones and making online courses mandatory is not how you build a strong public education system, and it's not how you build a strong economy. It's not how you build equity and inclusion in this province. Because if you get public education right, a lot of other things fall into place. And where this government is headed is exactly down the wrong road, Mr. Speaker.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's always a pleasure to be able to stand in this House and contribute to discussion. I've had the chance now to stand and speak for a little bit about this piece of legislation. When it was introduced, I had the great privilege and honour of being able to do part of the leadoff on second reading, as well as third reading of the bill. It's been a real honour to be able to speak to all the positive impacts that this piece of legislation brings to education.

Of course, our announcement last Friday is just the next step in the right direction when it comes to turning our province around and creating the opportunities that truly

work for students, that work for parents and that work for educators. I'm very, very proud to see the steps that the Ministry of Education is taking in this regard, with the full support of our caucus. I'm sorry to hear that there are so many concerns that have been brought up according to the member for Waterloo.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity in this House of sitting and listening to a member bring up some concerns—actually, I believe it was the member for Timmins. At that time, I was telling a little bit of a story about when I was growing up and had the chance to read a lot of kids' stories. I liked kids' stories. I was telling the story about the unfortunate situation where the NDP seemed to have read *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* just one too many times. That seems to have become their mantra, Speaker.

I was thinking a little bit earlier about another book that I found so applicable in my conversations with members of the New Democratic Party in listening to them, and that is a book that many of you may have heard of called *Chicken Little*. In the *Chicken Little* story, of course, the sky is always falling: "The sky is falling." To listen to the NDP speak to this legislation, the sky is falling; they're crying wolf.

These are just a few of the unfortunate childish games that we see coming from the opposition. It's been very disappointing to see that. I'm sure that in our debate that we'll have a chance to offer on this side of the House, it will be beneficial and it will be up-building. I look forward to continuing to hear it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm not going to stoop to those childish comments. I am just going to respond, if I may, to the fantastic comments by the member from Waterloo who, I think, spoke with such experience and expertise in this area, which I really appreciate.

I want to just reflect on one thing she said, which was that she talked about the role that teachers play in our school system and that educators, adults who work in our system, play in addressing particularly mental health needs which we know are increasing across our education system among youth and children.

When she spoke of the mental health waiting list right now for supports for our students, it reminded me of an email I received from a teacher at a school—not in my riding; just outside it. But many young people in my riding would go to this school. Half of the students in that school have IEPs. Now, for those folks who may not be aware or have anybody in the school system right now, that's an individualized education plan. It's basically identifying that your child had some kind of learning difference special need, and it's a plan. You're talking about—

Interjection.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's not just for—as I said, a different education—

Interjection.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, right. As I said, a different education experience, which includes gifted children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please. Order, please.

Ms. Marit Stiles: You are correct. Half of the students at this school have them, and I can tell you, some of them will be gifted and some will not, but that's beside the point, because my point is that in that school since September last year they have had five children commit suicide. So don't tell me that I don't know the numbers on that one, my friend, because five kids have died and you are taking teachers out of the classrooms.

Mr. Dave Smith: You misrepresented an IEP.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I did not misrepresent an IEP. Mr. Speaker, I did not misrepresent that. I know exactly what I'm talking about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): If you were in your seat, I might recognize you.

Questions and comments. The member from Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd ask the member to withdraw her unparliamentary comment.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Withdrawn.

Mr. Dave Smith: As the lead developer of Ontario's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. Thank you very much.

The member for Davenport was asked to withdraw.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Did you ask me to withdraw?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Well, I'm asking you now.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I will withdraw, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I return now to the member—

Ms. Donna Skelly: She just did it again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Look, I didn't hear it. The member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: As the lead developer on Ontario's most used IEP software, I have a great understanding of what the IEP is actually used for.

But I'd like to talk specifically about something that came from the member for Waterloo. She talked about virtual learning and how she didn't understand why we needed to have e-learning courses for it. Let me give you a specific example why. We're training our children today for the jobs of today and the future. Virtual teams are now used as one of the most used items in large companies. I'm going to give you some examples of companies. SAP, IBM, General Electric, Dell, the US Department of Agriculture and some new high-tech firms like Zapier, Hubstaff and Buffer all use virtual teams.

A recent study of engineering groups show that the best predictor of success is doing it early or before. That said, we've seen that even novices excel by practising some key behaviours that, while also critical in face-to-face settings, must be amplified in virtual ones. This is coming from the Harvard Business Review in December 2014. E-learning is a key component of all the jobs that we will be doing in

the future. We're training our children in high school for the jobs of today and the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I would like to take a couple of minutes to talk about the question of equity here, because some of the new requirements for students are incredibly inequitable, and I honestly believe that the government has not thought this through, as with much of their legislation.

With a billion dollars of cuts that have been announced to education, along with the fact that there will be fewer adults and fewer teachers in the classroom, comes the requirement that students complete four online courses. While that might work for some students, it doesn't work for all students. It certainly doesn't work well for students who are struggling with poverty, students who are precariously housed, students who may be experiencing homelessness, students who do not have access to the technology that they would require.

I really think that this is so profoundly significant and symbolic of the way that so much of the government's legislation has proceeded here. If you're not thinking about all of the students in Ontario and all of their various situations, then you're not doing your job as legislators.

Lastly, I want to go back to the question of service dogs. I think, again, you haven't thought through what happens if that is your one concrete plan. You have not thought through what happens to a family that has never had a dog before and has a child who suddenly doesn't have access to the therapy they need, and suddenly has to figure out how to also care for a dog, not to mention the significant finances that takes. Back to the drawing board, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Now we'll return to the member for Waterloo to give her an opportunity to sum up what she heard during the questions and comments period.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Obviously, it's a very emotional debate. I know the member from Davenport has had personal interventions and experiences with students who have committed suicide. I know that her concerns are well-founded, in that resources need to be in place when students come forward and express a need for help around mental health. I know that hit a nerve.

Just to the member from Northumberland-Peterborough South, who extrapolated on his extensive business experience around e-learning: What I had said—I don't know if you heard it because I don't know what you hear—is that e-learning shouldn't be mandatory. Not every student wants to take an e-learning class. It's unfortunate that the member didn't have an opportunity to hear what I actually said.

On the mental health piece, though, I do want to say the Ontario College of Teachers reports that an estimated 1.2 million children and youth are affected by mental illness, yet less than 20% receive appropriate treatment, often-times because they're not diagnosed or detected, and 70% of mental health problems are often seen first in childhood or adolescence.

1800

What I say to the government side of the House is that if you're removing the supports, and the adults and the teachers, and increasing class size—there's a direct correlation between the opportunities that teachers have to identify, and work with parents to address, some of those issues on a go-forward basis.

Bill 48 is a bill that's probably going to pass in this House. What the Minister of Education announced last week—we shouldn't go anywhere near any of that stuff. I think that you are destabilizing the public education system, and I think you're doing it intentionally. That's not the way to build a good, strong province up.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

VISITORS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I recognize the member for Windsor West on a point of order.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to recognize two of my constituents, who drove over four hours today to listen to my late show question. We have Meg and Craig Rigden, all the way from Windsor. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Point of order, the member for Peterborough-Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: When the member from Waterloo referred to me, she referred to the wrong riding. I am from Peterborough-Kawartha, not Northumberland-Peterborough South.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Much better looking, too.

Mr. Dave Smith: Yes.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That was unparliamentary. My apologies to the member for Northumberland-Peterborough South.

Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

AUTISM TREATMENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Windsor West has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. The member for Windsor West will have five minutes to state her case, and the minister or her parliamentary assistant will have five minutes to respond.

I turn now to the member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. As I had mentioned, I had asked a question on March 7 of this year. It was to the Premier, but he pushed it off to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to answer—which she didn't. She really didn't answer the question,

which is why we are here today: to try to actually get an answer.

I'm going to point out as well that when I asked the question, I referenced Meg. Meg is a mother of two kids under the age of five, both of them on the autism spectrum. Meg is here again today. She came here from Windsor, hoping that this time the government would not just answer the question but would actually look at her to answer the question. Because when the minister answered the question the other day, she went out of her way to turn her back to Meg and her husband, who were in the audience, and to the other parents who were here. They really would like an answer, where they stand there and look and honestly answer these parents who came.

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I just want to point out—I know I'm getting heckled—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Just if I could—sorry for the interruption. You made an allegation that the minister turned her back. You know you're supposed to speak to the Speaker. The minister was speaking to the Speaker, just to point that out. I believe she was speaking to the Speaker at that time, as opposed to turning her back to the parents in the gallery.

Applause.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm glad the Conservatives are applauding that. That was actually the way that Meg and her husband felt; they shared that with me.

But anyway, Speaker, Meg's concern is that she went to a round table. She was invited, with about two days' notice, to attend a closed-door round table, an invitation-only round table on a school day and a work day, that took place between the hours of 1 and 3 p.m. It already excluded a large number of parents, because it was by invite only. They hand-picked who they wanted to come, and then they did it when parents were either working or would have to rush out to pick their kids up from school.

But Meg was able to get to that round table. Anybody here who has children with any developmental disability, or knows anyone who has children with a developmental disability, knows how incredibly difficult it can be for you to make arrangements for a caregiver, or for someone to pick them up from school, or to be able to bring them with you, to make sure that it's a type of environment that their child is going to be comfortable being in and accommodated.

Meg was able to make it to the meeting, and she felt that some of the concerns she was bringing forward were actually being heard by the government side and that they would take those into consideration, along with the other parents who were there, one of whom was Sherri Taylor. We've heard the minister take a quote where they actually asked Sherri to add a line in to make it sound like the government was doing the right thing, and then the minister stood here and used that quote, completely out of context. When Sherri came forward and said that that was not used in the way that it was intended, the minister apologized by saying, "If I did something wrong," rather than actually acknowledging that she did.

Speaker, we know that the government is saying that the reason for the change to the OAP is because they want to clear a wait-list, but they're not doing it in a responsible way where they're actually going to support these children and these families. To actually have parental choice, which is what they're saying—they're not doing it in a way that will support that. They're not talking about all of the therapies that are actually out there that benefit these children, and they're certainly not providing the funding for these families to be able to go out and access that. Families like Meg's might get \$5,000 in a year for intensive therapy that can cost \$80,000 a year. Parents are talking about selling their homes to be able to provide therapy for their kids.

I notice that the parliamentary assistant to the minister is here tonight. She herself tweeted out publicly to the Liberals when they were going backwards on the OAP, saying that \$8,000 wasn't enough, and now she stands and defends the fact that there are families who are going to get even less than that. How has that changed? If they want to be clearing wait-lists, they need to do it in a responsible manner by actually listening to the families and listening to the experts, Speaker.

They are talking about the 14,000-plus wait-list for Passport funding because people get cut off at 18, because magically this government and the one before it think that their developmental disability goes away. They could clear that wait-list easily by supporting my bill, Noah and Gregory's Law, and they could do something similar with the OAP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler, now has five minutes to respond.

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today in the House to provide some clarity on our government's autism program, and to also speak to the points raised by the member from Windsor West.

Just before March break, the member opposite told us about her constituent Meg. I personally met Meg—as you mentioned, she was at the round table in Windsor—and I personally got to hear from her, and it was certainly an emotional afternoon as she talked about her two children with autism. She highlighted how the changes would affect both of her children.

You asked about our government and what we would say to Meg and the parents who were out on the front lawn of the Legislature. As you know, I'm the mother of two children with autism, and I understand what Meg and many other parents are going through. Any time a change in government programming or policy is announced that affects you on an individual basis, it is natural to immediately start feeling concerned. When the Liberals introduced their changes just a few short years ago, I was one of those parents, like the ones mentioned, who stood outside on the front lawn.

What drove our ministry's concerns to move towards change was that we were looking at a system that had a devastatingly long wait-list attached to it, a wait-list that kids were just trickling off of. It was clear that if we did

nothing, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, that if we did nothing about those wait-lists, some of those children who were on that wait-list, even if they were five years old, might never actually get off that wait-list, the way it was trickling, before they turned 18, and get any money from our government. The minister realized that something had to be done.

When I hosted these round tables across the province, I heard from hundreds of families, including Meg. Each family highlighted their own situations, and each family raised different concerns about the Liberal system that we were left with. What was clear from these consultations is that that system was broken, with three out of four kids languishing on wait-lists.

1810

Our program is a step towards addressing that concern. Under our government's reforms, we are clearing the wait-list and ensuring that the 23,000 children who are currently waiting to receive some service from their government will get some support. Our government will continue to make sure that we can help all children with autism in this province, and as the minister said in this Legislature this morning, we will continue to make enhancements to this program where we can.

What our government inherited from the Liberals was a system that was simply not working. It left more than 2,400 children waiting for a diagnosis and 23,000 children waiting for service. We knew we had to step in.

I recognize that this is a very difficult situation, and I understand what Meg and these families are going through. I will never stop doing my part to advocate for children with autism within government.

When my son was diagnosed with autism, my world flipped upside down. Our parental instinct is to hope for the best but to never stop advocating for what our children need to be the best that they can be. Again, I will never stop advocating for these children within our government.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Minister of Energy. The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will have five minutes to state her case and the minister's parliamentary assistant will have up to five minutes to respond.

I turn now to the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Yesterday, I asked the Minister of Energy if the Eastern Fields Wind Power Project in the Nation township was on or off. The government had announced its cancellation along with 757 other projects on July 13. The minister failed to answer my simple and direct question, and instead provided a vague response, and spin about electricity at fair prices.

I understand that the minister's cancellation order is a separate matter from issuing licences, technical reviews and public consultations. But that's beside the point. The

point is, certain projects cancelled by the minister may have reached developmental milestones while under the cancellation order. The point is, communities that were told in writing that projects were scheduled for cancellation may see projects going forward after all. The point is, these communities may not have voiced their opposition during developmental milestones because they were told the projects were cancelled.

The minister doesn't seem to know if any of the 758 projects have reached developmental milestones since his cancellation order. As an independent MPP, I consider it my parliamentary duty to raise this concern of the 758 to my constituents and my fellow Ontarians.

It appears some projects will be cancelled, but some may move forward. If Eastern Fields moves forward, that would be devastating for the people of my riding. Many more communities could suffer the same fate. We need the truth. Ontarians are entitled to know, and they need to know before it's too late.

Ontarians may have been completely blindsided by the government's promise. Ontario citizens and groups opposed to the project may not have participated in calls for public consultation because the government led them to believe that the projects were cancelled. After all, under a clearly stated cancellation order, it is highly possible that Ontarians did not feel the need to closely follow the 758 throughout the province.

How many other projects in Ontario have been issued some kind of permit since the cancellation order? How many are moving forward under the radar and are approaching or have obtained milestones for approval?

I'm calling on this government to issue a thorough review of its cancellation order and to provide Ontario communities with the clear status of the 758 projects—which ones are indeed cancelled and which ones are proceeding—so that Ontarians not be fooled by cancellation rhetoric. The people of Ontario need and deserve an updated list, a list they can check against the cancelled-project list of July 2018. I'm inviting all Ontarians who were opposed to any of the 758 projects to be alert: Your government's promise may not hold water. From their vague answers in the House, it appears that the government is unable to inform Ontarians of which of the 758 projects have passed milestones since the cancellation order.

Mr. Speaker, I asked yesterday whether the Eastern Fields Wind Power Project was on or off, and the minister was unable to answer, so I'll be more precise. Which of the 758 projects, including Eastern Fields, have passed developmental milestones since the cancellation order, and will the government rescind any granted approvals issued since the cancellation order?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll turn now to the minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Markham–Stouffville, for up to five minutes.

Mr. Paul Calandra: The member raised this question yesterday. I can certainly confirm that the project that she referenced, the Eastern Fields wind farm, was one of the

750 projects that was cancelled. I can also confirm that indeed Ontario is not purchasing power from this project.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Kitchener Centre has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The member for Kitchener Centre will have up to five minutes to state her case, and the minister's parliamentary assistant will have up to five minutes to respond.

I turn now to the member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today, I posed a question to the minister of corrections, and I have to be honest: It was difficult to pose the question. My question was about what the government's plan is to address anti-Black racism. But I had to provide that question to the minister of corrections, which, to be brutally honest, is a prime example of what systemic racism actually looks like. The fact that we would take a directorate aimed to explore racism and why it happens and address the root causes and move it from its own independent space to under corrections is one of the most basic ways that we perpetuate racism.

Taking a step back, my understanding is that the OPS, the Ontario public service, has admitted that they have failed to address the concerns of racialized employees, and they have gone so far, in their own internal investigations, to specify that they have not done enough for Black and Indigenous employees. I stood in the House and asked, with great sincerity, "What is the government's plan?"

The reason I asked the question was not to get into the media or have some kind of big explosion on the other side, but I asked it because this is my job. I am the critic for anti-racism, and since I began in that role I have requested that the minister provide me with a briefing. I have seen two ministers go into this portfolio of corrections, and nobody will provide me with my briefing as the critic for anti-racism. What that means is that when the communities ask me what the plan is, I have absolutely no choice but to say, "I don't know."

My role, prior to being elected, was to provide anti-racism training to a variety of organizations—post-secondary organizations; and I worked in public schools, I worked in private schools and I also worked with police services through the university when I was at Wilfrid Laurier University. I can provide support to this government if there is in fact a real dedication to doing anti-racism work. Unfortunately, time and time again, when an issue arises, there seems to be a desire to pivot away from the actual problem and instead focus on how they will not be answering my questions.

Today, for instance, when I brought up an actual case that is happening right now—I understand that they cannot speak to me about the merits of the case etc. We all understand that, but that wasn't actually the question. The question was, if we have an area within the government

where anti-Black racism is happening, what is the plan to address it?

1820

Instead of providing me with a response—I can only go with what I know. In July 2018, the government had only been in power for a little over a month. They took away a moratorium that would have stopped government from actually dismissing racialized employees while seeking an answer. So I ask very clearly, with great sincerity, what was solved between the time that the investigation started and July 2018 that would allow me to do my job and tell Black employees, in a government that wants to be diverse and have a variety of racial and ethnic others join us to do this important work—how do I go to an Indigenous prospective employee and say, "Well, there's no moratorium. I have no idea what the plan is for anti-racism. Let's hope for the best," when I'm somebody who has been doing this work and I know that we need to do better?

We cannot do this. You don't address anti-racism by refusing to admit that it's happening when the OPS is telling you it's happening. They're relying on us in this chamber to discuss the ways that we're going to address racism. So I am pleading with the other side to move away from the notes they have been provided with, to speak from their hearts and explain to me, as the critic for anti-racism, what I am supposed to say to racialized communities across this province when they ask me, "What is the plan?"

We cannot hug out racism. You can't hug out anti-Black racism. You can't hug out anti-Indigenous racism. You cannot hug out Islamophobia. It is impossible to do that. But if you really want to give folks a hug, why don't we first solve the problem? Address racism in a real way, work across the aisles, talk to people who have done this work, and be authentic when the questions are posed.

That is all that I am asking for: How are we going to tell the public that racism is being addressed in this government in 2019?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services will have up to five minutes to respond. I turn now to the member for Brampton South.

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this important issue. Having had the opportunity to work with dedicated, talented Ontario public servants since the election last year, I'm highly motivated to ensure that the province's workplace is accepting and respectful. Discrimination and harassment are unacceptable in the OPS or any other workplace. This is not negotiable.

Under the leadership of our exceptional President of the Treasury Board, I know that the Ontario public service is committed to achieving and maintaining an inclusive and respectful workplace. As a government, we hold them to a high standard, but I know they have what it takes to meet and exceed our expectations.

I know that the member across the aisle referenced a matter that is before the courts. The appropriate venue to

respond to that specific allegation will be through the legal process. As a result, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the specific allegations cited by the member opposite. I'm sure she understands this.

What I can say, and I won't hesitate to say, is that acceptance and respect are two values that underscore our government's relationship with public servants. In fact, acceptance and respect for the dignity of every human being are fundamental Canadian values.

While Canadians overwhelmingly reject hate, we know that racism and other forms of bigotry persist. Hate has tragic consequences. It violates our society's commitment to be kind and fair to others, it prevents individuals from achieving their potential, and it prevents communities from harnessing the collective talent of all its members.

Mr. Speaker, recent experience reminds us that hate has tragic consequences. Some people in Ontario, including the Black community, Indigenous, Muslim, Sikh and Jewish communities, deal with systemic racism and bias on a regular basis. While this hate is not always obvious to those who aren't directly affected, its consequences are real, and anyone who thinks hate doesn't affect them is mistaken.

History teaches us that those who target minorities are a threat to society as a whole.

Hate persists when it's allowed to fester. As the people of Ontario, we share a responsibility to speak out against hatred in all of its forms.

As legislators, we have a unique platform to fight hate and build a better society that treats its members with the respect they're due as individuals, regardless of race, religion or anything else. We can lead by example. We can celebrate the achievements of all our people. We can call out unfair circumstances, discrimination and hate.

We must work actively to ensure that Ontario remains one of the safest places to be a minority, while building a more inclusive society where all people can strive to reach their maximum potential.

I know that is what the member opposite intends to do, and I thank her for that. That is precisely what our government will do for our employees. It's what we will demand of all of our employers. And ultimately, if we work together as elected leaders, I know that's what our society will achieve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

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

The House adjourned at 1826.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Downey, Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	
Dunlop, Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Orléans	
Lecce, Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (IND)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stephen Crawford
Doug Downey, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Kaleed Rasheed
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Dave Smith
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Chris Glover
Christine Hogarth, Logan Kanapathi
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Dave Smith, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Parm Gill
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Jane McKenna
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Lorne Coe, Michael Coteau
Mike Harris, Faisal Hassan
Jane McKenna, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Toby Barrett, Catherine Fife
Goldie Ghamari, Jim McDonell
Norman Miller, Suze Morrison
Michael Parsa, Peggy Sattler
Kinga Surma
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Will Bouma, Paul Calandra
Lorne Coe, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Select Committee on Financial Transparency / Comité spécial de la transparence financière

Chair / Président: Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Doug Downey
Roman Baber, Doug Downey
Catherine Fife, Robin Martin
Lindsey Park, Ross Romano
Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria, Sandy Shaw
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim