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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 March 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 mars 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

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 19, 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): When we last debated Bill 74, the member for Whitby made his presentation and had concluded his presentation, but it is now time for questions and comments related to the speech given by the member for Whitby.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always a pleasure to stand in the House and talk about legislation, and in particular the health bill, probably the most significant piece of legislation that's come before us in a very long time, because health care is something that affects everyone. Everybody is going to access health care in their lifetime.

Our concern with this bill is that it opens the door to unprecedented privatization of health care public services. I've talked about this before, that this government has not yet been able to say—and maybe the member today can reassure me—that this bill will not allow our public health care system to be privately health care delivered. So we want to make sure that our public health care system is intact. As we know, they keep using those words, so that's good, but then we want to have it a publicly delivered health care system, not a private, for-profit service delivery in health care. That's our biggest concern with regard to this bill because it is an enabling legislation.

Some of it is not clear, when it talks about the entities that the minister can have—the “my health care” groups. They say that it's only about Meals on Wheels but they won't actually state it in the bill. Sometimes what you don't say says a lot.

So, it would be good to hear that we're going to have our public health care system be a public, not-for-profit

health care service delivery. I ask the government side, whoever speaks on this bill, to say those words and get on record so that we all can put our concerns to rest that it's not going to be opening up this legislation to have a massive, unprecedented privatization in our health care system.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Good morning, everyone. I would like to comment on Bill 74. I think it's a really important piece of legislation.

We haven't ever suggested that this is about privatization. I believe this is something the NDP are suggesting because they're trying to scare people, frankly—and they are, because I get little old ladies phoning me, telling me that they're afraid that they're not going to have home care anymore. I say, “Why are you afraid of that?” Well, it's because the NDP is suggesting in the House that we're taking that away from them. We're not taking that away from anyone. Our point is to make the system better. We're working very hard to make a comprehensive and connected system so people have a continuum of care in, as the minister has said many times, our publicly funded system. That is not what we're talking about at all.

I just wanted to read a little bit from the CEO of Alberta health, who was talking about the amount of money that is spent on administration in health care. Across Canada, the number is 25% in all of the jurisdictions overall. In Ontario, it is 30% spent on health care administration. Alberta health spends 3.3% of total expenses on administration. So I do think there are learnings that we can find. We can do better. What we're focused on is making sure that we put the money into front-line patient services so that patients get services when and where they need them in a timely way, so they're not stuck in hallways, as the minister has said many times. That is really the focus of our attention: to make better service for the people of Ontario, for the things that matter most to them, like health care, which is very important.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments. We have the member from—oh, for heaven's sakes, sorry—Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad you got that location.

It's an honour to stand up in the House today and speak against Bill 74. The Conservative Party in this province and in the colony that preceded this province have a long history of fighting against progressive change. In the early 1800s, Bishop Strachan, who was the leading Tory of the day, fought against public education and he fought against

the creation of democracy in Upper Canada. In the 1930s, the Conservative government under Mitch Hepburn gathered together a gang of goons to go beat up workers in Oshawa who were daring to unionize. John Robarts was generally a Progressive Conservative and one who actually did make some progressive change, but in 1965, he fought against public health care. And this government here is rolling us back all the way.

Bill 74 is an assault on our public health care system. The premise is that it's going to reduce administrative costs, which of course would be a good thing, but it's actually opening the door to private, for-profit health care, which we know will cost more and deliver less. This government recently—just last week, actually—introduced changes and a huge funding cut to our public education system. Last summer, they cancelled municipal elections. And in this House, four months ago, the Conservative Party voted to suspend the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of the people of this province—again, an assault on democracy. And Bill 66 that this government is passing is an assault on unionized workers.

This government is rolling back all the progressive changes that have happened in spite of the fact that they fought against them as they were rolled out over 200 years. So when we say this government is taking us backwards, they're taking this province backwards to the early 1800s.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: It's my pleasure as well to provide some comments this morning on the debate. I think that the member opposite needs to remember that our government was elected on a commitment to ensure that we would end hallway health care. We are fully committed to delivering on that promise.

The fact is that our Ontario health care system is currently on life support. Patients are forgotten on waiting lists. More than 1,000 patients are receiving care in hallways every day, and the average wait time to access a bed for long-term care is 146 days. That is completely shameful and just not good enough in the province of Ontario.

0910

I believe, and our colleagues on this side believe that patients and families have been getting lost in the health care system, falling through the cracks and waiting far too long for care. This has had a hugely negative impact on the health and well-being of patients, but also on their loved ones, both physically and mentally. Our health care system has been facing capacity pressures for many years. It does not have the right mix of services, beds or digital tools to be able to grow and rapidly help the aging population, which has increasingly had more complex and acute needs. So our commitment is to ensure that, going forward, our public health system actually puts patients at the centre of their care and to make sure that our services are better and more connected services, with the patient at the centre of care.

Speaking specifically to Bill 74, never once has there been anything in the bill that says that we are going to be

privatizing health care. There is not one single word in the bill to that effect—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. We will now return to the member from Whitby for final comments.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Bill 74 speaks to building a connected, public health care system for the patient—despite the fear-mongering that we continue to hear.

When I spoke about the bill yesterday for about 10 minutes, I made several key points at the time, and I just want to reiterate them as part of my windup here today.

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. Those who served in opposition on this side of the House last term will know what we heard from the Liberal government on the Patients First piece, and it didn't have those features at all. With these teams, providers can communicate directly with each other, creating a seamless care experience for the patients and the families. You know from your experience—you know this too, Speaker—in your constituency offices that that's what your constituents want: a seamless, unified health care system.

Modernizing the health care system is going to take time, but there's a continuum of the public engagement—as recently as a week ago, when I sat with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and several health care providers in the region of Durham. We're continuing that process of engagement.

The people of Ontario have been and always will be the government's priority and focus.

Speaker, and those watching here this morning, be assured of this: We will create a public health care system that works for everyone—a public health care system.

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

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: It is an honour, as always, to rise before this House on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park, especially to debate a bill on health care. Health care is an issue that is very important to my constituents. I have to say, as the MPP for Parkdale–High Park and as a public health professional, it is my duty to strongly oppose this bill, Bill 74. This is a bill that is making sweeping changes to our public health care system for the worse. This bill proposes the largest restructuring of Ontario's health care system since medicare.

Speaker, make no mistake: This restructuring is all about privatization. This bill does not mandate any improvements to existing care. It does not add or expand any health care services. It does not address any of the glaring issues our health care system is currently facing.

The Conservatives like to say that our current system is broken. It's not broken, Speaker; it's underfunded. It's underfunded because of successive Liberal and Conservative governments that have failed to make health care a priority. We now have a system where, over time, public dollars are continuously being siphoned off from patient care into private profit, and that is making our health care

system itself sick. What it needs to be well is better funding and protection from private profits at all costs. Breaking down the system is not the answer.

Here is what our health care system needs right now, which is nowhere in this bill:

—increased spending to hire more front-line workers—not in the bill.

—a plan to reduce wait times in order to get rid of hall-way medicine—not in the bill. In my riding of Parkdale–High Park, we have St. Joseph’s hospital. St. Joe’s serves people from 15 urban neighbourhoods. The emergency department is one of the busiest in the province. It’s designed for 65,000 visits, but manages over 100,000 visits annually.

—a solution for painfully long wait times for mental health and addiction services—again, not in this bill.

There’s also no plan for caring for our aging population in terms of addressing the crisis in our long-term-care facilities and in home care. As has been mentioned by the other side, the wait-list for a long-term bed is at over 33,000, and yet this bill does not address that problem.

Finally, I have to say this as a public health professional: There is absolutely no strategy or program focused on prevention or health promotion, on the social determinants of health, the upstream factors that impact health the most, the factors that can keep people out of hospital in the first place.

There are so many issues with the bill, from the creation of a super-bureaucracy to the complete and utter lack of consideration on health equity issues to the lack of consideration of the labour disruption that is going to impact patient care, and also the cuts to the front-line health care workers.

As the Ontario Health Coalition, the defenders of our public health care system, have clearly stated, “This legislation itself is terribly written, with no principles and no public interest protections while the government has given itself unprecedented powers to order mega-mergers, amalgamations, transfers of our local health services, closures of our local health services, privatization of significant portions of our public and non-profit health care services and closures of entire health care providers. It takes away the last vestiges of local control over our health care.”

This bill amends 30 statutes, which itself is like having 30 different bills in one omnibus legislation—and, mind you, Speaker, with no public consultation. And there is no evidence to support the 30-plus amendments they’re making to our health care system. The only thing that is there is that we see public dollars going into private sector pockets, and the consolidation of powers into the minister’s hands rather than in public hands.

And as we’ve seen and witnessed with all government bills so far, like all bills, this will be rushed through the Legislature at a reckless pace. It’s going to become law before the people of this province have had a chance to really engage in the process on a piece of legislation that is going to impact every single Ontarian. This is truly undemocratic.

Speaker, as I mentioned, this bill was problematic from the very beginning. If you will recall, this legislation was leaked by a whistle-blower, a public servant, and when the NDP flagged the problems with this bill, the Minister of Health went on record to say it was “a very early draft of legislation.” It was completely dismissed. Now we have the bill in front of us, and it’s 80% identical to the leaked bill.

0920

On March 8, 2019, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announced the board of directors for the Ontario Health agency. The board members are people with investment backgrounds. It also includes a member of the Premier’s Council on Improving Healthcare and Ending Hallway Medicine. What about front-line workers? Is anyone who is on the board a front-line health care worker? Front-line health care workers are the people who are in the system. They work day in and day out in the system; they know what’s working, what’s not working and how to fix it—someone who is actually on the ground, interacting with the patients. But no; no front-line health care worker.

In fact, this proposed legislation was not only created behind closed doors without public input; there are no public consultations being done currently that allow people to still have a say.

Also, Speaker, among the members of the board in this new super-agency are people like Shelly Jamieson, formerly of Mike Harris’s Health Services Restructuring Commission, which, let me give everybody a reminder, forced all mergers and closures in the Mike Harris era. She was involved in ordering the closures of thousands of chronic care public hospital beds and the creation of thousands of private, for-profit, long-term-care beds. We have folks like them in the agency.

Also on the super-agency board are corporate people from the chamber of commerce. Let’s not forget, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is campaigning for the privatization of health care, folks from banks and financial institutions who have been pushing for P3s, public privatization, from which they are taking exorbitant profits, and others.

This super-agency has extraordinary powers over our local health care services to order restructuring, closures, transfers and privatization. Health care is a \$60-billion portfolio and we have only 15 people who are part of the super-agency that is focused on reviewing the bids from private companies for health care projects. The focus, of course, will be on profit, not on care. I can’t see how this system will be beneficial to any Ontarian.

Despite this bill only being on second reading, the board has already held its inaugural meeting with, again, no public announcement, and again, behind closed doors. The LHINs were required to hold public meetings. If this is truly “The People’s Health Care Act,” why is the government hiding this bill from the people of Ontario? Again, because they know that what is in the bill is not supported by the people of Ontario.

Not only has the government not conducted any public consultation on this sweeping new health care restructuring law, it is making now a travesty of the public legislative process in our province, and has appointed a board that is dismantling the public, non-profit health care sector in order to privatize them for the profit-taking of the industries in which they are involved. So, essentially the government is already putting this law into force before it has even completed the parliamentary process and debates.

Speaker, I don't have too much time but I do want to say that, at the end of the day, free and equal access to health care is a fundamental Canadian right. More than that, it is part of our identity, and it is something that we hold very dear. The government knows that what they've done is not right. They're misleading Ontarians about the benefits of the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I will ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Finally, Speaker, as I have said many times in this House, we have a mantra in public health which holds true for every issue: Prevention is better than cure. If the Ford government truly wanted to make transformational health care changes, then today we would be discussing how we can end the crisis in affordable housing and homelessness, how we can ensure food security for every Ontarian, how we can end systemic racism, how we can implement universal pharmacare and dental care for all, and how we can provide mental health care and addiction supports for every Ontarian, especially children and youth. All of these measures would have a much greater impact on our health care system and prevent hospitalizations and hallway medicine, and save money in the long run.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's a pleasure to be able to stand and speak to the member from Parkdale–High Park's interesting contributions to the debate around Bill 74 this morning. I fear the member may suffer from some terminological inexactitude with regard to some of the concepts that she brought forward to this legislation.

It's clear that this legislation is in fact legislation that addresses 15 years of not just Liberal waste and mismanagement, but let's be very clear, the Liberal government that was propped up by a New Democratic Party for a great deal of that time. I believe the number is 97% of the time that the New Democrats voted with the Ontario Liberal government. Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne's legacy is clear. Frankly, this is the mess we have to clean up. It's the mess that Ontarians sent us here to fix. On June 7, 2018, they decided to elect a strong majority government for the PCs, and one of the big reasons they decided to do that was to end hallway health care.

This is a key part of that commitment to ending hallway health care, to finally creating a system that breaks down the bureaucracy, the burdensome growth of LHINs, sub-

LHINs, CCACs—I believe there are 14 different local health integration networks that are now being subsumed into the Ontario health teams. This is really about streamlining services. It's about providing better levels of care in ways that put more money into front-line care. I'm so disappointed in the opposition that they fail to recognize this, that they fail to see the benefits that this will bring to patients, who finally will be able to make one call, to have one care provider, to have someone who will be able to take care of them through that journey.

I'm excited about the continuum of care that our government is passionate about. We're finally focusing on the patient. We're not going to focus on special interest groups, like the members of the opposition. We're going to make sure that we're focusing on the best needs of all Ontario patients.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: When we talk about the provision of health services in Kiiwetinoong, health equity and health equality—it does not exist. I'm not sure, when we talk about health services for First Nations, for Indigenous peoples in the province of Ontario and improving them—it's very important that the way the system treats our people, it's almost as if we do not exist, that we are not people. I know that my friends across the floor, if they were in my community, they would not allow that. They would not allow their children, their parents, their grandchildren, to live under those conditions.

I know, dealing with Cat Lake the last few months and dealing with Grassy Narrows, when these communities are asking for help, there's no help. Is it because we're First Nations? Is this because we're on-reserve? I hear, "It's everybody. It's a public system," but because we're on-reserve, we get played into this jurisdictional Ping-Pong with our lives and with the health of our people. That's not acceptable, and we have to understand that.

One of the key things in our territory, in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation—they had this tripartite agreement with Ontario and Canada back in 2017 called the Charter of Relationship Principles, which is to transform the health care system in the territories. There has been no word from the province on that process to bring back the accountability, the funding and the responsibility to the communities. That's what we need for our First Nations: to bring back those three things. Meegwetch.

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

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: It's a pleasure to speak to this in the comments, because this bill really speaks to strengthening our public health care system, exactly what we needed to do. When we got elected, when we were campaigning in June, we promised to fix the health care system, and that's exactly what this piece of legislation is doing. It's going to put the patients first, which, for whatever reason, the previous government—which was propped up by the members opposite 97% of the time—failed to do for Ontarians, and that's exactly why we were elected. The system was on life support, and that's unacceptable. Change was needed.

One of the stats that sticks out to me in this debate and which recognizes why this was so important is how much the province spends on administrative costs. If we look at the provincial average, it's approximately 25%, just like the member from Eglinton–Lawrence had noted in her comments. Twenty-five per cent is the average; Ontario spends 30% of its budget on that. If we look at provinces like Alberta, they're spending 3%. And that's unacceptable, when we have families, we have patients spending days in hallways of our health care, waiting over 140 days to get a bed in a long-term-care facility. That's unacceptable. That's exactly why we got elected. It's exactly what this piece of legislation is going to do: It's going to make sure that our health care system focuses on patients. It puts the patient first and ensures that every single person in this province has access to good public health care.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I rise on behalf of the constituents of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. I will say that the number one priority for those residents is health care. We heard it on the doorstep. I continue to hear it.

In fact, what I will agree with with the members opposite is that this health care system is on life support because of the chronic underfunding of the current Liberals. In fact, this system is the least funded per capita in all of Canada. We have the least per capita funding. This is something that needs to be addressed—the actual funding in this system.

Really, this is being held together, as we said, by front-line workers. They are the ones who, day in and day out, with their heroic efforts, are keeping this system going. I've seen it this week. My father was in emergency this week, and in addition to the overcrowding in emergency, they had a code silver, which is an active shooter warning. So they have their hands full, and they are doing their best to keep that system running. But, currently, under this government, people are being laid off at hospitals. We are losing front-line workers, we are losing nurses, when we need more front-line workers, not less.

The people of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, in their concerns about the health care system, didn't ask for a super-bureaucracy. They didn't ask for a super-bureaucracy to be packed with people from the investment community, insiders, and people who have nothing but benefit to get from this system in terms of its not-for-profit status.

This government says that they were elected to fix this health care system, but they're in for a rough ride when the people of Ontario see precisely what it is that they are trying to foist on them—which is a system that is not for profit—in fact, our public health care system is in the health care act, and it says all administration of provincial health insurance must be carried out by a public authority on a not-for-profit basis.

So if this is not-for-profit, put it in the bill, because it is not currently in the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member from Parkdale–High Park for final comments.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I know that members on the other side are insisting that it is a public health care system, and I would say, then, why are the members afraid to say “publicly delivered health care system”? There is a difference. Public health care, we know, means public dollars. But where are the public dollars going? Who is providing the service? If it's public dollars that are going to private companies that are delivering the services, then it's not a public health care system. Public dollars going to for-profit is not a public health care system.

Also, in this legislation, the super-agencies and the Ontario health teams—there is a clause in the legislation that allows them to “generate revenue.” What is the purpose of a health care system—to generate revenue? There is nothing in this legislation that explicitly mentions not-for-profit.

Again, if the members on the other side are insisting that there is no private profit role to play in this legislation, why is it not clearly stated in this bill? It has to be explicitly stated so that Ontarians can rest assured that this government is not moving our public health care system into private hands.

Finally, I want to end with the message around prevention, because that is one of the key things that the government can do in terms of preventing hallway medicine. If we had universal pharmacare, for instance, people would be able to take their medicines on time, people would be able to afford the medicines, they would be more productive workers, they would be healthier, and it would be less likely for them to end up in the hospital. So you're spending a little bit up front, yes, but in order to save—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Further debate? The member from Kitchener South–Hespeler.

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you, and good morning, Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 74, our plan to modernize our public health care system. It is a plan that is desperately needed. We inherited a health care system from the previous government that was in absolute crisis, and it's going to take years to get things back on track. Quite simply, as our health minister and Deputy Premier has stated, our current level of care is not patient-centred. Care is being driven by system demands and not by what is best for a patient overall. We've also seen years of costly inefficiencies in our health care system. That's why I ran on a commitment, along with our entire PC team, to ensure that we work towards ending hallway health care. And since we can't seem to stress this enough this morning, we're working to fix our public health care system.

We've been talking continuously about the daily struggles of front-line workers, patients, and their loved ones, as 1,000 people a day are still being treated in hospital hallways and in storage rooms across this province. Mr. Speaker, that is something that needs to change. It's a number that I've watched continue to grow under the Liberal government, even as they continued to spend more

money on health care. Over the last five years, our province has spent 30% more than the Canadian average on administration costs in health care. That's money that could be getting to the front lines, and focused, again, on patient-centred care.

Mr. Speaker, people in my riding are thrilled with the direction our health minister and our government are heading with this bill. As an example, I received an email from Phil, a constituent in Kitchener:

"I have been an active in-patient/outpatient of the Grand River Hospital since November. I am absolutely thrilled with the announcement about overhauling the miserably out of date and out of touch system your government inherited from the Liberals. Their eHealth was a failure before it even started. The amount of repeated information a patient has to emit is staggering. One feels as a broken record with constant retelling of symptoms and the timeline involved, what meds you are taking and what you have taken in the past. The 'hallway medicine' aspect is totally accurate, unfortunately. Only the worst-off get a treatment room. There must have been at least 15 patients in the hallowed halls of the ER. I had to endure two nights waiting for admission and a hospital room."

That is why these changes are so desperately needed, and I'm thrilled that they are being directed by the Minister of Health, who was Ontario's first Patient Ombudsman. She worked tirelessly for months meeting with patients and their families, and fully understands the realities that they're facing trying to navigate the system. Her overall goal is to fix our public health care system, ensuring that it is focused around the needs of Ontario's patients and their families.

One thing that is constantly being raised also in my riding of Kitchener South–Hespeler is the long waits for long-term-care beds. And it's no wonder people are worried and stressed about their loved ones needing long-term care. Since 2003, the average wait times to get a spot have increased by 300%. The provincial average wait now is 146 days. That's why we're committed to continually adding more long-term-care beds right across the province, including the more than 140 that have come to my riding in both Kitchener and Hespeler.

Mr. Speaker, my mom and our family a few years ago were trying to get support for my grandparents through their last few years. It was extremely challenging for my mom. She lived several hours away from her aging parents, and that certainly complicated things for her. She watched her mother deteriorate from dementia, and my very proud grandfather just struggled to keep up with her care. My mom spent hundreds of hours on the phone and in meetings and appointments trying to sort out home care and several long-term-care issues that eventually came up. The stress that I saw my mom endure was just unbearable. It was clear that the system was broken and failing my family.

Every family in Ontario deserves to have a health care system that puts our loved ones first. We deserve to know that our public health care system is sustainable now and for generations to come. We also deserve a system that

supports patients with adequate supports, no matter where they live in this province. That's why Bill 74 is so important for the future of our health care system.

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We want to work towards a health care system that has better connected care, so our loved ones can get the care they need in a timely matter while being treated with dignity and respect, and not being cared for in hallways and in storage rooms. Having a more connected health care system will also lead to better supports for people right across the province. We'll take proactive steps to address their health care needs before it becomes an emergency or a crisis.

Let's think for a moment what that future could look like. With this proposed legislation we could have improved access to secure digital records like online health records and virtual care. Just having both of those will mean less gaps in the system, less waiting and not having to tell your story over and over like Phil from my riding did—simply a more seamless system that will really focus on a patient's needs. This is why our Premier and our government are working so hard to improve our public health care system, because we know what it can be and what it needs to be for the future.

Ontarians also deserve a system that respects their tax dollars. Currently, we're spending 42 cents out of every tax dollar on health care services and yet we rank poorly on critical factors such as wait times, quality of care and system integration, compared to our provincial counterparts. Constituents in my riding have made it clear that they want our government to fix the health care crisis that the previous government left us with, while respecting their tax dollars. That means we need to do what Minister Elliott is proposing in this bill.

She is working towards making our system more sustainable and accessible for years to come. We all know we want to have reliable health care well into the future. In order to ensure that this can happen, we need a system that is connected, one that doesn't leave my constituents struggling to access the next steps in care that they need.

This legislation, if passed, will also work towards modernizing and reorganizing our health care system, and removing multiple layers and agencies. Instead, we would see Ontario Health. If this legislation passes, it would provide better wraparound care across the province as Ontario Health would bring the expertise we see in agencies like Cancer Care Ontario into other critical areas of our health care system. Under our proposed plan to put patients first, having that one agency will help decrease confusion for not just the patients but their families as well as our front-line workers. We owe it to our amazing nurses and our doctors and our PSWs in our system to make sure we have that wraparound care, that we have the patient-centred care, so that they know how to navigate the system as well.

Mr. Speaker, with the minister's proposed legislation, we'll be breaking down the unnecessary silos that we see today in health care. Patients will become part of an Ontario health team and they will not need to take part in any

extra administrative processes. We have health care that is funded in silos right now, and when we have care that's funded in silos, that's exactly how it gets delivered: in silos. We need a more integrated system that looks at the whole person, what's going on with them, and not just their illness.

With the minister's plan, it will mean patients in the future will not just have greater access to care, but also support from a broader network of providers, all working together in that wraparound model, to ensure the best possible outcome. This broader network will include local health care providers, hospitals, home care providers like nurses and PSWs, all working connected together. It will mean that aging seniors who are in our lives will also be able to stay at home longer with the support and care that they need, and it means that that patient's team will have access to their history, their medical needs and be able to connect with them on various types of care without, again, the patient having to retell their story over and over again.

As I end off, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say thank you to the health minister for all the work that she's done on this bill, and as well to her two parliamentary assistants, who have been absolutely amazing working and supporting the minister to get this bill through.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The Meno Ya Win health centre is a hospital in Sioux Lookout that serves about 33,000 people in northwestern Ontario, and which is in my riding. It's a facility that has 47 beds but also runs 20 long-term-care beds.

When we talk about long-term care, I remember being involved in the hospital and the waiting time to get a long-term-care bed was four and a half years. Last year, there was an announcement to build 76 new long-term-care beds. When there was a campaign in May, the Premier showed up at the hospital and promised that he'd be there to shovel, to break the ground to build a new facility. To this date, there has been no response from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on those beds.

Also, I just want to mention quickly that I know during the Cat Lake housing crisis, one of the things I asked for from this government was to have a specialized medical assessment team in the community; specifically, a dermatologist, for example. Within the system that exists today in the region, to access a dermatologist specialist can take months to years to get an appointment. So when we talk about our kids in Cat Lake, it could take five to 10 years just to get all the kids assessed.

Anyway, when we talk about health care, think about First Nations people, Indigenous people. We are people too. Meegwetch.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: I want to thank the speakers from Kitchener South–Hespeler and Kiiwetinoong for their comments.

I want to say also that yesterday I learned something new, and I'm willing to acknowledge that: when the

member from Haldimand–Norfolk spoke yesterday in the House and referred to how public health care in Ontario actually started under Premier John Robarts's Conservative government. I know there's often a lot of discussions around the public health care system, but we all believe in a public health care system, and I think we all, across all parties, believe in a public health care system and the importance of having that for the people of Ontario. I think sometimes where we differ is with respect to how we best deliver it and how we get there. But certainly, we all see the necessity for a strong public health care system that serves our constituents and all the people of Ontario in the best possible way.

There's no doubt that over the last several years there have been problems with our health care system. It's struggled greatly. I'm not going to cast against anybody. At the end of the day, ultimately, our system is not working efficiently; it's not working in the best possible way. And what we are trying to do as a government I think is really quite simple when you break it down: to look at the amount of money that is in administrative offices as opposed to front-line services. That's what we want to do. We want to take the money out of those administrative offices and we want to move that money to the front lines. We want more doctors. We want more nurses. We want more specialized care devices. No one out there is ever going to suggest, I don't think, from any party, that we don't want more nurses, that we don't want more doctors. We want to make sure that the money is invested where it matters the most, to make sure that our loved ones get the care that they deserve, the care that they need and the care we all want to give them.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to focus my time on the health equity issue that is completely lacking in this bill. This bill fails to ensure equitable access to health services across this province, because one of the criteria to become an Ontario health team is based on service delivery of three services from the list, but it does not require a core basket of health services per Ontario health team. In order to receive a designation, if they only require three services from the list, then it is very likely that the health teams will provide services that they have capacity built for. We know very well that in this province mental health and addictions is a sector where we need capacity building, where there need to be significant improvements and investments. So providing mental health care and addiction services becomes a serious challenge and, therefore, would likely fall low on the priority list in terms of the services that a team is able to provide. The result could be health care services that vary depending on where in Ontario you live. For example, in Toronto, you might be able to access mental health services because there is some capacity here. But if you are in the north, particularly in many of the Indigenous communities, it is going to be very, very difficult to access mental health services, because your Ontario health care team does not provide it. Then, members of the community have to leave their

community to travel all the way to places like Ottawa and Toronto just to receive a service, and that is not right.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: It is my pleasure to stand up to speak on Bill 74.

In Ontario, we are blessed with a health care system that people can access when they need it. Unfortunately, our health care system is broken now. Patients are forgotten on waiting lists. More than 1,000 patients are receiving care in hallways every day, and the average wait time to access a bed in a long-term-care home is 146 days.

As a government, we must ensure that our health care system improves and provides the best service to everyone. We promised that we would end hallway health care, and we are fully committed to delivering on that goal. Bill 74 will work towards this end.

We need to build a public health care system focused on the patients and that will direct money to front-line services. By doing this, we will improve the patient experience and provide better and connected care.

We need to build a system where family doctors, hospitals, home and community care providers work together as a team to provide a seamless health care experience for the patients and their families.

Modernizing the system will take time, but we will do this by listening to the people who work on the front lines. This includes consulting doctors, nurses and other care providers as we implement our public health care strategy.

Bill 74 will create a public health care system that works for everyone.

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

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you to the members from Kiiwetinoong, Sault Ste. Marie, Parkdale–High Park and Don Valley North for responding to my debate this morning.

Certainly, when we're talking about this bill, long-term care is a big part of it, because we can't have those waits. We know that we can't have people sitting in hallways waiting for treatment or waiting to be admitted to hospital. We need to be looking at a system that is focused around that patient, that is focused around their families and making sure that we have health care that is connected, so that Phil from my riding doesn't have to repeatedly tell his story over and over again. It has been months since he first went into Grand River Hospital, and yet he is constantly still having to go through his story.

One thing I didn't say earlier that was in his email to me: He said he could go on and on about the fragmented care—again, the silos that I was talking about earlier. If we have health care that is funded in silos, it ends up being delivered in silos. He said, "It is pathetic that a patient has to deal with their illness on top of complaining about their treatment."

It is statements like that that are the reason why the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and our Deputy

Premier knows how important this bill is, why her parliamentary assistants have been working so hard on this bill. It's because we want to ensure that we do have a publicly funded health care system that wraps around a patient and their family to help get them through the most challenging times in their lives and to make sure that they have what they need—again, as Phil likes to stress—without having to tell their story over and over again.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to be able to speak to Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act, but I have to tell you there are a number of things I find troubling with this bill. Some of these issues have definitely been raised by my colleagues, but for such a large piece of legislation that is moving very quickly through this House with a lack of consultation, there is definitely a lot wrong with it.

The first thing that I find troubling, of course, is the opening of the doors to privatization of our most prized public health care system that is in this legislation. Our public health care system is a source of national pride. Other jurisdictions around the world look to us for leadership. I cannot understand why the PCs would undermine our public health care system instead of strengthening it. While the members opposite are careful to always say that this bill does not threaten publicly funded health care, they will not say that health care services will be publicly delivered. They will not say "not for profit." That's because this bill deliberately opens our health care system to private, for-profit service providers. This bill has no restrictions that will prevent for-profit organizations from becoming Ontario health teams or from delivering front-line health care to patients.

We spend over \$50 billion on our health care annually. These private, for-profit companies want a piece of the action. This government is opening the door for them. And we know how the private sector works. Private businesses, of course, want to make a profit, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. We wouldn't fault a business for behaving as businesses should. But when it comes to essential, publicly funded services like health care, there is a serious conflict.

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: I see the members opposite cannot stand it. They can't say the words "not for profit." Just say it: not for profit. Do it.

In health care, patient outcomes should be the number one concern. We don't want a system where our health service providers are looking at their books and trying to figure out how to improve profit margins. Usually, this will result in poorer quality service. We don't want a system where public health care dollars from OHIP line the pockets of owners and shareholders. And we don't want a system where certain types of health care are more accessible than others because there is a bigger market for them.

Opening up to private business creates the opportunity for market failures. Health care services of all kinds should

be provided even in locations where unprofitable services are still needed. We heard very clearly from the member who is sitting next to us what the services are like for First Nations in the north. People will have a choice out of their list of how to be a health team. Will they choose the hard choices on First Nations? Probably not. They're going to be looking for profit.

The Canada Health Act outlines the conditions of our public health care system. The very first of these conditions is public administration.

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: You should pay attention to this, the Canada Health Act.

To quote the legislation, it says: "The health care insurance plan of a province must be administered and operated on a non-profit basis by a public authority appointed or designated by the government of the province."

Bill 74 intentionally opens the door to privatization. This flies in the face of the first principle of our public health care system. Tommy Douglas must be rolling in his grave watching you dismantle our public health care system.

The government must commit to both publicly funded and publicly delivered health care so that patient outcomes are the top priority, not profit. Ontario knows there is a problem with our health system, but no one in Ontario voted for for-profit health care delivery.

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's amazing. When I was speaking—I was being called to order previously, but these guys just go on and on.

Ontario knows there's a problem—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I'm doing what I feel I need to do in order to maintain order on both sides. I will ask that both sides have the respect for whoever is speaking. As I said, that goes both ways. So I am doing what I'm called to do. I don't need to be reminded.

Thank you very much. I'll turn it back to you.

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Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. It's okay. I can speak over them anyway.

As we all know, this legislation will establish a health super-agency. Several great organizations will cease to exist if this legislation passes. Cancer Care Ontario is a world-renowned agency. It's not broken. It has nothing to do with hallway medicine. It will be dissolved for no reason. It should be allowed to continue its great work. Trillium Gift of Life is another example of a best-in-class agency. It is also being dissolved for no reason. It should also be able to continue its work in organ donation. Cutting these agencies has nothing to do with solving the hallway medicine crisis.

The oversight, or lack of oversight, of this new super-agency is also troubling to many. This bill gives the Minister of Health broad powers to amalgamate many existing health service providers or cease their operations. This gives us a flashback to the former PC Premier who closed 28 hospitals and laid off 6,000 nurses.

Further, the Patient Ombudsman will become part of the super-agency. We need a Patient Ombudsman that is independent, one that can actually scrutinize the health system without fear that they're biting the hand that feeds them. But that's a wasted opportunity with this government, because we knew how they felt about oversight when they cut the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, they cut the Environmental Commissioner, the francophone commissioner—this government doesn't like oversight or scrutiny from anyone.

Even further, the super-agency won't be accountable to or guided by the local communities that it's supposed to serve. Bill 74 actually reduces the requirement to engage in public consultation. The LHINs were at least required to engage the public as part of their local planning. This minister will keep the Patient and Family Advisory Council, but that group has absolutely no teeth. Instead of community-based care, we now have a bloated, centralized super-agency that will be making long-distance decisions about the health needs of a province.

And the transition to this new system will be a complete mess. This government has undertaken a massive change, and very rapidly. People aren't going to stop needing health care any time soon. The ministry will not have a quiet time to restructure the entire system. No, this will be chaotic, and the quality of health care in Ontario is going to suffer during this transition. Health care workers, who are already working under difficult conditions, will have the burden of managing this change, and patients will have to figure out how to navigate a system that is moving quickly. This government underestimates how difficult it will be to implement—and hastily—a redesigned \$50-billion system and how much the quality of care will suffer at the time.

Lastly, I find it very disturbing that the super-agency met in secret last week. We saw that in a Star report. They were meeting while we were actually debating the bill in second reading. There have been no public consultations. This bill has not been given royal assent, and yet the committee is already meeting. How is this absolutely possible? Nothing should be happening before this legislation passes in this House, and yet this government is taking it upon themselves to move ahead, to have meetings in secret, and not make sure that the public is involved. That is an absolute disgrace. But this is nothing new that we have seen come from this government since being elected. We have seen things that I probably shouldn't say coming from this government, because it is a slam against our democracy. The people of the province voted for something different, something that they could count on, some kind of hope, and this government has given them nothing but despair.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's interesting to listen to the member opposite. Sometimes I feel like we're having a debate on two different subjects entirely.

I have to talk about the point that she raised about Cancer Care Ontario. We all know Cancer Care Ontario is

a great organization that has done great work in this province and, frankly, it is the shining example of what we're trying to do with this bill. Not only are we not getting rid of Cancer Care Ontario, we are consolidating Cancer Care Ontario into the single agency. It is the model for what we are trying to do. And if the member opposite had read the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions in 2010 that our Deputy Premier and the Minister of Health was the Vice-Chair of, she would recall that the minister said Cancer Care Ontario is the model that we should use.

This is exactly what we're doing. We're consolidating the best we have in the system. We're going to learn from the best that we have in the system how to make the rest of the system work equally well, so here is a model that we are using to build on. You would think that the members opposite would think that is a good idea, because Cancer Care Ontario successfully put the patient at the centre of cancer care, and that is exactly what we want to do with the rest of our health care system. We will build on this model and learn from it and scale it up so that we can use it across the system.

I think this is a very important example of where there may be some misunderstanding. I don't understand why the members opposite are looking at that as something negative. It's a positive, because we have seen that this is an example of how we want to operate, to have a careful, coordinated system that puts the patient at the centre of care, and that is exactly what we're trying to do.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: You got it this time, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

It's an honour to stand in the House and speak against Bill 74 today. All of us on this side of the House recognize the importance of a public, not-for-profit health care system. We recognize that Canada has benefited from this system for over 50 years and that it is providing us with the lowest-cost health care, far lower than in the United States. The United States, per capita, spends almost three times what we spend on health care and yet their health outcomes are much less. They have shorter lives, they have fewer healthy years of living and their infant mortality rate is higher. We actually have healthier outcomes and we spend less money.

I was puzzled by the comments from the member opposite, because she was praising Cancer Care Ontario as the shining example of how a system should be run. We would agree on that fact, because Cancer Care Ontario has a stellar record of providing excellent cancer care for the people of this province, but this bill destroys Cancer Care Ontario. It folds it into this megalithic organization.

If you read the text of the bill, there's not one place in this bill where it says that public health care will be delivered on a not-for-profit basis, and that's of deep concern because we know there are lots of for-profit companies that are itching to get at the \$60 billion that we in Ontario spend every year on health care. The vultures

are circling. We've already seen that they are so anxious to get involved that the board has already met this past week to discuss how they're going to divvy up the profits that they're going to be making from our public health care system. This is happening. That the board is actually meeting before the legislation has passed is certainly a concern and it speaks to the kind of backroom deals that are inherent in this government's operation.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'd also like to provide some comments to the member opposite from Hamilton—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Mountain.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Hamilton Mountain. I think that what's really important to remember here is that the people of Ontario, after many, many years, have agreed that what we need is a connected health care system—and that this puts the needs of patients first. Our minister has made it very clear, in introducing Bill 74, that Ontario deserves peace of mind that this system is sustainable and accessible for all patients and their families, regardless of where they live, how much they make or the kind of care they require.

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Ontario's new plan will improve access to services and patient experience by organizing health care providers to work as one coordinated team focused on patients and specific local needs. Patients would experience easy transitions from one health care provider to another; for example, between hospitals and home care providers, with one patient story, one patient record and one care plan.

We're going to be able to allow patients and their families and caregivers to navigate the public health care system 24/7, integrating multiple provincial agencies and specialized provincial programs into a single agency, to provide a central point of accountability and oversight for the health care system.

If we expect real improvements that patients will experience first-hand, we must better coordinate the public health care system so that it's organized around people's needs and outcomes. That is at the centre of what we're trying to do with our Bill 74.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I just learned this morning in the House that this super-agency has already met; the board of directors has already met. The thing that I think is one of the two most concerning things about this bill is this unaccountability. We've seen time and time again in the House that this government treats democracy like a formality. Clearly, this super-agency is not waiting for the people of Ontario and for this Legislature to decide whether or not this is a bill that will help the people of Ontario. The very fact that this is not in any way what people want—nobody asked for a super-agency—and the very fact that the profits in this \$60-billion industry, which is very lucrative to people, the fact that the people who are in charge of this are unelected—they're not responsible to the people of Ontario. They are unelected. This bill also gives the minister extraordinary powers. That's a very

concerning thing for the people of Ontario—not just for the term of this Legislature, but going forward. We are creating a super-bureaucracy that is unelected and unaccountable to the people of Ontario, and that is very chilling for the people of Ontario.

The second thing is, we hear again and again—you can say it as much as you want, but until you put it in the bill, it means nothing. We are asking that you ensure that the people of Ontario do not have to worry that you are introducing big box health care to Ontario. The people of Ontario want not-for-profit delivery. If that's what you're saying, and if you would like to reassure the people of Ontario that our health care system is not up for sale to the highest bidder, that we're not going to go back to the era of Mike Harris, when he privatized our long-term care and he privatized all of it—and we see the evidence of that now, with the Premier who is now on the board of directors for Chartwell, a very lucrative, profit-driven agency—if we are not going to go to that end—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I return now to the member from Hamilton Mountain for final comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to all of the members who have had their input into my 10 minutes.

There are so many issues that are happening in our health care system. There is a ripple effect that creates the backlog in our health care system, and this bill does not address that. It does not address the 18,000 children who are waiting for mental health services, who end up in emergency rooms and in hospital rooms when they shouldn't have to be there. There is nothing to address the lack of long-term-care beds. It's not in the bill that they're going to build more long-term-care beds—yes, they're building 6,000, but that's not near enough.

The Ontario Health Coalition summarized this bill very well: “This legislation neither directs the health system to meet the population's need for care, nor does it improve any single service. It opens no new hospital beds. It does not make more surgeries happen. It does not provide a single new unit of mental health services, or home care or any other kind of care.”

So, Speaker, we know that the rippling effects in our system, the mental health that is being caused by this government, the anguish that is being caused by this government—just think of the parents with autism alone and the mental health that is being created by this government's plan. None of that is addressed in this bill. The lack of oversight, removing the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, making sure that the Patient Ombudsman is—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order: I recognize the member from Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: For a better part of the summary, the highlighting from the member opposite has been nothing to do with Bill 74—not the focus of it at all. I would ask for your indulgence please, Speaker, in directing the speaker accordingly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I've been listening closely and I've been seeing a tie-in.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Could I have the House's attention? I wish to start off the introduction of guests by informing the House that we have a former member in the Legislature. The member for Brantford in the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments, Phil Gillies, is here today. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

In the public galleries today, we have students from across the province participating in the first annual Legislative Assembly of Ontario Post-Secondary Model Parliament—or they're on their way. Please join me in welcoming them as well. I would invite all members to the event that we're having tonight in the dining room to welcome them.

In the Speaker's gallery today, there are a few more students who are participating in the job shadow program run by the Association of Former Parliamentarians: Mei Ling and Ashia Bak. They are joined by former Speaker and chair of the Association of Former Parliamentarians, our good friend David Warner. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

I would ask all members to keep their introductions as brief as possible.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Il me fait plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à Carol Jolin, président de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario; Aidan Auger, école Saint-Charles-Garnier, conseillère élève; Évangéline Cowie, école Monseigneur-de-Charbonnel, conseillère élève; M^{me} Danielle Laflamme; et M^{me} Laflamme-Millette, qui sont venus ici pour la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Toby Barrett: People who love horses are out front at Queen's Park today. I welcome Brenda Thompson with Whispering Hearts Horse Rescue and also with Animal Welfare Watch.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give a warm welcome to Olivia Karp, a student from my riding visiting today and participating in the Ontario Post-Secondary Model Parliament. Welcome, Olivia.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ça me fait, moi aussi, grand plaisir d'accueillir Diane Laflamme-Millette, qui est d'Ottawa-Vanier. Alors, bienvenue à Queen's Park.

I also want to welcome Brian Hopkins, who is from Ottawa-Vanier as well, who will be participating in this year's Legislative Assembly of Ontario Post-Secondary Model Parliament. Welcome.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Today, I'm really, really pleased to welcome, from the Woodbridge Agricultural Society, vice-president John Schell and director Clara Schell, and my legislative assistant, Bill Daverne. Welcome, folks.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As I look over in the gallery, I see that Arnaldo Beni has joined us. He is one of our constituents. Welcome to Queen's Park, Arnaldo.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: J'aimerais, moi aussi, saluer et accueillir M^{lle} Sophie Beach-Vaive d'Orléans, qui est avec nous. She will be participating in the 2019 Legislative Assembly of Ontario Post-Secondary Model Parliament.

Aussi, ce matin, nous nous sommes rassemblés pour la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. J'aimerais dire un beau bonjour et saluer tous les membres de la communauté franco-ontarienne qui sont ici aujourd'hui pour célébrer cette belle journée. Bienvenue.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I would like to welcome to the gallery today Muhammad Zaman, a student from my riding, who is participating in the 2019 Legislative Assembly of Ontario Post-Secondary Model Parliament. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Andrea Horwath: Bienvenue à tous les membres de la communauté franco-ontarienne et de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. Nous sommes très fiers de vous accueillir ici pour célébrer la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to recognize Celia Lewin, who is here from my riding of Thornhill. She's my youth association president, and she's here for the Post-Secondary Model Parliament.

I also want to welcome everybody who's here for the Post-Secondary Model Parliament and wish everybody here in the Legislature—et à tous les Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens—une bonne Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Bienvenue à tout le monde.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I see at least two model parliamentarians up there from my riding: Evan Tanovich and Suzie Sawicki. There may be a third one, Ms. Ruuth, up there somewhere, as well. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to welcome Andrea Stoppa, my executive assistant from the riding of Nipissing, who is here with us today.

M. Michael Mantha: Je vois que j'ai deux amis ici aujourd'hui : M. Carol Jolin, qui nous joint, et puis, mon ami Ralph Palumbo. Bonjour.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd just like to welcome all the post-secondary students here for the Ontario model parliament, especially those from Ottawa. I look forward to speaking with you this afternoon.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I welcome youth riding association president Heylaanaa Annesly, who is part of the model Parliament. I also welcome all the students to the Legislature today.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'd like to formally welcome Martine Taylor, who is here from the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence and in the members' gallery.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to welcome two residents of my riding, Paul and Carol Dietrich, to the assembly; as well as Morgan Carl and Sophie Williams, here for the Post-Secondary Model Parliament. Sophie also was here as a page in 2013 and for the Post-Secondary Model Parliament in 2016. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Gilles Bisson: De la part de notre chef, M^{me} Horwath, et le caucus NDP, on aimerait accueillir tous nos amis du parlement modèle qui sont ici. On behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats, we want to welcome all of the model Parliament students who are here today.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Joining us in the members' gallery this morning are three gentlemen who always take a keen interest in Ontario politics. Mark Holmes, Ralph Palumbo and Kelly Mitchell are joining us today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: I would like to welcome Syed Ayub, a student from my riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville, to the Legislature of Ontario Post-Secondary Model Parliament. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to welcome Varshil Bhagat, a student from Brampton West, who is also participating in the Post-Secondary Model Parliament.

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to echo everyone's sentiment and welcome the students who are here for the model Parliament—and a special shout-out to Chloe Craig from Northumberland-Peterborough South.

1040

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Speaker, I don't wish to sound like a broken record, but as probably the only current undergraduate student here in the Legislature, it's nice to be joined by so many of my peers today. It has changed the look of the Legislature, and I want to welcome them all to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available today for introduction of visitors.

The member for Thornhill on a point of order.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA
FRANCOPHONIE
JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE
DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just have a very quick point of order. I see a lot of people are wearing their official Franco-Ontarian flag pins. Today is the International Day of the Francophonie. I want to wish everybody une bonne Journée internationale de la Francophonie, and I hope we have unanimous consent to wear our pins. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We don't need unanimous consent. I thank the member for Thornhill for her intervention, and I'm glad that members are wearing the pins.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Premier. The Premier is removing 10,000 teachers from

schools and cramming more students into crowded classrooms. High school students could be stuck in classes with as many as many as 40 students, and that's when they're not forced to take classes by YouTube.

How will removing thousands of teachers from classrooms and putting students into online courses actually help students learn?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I just can't believe the Leader of the Opposition can be untruthful and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the Premier to withdraw.

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And conclude his response.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, we all know in this chamber that there's not going to be any layoffs in education whatsoever. There won't be 10,000 teachers—that's scaremongering. That's going back to the old tactics of what we've seen the last 15 years: 15 years of ignoring teachers, 15 years of ignoring parents and 15 years of ignoring students.

We're going back to the basics, Mr. Speaker. We're going back to make sure our grade 6 students aren't on the bottom tier of the whole country when it comes to math. One third of our teachers are failing the same math test. We're going to support our teachers to make sure—

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government says high school students will be required to take four classes online instead of getting in-person instruction. Under the Ford government, regardless of what the best learning environment is for students or if they need any one-on-one attention, students will be spending more time learning from Google. Is that how the Premier thinks he will boost student achievements?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, you see how out of date the Leader of the Opposition is. It's already happening. We're focusing on technology as well. We see it in our colleges' and universities' online courses, and we're going to keep up with technology. It's about making sure our students are taught properly and not taught like in the last 15 years, in the lowest tier. When it comes to arithmetic, when it comes to reading and writing, we're going back to the basics, Mr. Speaker. We're going to be making sure our students have a proper education.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, here's the Ford government plan for our kids: fewer teachers, larger class sizes, more Googling. The Premier says he consulted with parents. Can he tell us how many of those parents asked for larger class sizes and learning from YouTube?

Hon. Doug Ford: The largest consultations in the history of this country, in the history of this province, took place. They took place—

Interjections.

Hon. Doug Ford: Some 72,000 parents spoke out. That includes teachers, students and parents. We're doing something that no other government has ever done, and that's actually listening to the teachers. We're listening to the parents. We're focusing on education, making sure our students are ready to get into the workplace, because we're going to need them. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Because we created in the last three months almost 100,000 new jobs. That's why we need them.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. This week, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, a veteran Conservative MPP, made disturbing allegations that the Premier's hand-picked chief of staff, Dean French, and other senior operatives within his government were engaged in “illegal and unregistered lobbying” by friends of the Premier.

Was the Premier or anyone in his inner circle engaged in “illegal and unregistered lobbying” by friends of the Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, here goes the ironic situation that we face every single day in the Legislature here, telling stories. We aren't asking for cash-for-access. The NDP were putting out cash-for-access: Pay \$800 to have the luxury and have a reward and meet the Leader of the Opposition. That's \$800, and that's unacceptable.

We don't ask for \$800. We ask for \$25 for spaghetti dinners. We ask them to pick up the cellphone and give us a call. We don't need any lobbyists, like the Leader of the Opposition does. She sits there and talks to the heads of the unions every day. They support her. They fund her. That's what it's all about: making sure they continue to stick their hands in the taxpayer's pocket. They don't worry about taxpayers; they worry about themselves.

Interjections.

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

I'm going to caution all members, in terms of intemperate language. It's so loud in here already that I can hardly hear. Of course, the Speaker has a responsibility to try to maintain order, but I need the co-operation of the members in order to do that. If necessary, I will warn members, and if they continue with this sort of behaviour, I'll have no choice but to begin naming members. I would ask all members to keep that in mind and ensure that their language is parliamentary and not intemperate so as to inflame other members. This is the provincial Parliament of Ontario. Let's remember that.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. It is the provincial Parliament where this government actually brought cash-for-access back to Ontario, so it's pretty rich

that the Premier is now complaining about the very legislation that he brought forward, one-upping the Liberals.

Did the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston ever speak to the Premier, his chief of staff, Dean French, or any members of the cabinet about his concerns with possible illegal activities?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, you know and everyone knows that there's no illegal activity outside of posting a fundraiser four days before it takes place—

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Which they did.

Hon. Doug Ford: —which the NDP did, Mr. Speaker. You're supposed to post it seven days before. They broke the law. They know they broke the law. It was four days—\$800 access. I wouldn't pay eight cents to have access to the NDP, not to mention \$800.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Before I actually ask the next question, I want to remind the Premier that he is in a room full of witnesses here. Has the Premier heard any complaint from any source whatsoever about possible “illegal and unregistered lobbying” against members of his senior team?

1050

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, the only illegal lobbying I've ever heard about is through the NDP. When they meet with the heads of their unions, the public sector unions—and as I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I feel sorry for the front-line public sector union members who totally disagree with the socialist mentality that the opposition has brought to this chamber. They don't want their union dues going there. They want their union dues making sure that they are taken care of, not to a political party. They respect the work that we're doing. They respect the work—that we're reducing gas prices, reducing taxes, making sure that we put more money in their pocket. We're fighting against the terrible, terrible tax, the carbon tax, that could possibly put us into a carbon recession as of April 1. That's what their members are worried about, not supporting the leader of the NDP to celebrate her 10 years of being leader.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Maybe I'll get an answer this time.

A veteran Conservative MPP made disturbing allegations about the conduct of the Premier's senior staff team and described the chill the Premier's team has put on dissent within the government. Was the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston expelled from the PC caucus because he disagreed with the Premier's chief of staff's lobbying practices?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, this is just gutter politics right now that we see in this chamber. They're wanting to fight, but since I've been in the chamber for the last eight months, I have yet to hear one idea the opposition has come up with to save the taxpayers money. They believe in one mentality: It's spend, spend, spend, tax, tax, tax. That's what they believe in.

We believe in saving the taxpayers money, putting more money back into their pocket, making sure that we create an environment, that this province is going to thrive, that the people in the province will thrive and be more prosperous and grow. And we've proved it. Companies around this province are so excited that they're able to reinvest in this province and hire, again, 100,000 new people in the private sector. That's more than the United States. This province is on fire right now, and we're going to continue—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the Premier is confident that his hand-picked chief of staff, Dean French, and his senior staff team have not engaged in any “illegal activity,” will he order them to fully co-operate with any investigation into the matter?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, do you know what the province is terrified about right now? April 1. April 1—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: They're terrified about April 1. Mrs. Jones is worried about driving her kid to school, back and forth to the sports facilities because—guess what, Mr. Speaker? Mrs. Jones is going to be paying a lot more. Mrs. Jones, when she goes to the grocery store—that's going to go up in cost. Everything is going up in cost for what? A fake carbon tax? It's a tax. They put the word “carbon” in front of it. It does nothing for the environment.

What we've done for the environment—the Minister of the Environment has done an incredible job—is we've reduced emissions by 22%. We're leading the entire country in emissions reductions. That's true leadership.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The House will come to order. I need to be able to hear the member who has the next question.

Start the clock. The member for Perth-Wellington.

HUNTING AND FISHING

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm certainly looking forward to this answer.

My question is for the Premier. By cancelling Liberal fee increases on hunting and fishing licences, removing the \$2 service fee and doubling the number of licence-free fishing events, we are making these great sports more accessible and affordable for all Ontarians. We have also

honoured our heroes, the veterans and serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces, by giving them the option to fish for free in Ontario.

Like many of my constituents, there's nothing better than enjoying Ontario's beautiful outdoors. That's why it was great to see the Premier attend the Toronto Sportsmen's Show last weekend.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier update the Legislature on how our government for the people is continuing to make life easier for hunters and anglers?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the great MPP from Perth–Wellington—an absolute champion.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, we have taken a different approach to government. We're actually putting more money back into people's pockets. When it comes to the fishermen, the anglers and the hunters, we froze the fees. When it came to car registration, we froze the fees. When it came to beer and alcohol, we froze the fees. That's actually saving the common person money. Our great veterans and the people who serve to protect this country: They'll have zero fees. They won't have to worry about getting a licence. They put their lives on the line every day; it's about time we start respecting these people. I know the opposition doesn't respect them, but we respect them, I can assure you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the Premier for that answer. I know that my constituents in Perth–Wellington will be pleased to hear that under the leadership of the Premier, our government is on their side and committed to making life easier and more affordable.

Hunting and angling is a part of our culture in Ontario, but it is also an important part of our economy. After 15 years of out-of-control spending by the past Liberal government, it is great to see that Ontario is finally open for business and open for jobs.

Can the Premier speak to the important role that hunting and angling plays in our economy?

Hon. Doug Ford: You know, Mr. Speaker, myself and a numerous amount of MPPs from our caucus ended up going to the sportsmen's show. I call them the real people. You get out of the bubble, you get out of the downtown elites and the bunch of lefties downtown—all they want to do is tax and spend. You get to the real people. That's the outdoors people, the rural folks we met at the sportsmen's show.

There were thousands of people there. I couldn't walk an inch, I couldn't even take a step without people coming up to me and saying, "Doug, keep going. You're doing a great job. We thank you for doing what you're doing: protecting the real people of this province, the hard-working people that like to go out once in a while and do a little bit of fishing and a little bit of hunting." Those are the real folks.

Get yourselves out of the bubble and listen to the folks of the rural areas.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. The member has the chance to place his question.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston has raised serious concerns about the way that this government conducts business. He alleges that, once the Premier and his insider friends came to Queen's Park, many newly elected MPPs were taken advantage of by "backroom operatives." He also raised concerns about "illegal and unregistered lobbying by close friends and advisers employed by the Premier."

Speaker, the member is a veteran PC MPP with over a decade of service in this House. I don't often agree with that member, but he has always struck me as an honest person. Why should Ontarians believe the Premier when he says that this member is making it up?

1100

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, I find it ironic coming from the MPP from Essex, when I got a call from one of his buddies saying—they watched the show, as we call it, yesterday. He says that he finds it ironic when he got a call from the MPP from Essex pushing an \$800 illegal wine-and-dine with the leader.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the Premier on his use of language. You can't say that.

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Complete your answer, please.

Hon. Doug Ford: What the people are worried about is their taxes. They worry about the pocketbook issues. They're tired of being gouged by all three levels of government. They finally see some light at the end of the tunnel with our government. Right across the board, we're reducing taxes, we're creating good jobs, we're creating an economy that is just absolutely booming right now. And it's not a coincidence it's booming. We've created an environment to thrive and prosper and grow in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'll try to be a bit more gentle with the Premier because it seems to be a little bit of a sensitive issue for him.

The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston has raised serious concerns about the way this government conducts its business. If the Premier is so confident that he has done no wrong and it's his former caucus member who's making these inaccurate claims, will he call the OPP now and invite them to investigate? Will he do the right thing and call the OPP?

Interjection: Open the door, Doug. Open the door.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Open the door to truth and transparency.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I can't wait to the call the OPP on the illegal fundraising that the NDP are doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I ask the Premier to withdraw.

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And complete his answer.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, I have no problem calling the OPP to investigate how the fundraising is going with the NDP. That's what I'm concerned about. You can't be going around saying, "Here's \$800 to have access to the leader of the NDP."

Again, we're a little different. Unlike yourselves, all you have to do is pick up—

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

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yesterday, the minister released the results of the 2018 Student Voices on Sexual Violence survey. The results of the survey are heartbreaking and disturbing. They show that far too many of our students are experiencing sexual violence on our campuses. One instance of sexual violence, harassment, stalking or assault on our campuses is one too many.

The results of the survey show that we need to do more. Can the minister tell us more about the results of this important survey?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member from Durham for that question and for her good work.

Our government takes the safety and well-being of our students very seriously, and I want to thank the thousands of students who had the courage to share their experiences. As the member notes, the results of the survey are heartbreaking and disturbing. We know that of the over 116,000 university students who completed the survey, roughly 63% experienced some type of sexual harassment; and, in the college sector, of the over 42,000 students who completed the survey, just under 50% experienced sexual harassment. This is not acceptable. I want to work with students, institutions and all Ontarians to improve campus safety.

I am looking forward to sharing the immediate steps our government announced yesterday in the supplemental.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Lindsey Park: Thank you to the minister for your transparency in sharing the details of this survey. It's clear that the status quo is not good enough and we need to take more action. This is an opportunity to have an honest and open discussion about how we can do better. I know that the minister and, in fact, all members of the chamber will agree that we need to work together as legislators and as Ontarians to make our campuses safer.

Can the minister tell us what immediate steps our government is taking to improve campus safety in light of this survey?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: The member is absolutely right that the status quo is not good enough. That is why, yesterday, I announced various measures to improve campus safety. We will double the Women's Campus Safety Grant—double it—to support universities and colleges in preventing incidents of sexual violence on campus. We will require every university and college to report annually to their board of governors on sexual violence on their campuses, and to have a task force devoted to tackling sexual violence on campus and reviewing their sexual violence policies by September 2019.

Speaker, I believe that these measures will help address sexual violence and harassment on campus. I am committed to working with students, universities and colleges to prevent sexual violence on campuses across Ontario.

SUBVENTIONS DESTINÉES À L'ÉDUCATION EDUCATION FUNDING

M^{me} Marit Stiles: Ma question est pour la ministre de l'Éducation. En Ontario, nous avons un système d'éducation de langue française florissant. Les conseils scolaires catholiques et publics de la province sont en pleine expansion grâce au nombre croissant d'inscriptions.

Des joueurs clés de l'éducation francophone sont récemment venus à Queen's Park pour nous dire que les décisions du gouvernement en matière d'éducation peuvent avoir un impact néfaste sur le caractère particulier du système de langue française. Des décisions comme l'annonce de vendredi dernier concernant l'augmentation du nombre d'élèves par classe veulent donc dire que les petites écoles francophones seront forcées d'offrir encore moins de classes. Pour les conseils scolaires ayant déjà de la difficulté à attirer des enseignants qualifiés, couper le nombre de postes ne fera qu'empirer la situation.

La ministre a-t-elle considéré l'impact que ces coupures auront sur les conseils francophones?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Merci beaucoup pour la question, but I'm going to speak—parler—en anglais, out of respect for our French-speaking Ontarians.

Interjections.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: They'll appreciate that. They know what I mean.

Speaker, in all seriousness, I find the game of the opposition party to be very offensive. This game they're trying to play, the narrative they're trying to create, is absolutely wrong. We stand by our francophone students. We stand by our francophone teachers. I can tell you, the organizations lobbying and advocating on behalf of our francophone education system in Ontario do a wonderful job. We've got a great relationship—not only myself, but the Minister of Francophone Affairs, her PA, my PA, and our absolutely diverse caucus that we have sitting in the PC government.

We know what's needed to get francophone education secure in this province, and that—

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

M^{me} Marit Stiles: Monsieur le Président, ça ne suffit pas. This plan to cut a billion dollars and 10,000 teachers out of our school system doesn't make sense for franco-phone students. It doesn't make sense for francophone schools. It doesn't make sense for any student.

This morning, the minister on CBC Radio was asked how taking teachers out of classrooms would help students. She said that she was doing this to build "resiliency." I guess that's a tough-love approach.

But anyway, does the minister actually believe that she is doing students a favour by taking away their teachers?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: To start off, I have to say that I think somebody needs two minutes for fake laughing, because really and truly, this is ridiculous. The narrative the opposition party is trying to create is absolutely ridiculous.

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Let me tell you, Speaker, that we're investing in education, and I feel good about the plan that's going to work for you, your kids, your grandchildren, our teachers, our students, our employers, everyone in Ontario. Because we're getting back to the basics and we're going to be funding and investing in math qualifications, additional qualification courses for our students. We're investing in a top priority, which is always the learning environment in a perfect classroom scenario. We're going to be standing by our teachers.

Again, I stand today and correct the member opposite in full clarity. Not one person will involuntarily lose their job. We're going to be investing in school boards to—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. The next question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question today is for the Premier. I think it's an appropriate question, given we have so many young people here today. It's a question of ethics.

Speaker, through you to the Premier, two days ago, Mr. Hillier made us aware of some of the outrageous actions your government has taken behind closed doors. He describes the back door that big corporate interests have into the Premier's office through Dean French and Chris Froggatt.

Has the Premier done anything since taking office to make sure that his staff and ministry staff have the information that they need to ensure they are not breaking the law? Do they have the training, the knowledge that they need to be able to urge corporations to make sure that they are registered lobbyists and that their lobbyists are registered appropriately? What is the Premier doing to make sure that his office operates within the limits of the law?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I look to the Deputy Premier to respond.

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, I can assure you and I can assure the House and I can assure everybody watching that the claims that have been made by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston are completely unsubstantiated. There is no truth to any of these. As a matter of fact, the member has not provided any evidence whatsoever other than making some claims in a letter. There has been absolutely no evidence that anything occurred. I can tell you that the Premier, the Premier's office and our government are acting with complete integrity.

We knew that when the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston was initially expelled from the caucus for some comments that he made, there were other issues as well that we needed to look at. As a matter of fact, the Premier really wanted to give the member a larger voice in our caucus, but the member chose to go in another direction. I think it's very harmful to government in general.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Back to the minister: He talks about no evidence. What I would ask this government is, if you have nothing to hide, why not provide us now with a list of all the meetings the Premier and his staff have had since taking office? Will the Premier tell us where he and his staff have been? Would you co-operate with the Integrity Commissioner to have a full review of all meetings by you and all members of your staff, including Dean French and Chris Froggatt: yes or no?

Hon. Todd Smith: It's unfortunate that these claims, which are completely unsubstantiated, absurd and categorically false, continue to occupy space here in the Ontario Legislature.

Let me remind the member opposite that it was actually her government that had not one, not two, not three, not four, but five OPP investigations while they were in government—five OPP investigations. There actually was evidence, Mr. Speaker. There was evidence—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the government members that the Minister of Economic Development and Job Creation has the floor—stop the clock—and I can't hear him, and we're very close. I don't know why they'd be heckling their minister as he responds, and interjecting.

Please start the clock, and let the minister conclude his response.

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would say that if there was anything in the letter that Mr. Hillier sent that was true, why didn't he act earlier? Clearly, he was expelled from the PC caucus for a reason, and that was because he just didn't want to be a part of the team. He didn't want to show up to work, and I can see a similar thing occurring—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will remind all members, in case they have forgotten, that it's inappropriate to make reference to the absence of another member at any time. All of us, from time to time, have been away

from the Legislature during a sitting day, generally for a good reason, in most cases, I think. That's why we don't do it. For anybody who needs a reminder, there's a reason why we don't do that: because any of us individually might be away on any given day. I shouldn't need to keep reminding people of that.

Start the clock. Next question.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Ma question est pour le ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport. Nous célébrons aujourd'hui la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Je sais que pour les francophones et francophiles dans mon comté de Mississauga-Centre et partout à travers la province, cette journée a une importance très particulière. Nous soulignons aussi les contributions et l'histoire riche de la francophonie ontarienne qui compte plus de 400 ans.

Depuis notre élection, nous avons exprimé en maintes occasions notre volonté de promouvoir les droits des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Est-ce que le ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport pourrait nous faire part de la vision de notre gouvernement pour la population de l'Ontario en ce qui a trait aux intérêts des francophones?

L'hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Je remercie la députée de sa question. Premièrement, je veux dire et souhaiter à tous les francophones de la province de l'Ontario une bonne journée de la Francophonie.

À nos yeux, le français, et le bilinguisme qui en découle, sont des atouts de marque pour l'Ontario, alors que notre gouvernement s'est engagé à faire de l'Ontario une province ouverte aux affaires et ouverte aux emplois.

Plusieurs rencontres avec divers intervenants clés du milieu des affaires nous ont permis de commencer à identifier les obstacles auxquels sont confrontées les entreprises, et à récolter des idées en vue de dynamiser l'entrepreneuriat francophone en Ontario.

Nous oeuvrons et continuerons d'oeuvrer à l'éducation pour tous et par tous les francophones, à l'accès à des services de santé en français de qualité et la justice—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Je remercie le ministre pour sa réponse. Je remercie, aussi, au passage la ministre des Affaires francophones pour son travail diligent et attentif, à l'écoute des milieux francophones et de leurs aspirations et besoins.

Monsieur le Président, mes électeurs dans Mississauga-Centre, tout comme la majorité des francophones de cette province, souhaitent que le gouvernement fédéral redonne sa juste part en services aux citoyens et aux entreprises de l'Ontario.

Le président du Conseil du Trésor peut-il nous parler de la lutte que notre gouvernement mène pour faire valoir le bon droit des contribuables ontariens en ce qui a trait aux affaires francophones?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You have to refer the question if you're going to refer it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): President of the Treasury Board.

L'hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Notre gouvernement continue de mettre le gouvernement Trudeau au défi de combler l'écart important entre le financement que l'Ontario reçoit pour les services en français et celui accordé aux autres provinces.

Le gouvernement fédéral verse en effet à l'Ontario 2,78 \$ par francophone pour les services en français, tandis que le Nouveau-Brunswick reçoit 7,31 \$ et le Manitoba 35,71 \$.

Notre position est que si les libéraux fédéraux étaient vraiment engagés à investir dans la francophonie ontarienne, ils réévalueraient à la hausse l'allocation de leurs contributions actuelles aux programmes de services en français de l'Ontario, afin que celles-ci puissent mieux répondre aux attentes et besoins des quelque—

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

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SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Aujourd'hui, nous avons eu la visite du crieur public francophone pour présenter leur manifeste franco-ontarien. Un crieur public a pour objet de faire parvenir l'information aux gens, mais cette fois-ci, c'est le contraire qui se passe. C'est la communauté franco-ontarienne qui est venue pour vous informer, pour vous faire entendre ce que les Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens demandent depuis novembre 2018 : de remettre en place le Commissariat aux services en français en tant que bureau indépendant et de rétablir le financement de l'Université de l'Ontario français.

Que doivent faire de plus les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes pour que vous compreniez ce que nous voulons?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Tourism and Culture.

L'hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Je pense que c'est au sein d'un gouvernement que nous pouvons avoir le plus grand impact, et le ministère continuera à travailler pour faire avancer les dossiers importants. Nous savons que la prospérité et l'épanouissement des communautés francophones passent, avant tout, par l'économie. Alors nous travaillons pour assurer la croissance économique et la réduction des formalités administratives dans les communautés francophones.

Les services primaires sont une priorité pour notre gouvernement. C'est pourquoi nous nous penchons sur la modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français. Nous travaillons pour protéger et améliorer les services de première ligne en français en éducation, en soins de santé et en santé mentale. Nous travaillons aussi pour améliorer l'accès à la justice—

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Il est un peu décevant que pour cette Journée internationale de la Francophonie—

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Withdraw.

Encore une fois, ces gens-là ne sont pas venus à l'Assemblée législative par courtoisie, pour vous rendre visite. Au contraire, ils sont ici dans cette journée de la Francophonie pour vous rappeler du fait que le gouvernement conservateur a tourné le dos à notre communauté.

Nous avons entendu dire à plusieurs reprises que le transfert du commissaire au bureau de l'ombudsman n'était que pour une raison financière, mais l'ombudsman lui-même a avoué qu'il aura besoin de l'argent neuf pour accueillir l'équipe du commissariat. Vous n'avez même pas promis que personne ne serait licencié.

Allez-vous, une fois pour toutes, écouter ce que les Franco-Ontariens vous demandent, oui ou non?

Interjections.

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

L'hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Notre gouvernement a annoncé que nous proposerons des modifications au projet de loi 57, Loi de 2018 visant à rétablir la confiance, la transparence et la responsabilité. Ces modifications créeront le poste de commissaire aux services en français au sein du bureau de l'ombudsman. Notre but est de trouver la meilleure façon de protéger les francophones en Ontario, tout en respectant l'argent des contribuables. Ces modifications vont assurer des économies d'échelle sur les frais reliés au fonctionnement du bureau, mais le commissaire continuera de déposer ses rapports auprès de l'Assemblée législative et à conserver son indépendance du gouvernement. Le commissaire conservera la responsabilité d'enquêter et de déposer ses rapports auprès de l'Assemblée législative.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Our government has been taking definitive action to put more money in people's pockets and open Ontario for business and for jobs. We are cutting red tape, reducing the regulatory burden businesses face and providing relief to families and individuals. At the same time, we are cleaning up the financial mess left behind by the previous Liberal government. Our government is taking—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please stop the clock.

I apologize to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt. I'm going to ask the member for Waterloo to come to order, the member for Essex to come to order and the Minister of Education to come to order.

Start the clock. I apologize to the member. Please conclude your question.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Our government is taking bold action. Yesterday, we hoped to find a federal partner committed to restoring Canada's business competitiveness and protecting jobs. However, we were once again disappointed by the federal government's inaction.

Could the minister please inform the House how yesterday's federal budget will impact Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt. Yesterday's budget confirms that the federal government does not share our vision for making Ontario open for business or open for jobs.

The federal government is threatening manufacturing and small business jobs in Ontario and hurting families with their job-killing carbon tax. On April 1, the federal government will reverse the relief that our government has brought to families and businesses. The federally imposed carbon tax will immediately raise the price of gasoline by 4.4 cents a litre, and it will make it more expensive to heat your homes and buy food for your families.

We had hoped the federal government would have taken note of the success that we've had in Ontario and maybe followed suit. But despite their lack of action, our government will continue to restore our province's finances, cut red tape and make Ontario open for business and open for jobs.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you to the minister for his response. It is disappointing to see the inaction of the federal government. Time and time again, Premier Ford and our government have raised the alarm over the federally imposed carbon tax coming on April 1. However, the people of Ontario can be sure that this government and this Premier will not stop fighting for them.

We know our plan is working. For the past nine months, our government has been working hard to reduce Ontario's deficit, cut red tape for businesses and create a pro-job environment, and we are seeing the results.

Could the minister please explain to the House the successes our government has seen and why the federal government should follow suit?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: In just nine months, our government has added 132,000 new jobs. Once again, we are seeing Ontario businesses investing again, creating jobs and growing our economy. The inaction of the federal government fails to build upon the success of the province of Ontario.

Speaker, we have concerns with the package of concessions the federal government accepted under the Canada-US-Mexico agreement in our agricultural sector. We continue to call on the federal government to oppose the new Buy American provisions that would negatively affect Ontario business and workers, and we expect the federal government to continue to press the US for immediate and permanent removal of tariffs on our steel and aluminum.

We will continue to build on our government's success and make Ontario open for business and open for jobs.

SERVICES DE SANTÉ EN FRANÇAIS
FRENCH-LANGUAGE HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais, moi aussi, vous souhaiter à vous, à tous les parlementaires, aux Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes qui sont ici et aux membres de l'AFO, une très bonne Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Pour bien des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, les entités de planification des services de santé leur ont donné accès à des services de santé qu'ils n'avaient jamais eus avant. Pour bien d'autres, elles ont amélioré l'accès—soit dans nos hôpitaux ou dans nos maisons de soins de longue durée—aux services de santé en français.

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Maintenant que le gouvernement de l'Ontario nous a enlevé notre université franco et qu'il nous a enlevé notre commissaire aux services en français, les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes sont inquiets. Qu'est-ce qui va arriver aux entités de planification? Elles devaient se rapporter aux RLISS; les RLISS n'existeront plus.

Ma question à la ministre : quelle garantie peut-elle nous donner que les entités vont continuer dans le même nombre, qu'elles auront des pouvoirs décisionnels, et où seront-elles dans la nouvelle structure administrative?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question.

The services that Franco-Ontarians receive in health care are not uniform across the province. We know that. We know that there is a lack of people who are trained and in service right now in several areas; in particular, personal support workers and registered nurses, in certain parts of the province.

We are conducting a human resources review with a particular emphasis on making sure that people are able to communicate in their first language with the people who provide them with health care services. I know that is a particular concern for people in the Franco-Ontarian community, especially with respect to mental health services, because communication is vital in those areas. It is an area that we are working on right now within the ministry, to make sure that we have the proper human resource mix in each of the areas—hospitals, long-term-care homes, and in home care.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: La ministre a raison : nous avons une pénurie criante de préposés aux soins personnels, tant dans le nord de l'Ontario que dans l'est de l'Ontario. Cette pénurie affecte les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes de façon disproportionnée.

Imaginez-vous, monsieur le Président, que vous avez 90 ans, vous avez toujours parlé français à vos enfants, vous êtes une femme de votre temps qui n'est pas allée sur le marché de travail, qui a toujours parlé français : vous avez besoin d'aide à domicile, et la préposée qui vient vous voir ne parle pas un mot de français. Ça, c'est la réalité de bien des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-

Ontariennes en ce moment, partout en Ontario mais surtout dans l'Est et dans le Nord.

Ce que j'aimerais savoir de la ministre : c'est où dans le projet de loi 74 qu'on voit la stratégie concrète pour remédier à la pénurie de travailleurs personnels? Parce que, moi, je ne le vois pas.

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, the member will know this has been an issue for quite some time. In fact, when we served together on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions 10 years ago, we did note that this was a particular concern for Franco-Ontarians not receiving services in their first language. We are continuing to work on that. Nothing much, I'm sorry to say, has happened in that time, but we are going to work on that.

In the new Ontario health teams that are going to be developed at the local basis—those teams will be responsible for making sure that all of the people who live within the geographic region that they serve are going to be able to receive services in their first language. That will be French; it may be other languages. We want to make sure that every person in Ontario will be able to get the right services for them when and where they need them—and that includes speaking French, as it is the first language of many Ontarians, particularly for seniors, because they often revert to only their first language as they get older. It is going to be critical that we provide those services, and the local Ontario health teams will have that responsibility.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Vincent Ke: My question is for the Minister of Education. Last week, I was so pleased to hear the minister outline a new vision for education in Ontario. I know that after years of failed ideological programs, students in my riding of Don Valley North are falling behind. They are leaving school without the basic skills they need. Ontario was once a world leader in education, and I believe with this plan it can be again.

Can the Minister of Education tell us what our government is doing to ensure that Ontario students will once again be global leaders in subjects like math, science and technology?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to thank the member from Don Valley North. You're doing a great job. Speaker, this member from Don Valley North is doing a great job staying connected with his constituents, and I really appreciated receiving a positive reaction and response from his riding about our plan for education, to getting back on track in Ontario. So thank you for that.

I can tell you what we're doing in terms of getting Ontario back on track with regard to STEM—science, technology, energy—engineering and math. But there's so much energy, I can't even begin to tell you, Speaker, for the plan that we have, because 15 years of failed ideology that the member mentioned and the experiments that the

previous Liberal administration chose to do on our students absolutely failed our students.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: What we're doing is, we are going to be investing in a four-year strategy where we're going to be rolling out math that's going to get back to the basics and focus on arithmetic, multiplication and making sure our students—

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you to the minister for that response. I'm so pleased to hear you mention how we are going to be preparing students for the future. I am confident that this plan we have brings our education system into the 21st century. I also know that we need to be providing our students with the best approach inside and outside our classrooms.

Can the minister explain how the government will continue to involve parents and to support teachers in providing quality education?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, thank you to the member from Don Valley North for the question. I want to share with you that we are embracing a team approach to make sure our students are supported in math.

We recognize that parents are the primary educators, and we're going to make sure that they have all the resources they need to make sure that they can support their students at home. We believe very strongly that parents should be teaming up with teachers to make sure, again, that our students are getting back to the basics and focusing on the competitiveness and the knowledge that will help them be global leaders. We feel that when we combine parent support with some of the best teachers in the world whom we have right here in our Ontario classrooms, we're setting our students up for success.

To that end, we want to see our teachers succeed as well, and we're going to be investing in them. Any teacher who wants to take additional qualification courses in math—we're going to be investing in them and working with them. Our government is getting education back on track in Ontario, and we're going to get it right once and for all.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Hamiltonians are demanding answers about why a scathing report was buried for five years, showing that the Red Hill Valley Parkway was not constructed properly. Hamiltonians also want to know why the provincial government never said anything about its own reports, which showed that the asphalt on the parkway was steadily getting less safe, year after year. Between 2012 and 2015, there were twice as many crashes on the Red Hill Valley Parkway compared to the nearby Lincoln Alexander Parkway. Seven people lost their lives.

Will the Premier apologize to the people of Hamilton on behalf of the province for failure to raise the alarm bell about the Red Hill Valley Parkway problem?

Hon. Doug Ford: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I would like to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for asking that question. I have great respect for that member. I consider him one of my friends in this Legislature. I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, we've looked at this situation, and I do have to remind the member opposite that the study that he's speaking of, which is lost, is a municipal study that somehow—you'd have to ask the municipality for that answer on where that study is and why it has not been released yet.

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The MTO has collected data, and we released that information we collected between 2007 and 2014 on four lanes in the four-kilometre stretch of the Red Hill Valley Parkway. The data collected in the four-kilometre section showed the pavement friction met MTO's satisfaction and was typical of other stone approved to be used in asphalt placed on busier highways in the province.

Mr. Speaker, the member is asking a question to the municipality. I refer him to the municipality for those answers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, supplementary?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Mr. Speaker, my question is back to the Premier. I would say that the people of Hamilton do not want to get caught in this being bounced back and forth. They deserve answers. They deserve to know who knew about the problems with the Red Hill Valley Parkway, who did they tell and what did they do about it. This is a very serious matter.

Above all, Hamiltonians need to know why they were kept in the dark all those years when there are reports showing that the roadway was getting slipperier each and every year. We would like to ask: Will the Premier do the right thing and pick up the tab for the cost of a judicial inquiry, so the people of Hamilton can get the answers they deserve?

Interjections.

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

The question has been referred to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks again for that question. MTO had no role in Hamilton's 2013 study. The Hamilton study was completed by a consultant using a British friction-testing methodology that isn't used by MTO.

Friction testing is one of many considerations when identifying a section of highway for additional monitoring or potential remedial measures. The ministry, when they're doing their testing, looks at the layout of the highway, pavement age, traffic conditions and collision data. MTO's approach is to achieve friction by selecting an appropriate pavement type for the surface layer and allowing pre-approved, high-quality, durable aggregates to be used in that layer.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what went on with the city of Hamilton with regard to that study or why that study hasn't come forward. We weren't a part of that consultant

study as the ministry. Again, I refer the member opposite to please contact the city of Hamilton and request the information that you're asking for. They should be presenting that data that you've been requesting to you.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This past fall was a particularly challenging harvest season for farmers in Sarnia–Lambton and across Ontario due to the unprecedented levels of vomitoxin mould on last year's corn crop.

The impact of DON was both hard-hitting and far-reaching. I heard from many farmers who not only struggled to sell their crops, but were also concerned about not having enough feed for their livestock.

Yesterday, the minister attended the Grain Farmers of Ontario's March Classic. He got to hear from farmers who are growing momentum for the Canadian grain industry, its reputation and their own businesses. However, he also got to hear about concerns facing the grain industry, such as the possible reoccurrence of vomitoxin in the future.

Could the minister please tell the House about the work the government has done to assist farmers impacted by DON?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Sarnia–Lambton for that excellent question. Yesterday, I did have the pleasure of attending the Grain Farmers of Ontario's March Classic in London. I heard not only about the impact of DON, but once again about the dedication and resolve of our farmers and our farm families.

We are launching a cost-shared program through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership to provide special assistance to farmers experiencing extra costs due to DON. We are extending the Commodity Loan Guarantee Program repayment deadline for the 2018-19 program. I've also asked the federal government to initiate a formal assessment under the AgriRecovery framework.

Our government respects the values of farmers, and we will be there to assist them through the challenges they face. We want to show that not only is this the government for the people, it's the government for our agriculture community.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I appreciate all his hard work advocating on behalf of Ontario's farmers, farm families and especially those who were hard hit by vomitoxin last fall.

Agriculture and agribusiness are of vital importance to our province's economy. I'm proud that our government has made expanding our agricultural industries a top priority. This government appreciates the hard work of our corn farmers and the enormous value of the entire sector to our economy and to our rural communities.

Unpredictability is a fact of life for our province's farmers. However, I'm glad that this government is committed to innovation and developing future solutions to threats like DON. As farmers prepare for the year ahead,

could the minister please share more details on what is being done to minimize the risk of DON and its impact on Ontario's farmers now and in the future?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thanks to the member for the supplementary question. I've taken steps to prepare for this year's harvest, including co-funding the Ontario Corn Committee study that examined which varieties of corn were most susceptible to DON. I've hosted numerous round table discussions with industry representatives impacted by vomitoxin, to understand their concerns and to see how our government can help find alternate markets for the high-DON corn.

This week, I was pleased to announce a change to production insurance that will help farmers if we ever experience this situation again. The program will now allow tiered salvage benefits so we can provide different levels of assistance, depending on the crop damage.

Mr. Speaker, running a farming operation is not an easy way of life. It is critical that our farmers have the support they need available year-round. This government is here to support our farmers and our rural communities with the resources they need every step of the way.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you, Speaker. I'd just like to take a moment to welcome members of my Queen's Park and constituency team here today: Laura Nguyen, Ohana Oliveira, Ahmer Khan, Janessa Duran and Lina Pulido. Welcome to Queen's Park.

NOWRUZ

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On a point of order, the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Speaker, today is the first day of spring, and March 20 is also the first day of Nowruz, the Persian new year. On behalf of my colleague Goldie Ghamari and all my colleagues in this House, I would like to wish all those celebrating Nowruz a very happy and healthy new year.

Nowruzetan Pirouz.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There are no deferred votes. This House stands in recess until 3 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to welcome Mr. Raja Singh, Sunder Pal Rajasansi, Gurjot Singh Sekhon, Dharampal Sandhu and Bhawandip Kaur Sandhu from the Drug Awareness Society of Toronto, who are here because I'll

be making a statement on their organization. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very, very pleased to welcome Catarina Liete, a student at Glendon College, a first-year student in arts and international relations—and, of course, in French it's collège Glendon. She is here for the Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Bienvenue.

M. Guy Bourgoïn: Il me fait plaisir encore de souhaiter la bienvenue à Carol Jolin, le président de l'assemblée francophone de l'Ontario.

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm seeking unanimous consent to move tonight's late show that I have to next Wednesday, March 27.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move the late show that was scheduled in his name tonight to Wednesday, March 27, 2019. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Doug Downey: My visitor is watching my TV because he's my EA. It's his birthday today: James Nicol.

Also, my great-niece was born this morning: Ava Grace Morrison.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to request unanimous consent that, this afternoon until I leave the chamber, I can wear a shirt stating that there are Franco-Ontarians here in Ontario outside of Quebec. It's in French, so that's why I'm saying it to you in—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans is seeking unanimous consent of the House to—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I think I have to seek unanimous consent first. Point of order: the member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We'll obviously support it, but members have been wearing green all day in regard to francophones on both sides of the House—at least on this side of the House; I'm sure there are some on that side as well—so support it, we will.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans is seeking unanimous consent of the House to be permitted to wear a T-shirt for the remainder of the afternoon in the Legislature recognizing that there are francophones living outside of Quebec. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. David Piccini: My colleague Andrea Khanjin and I see a very young bright mind, Noah Shack. Welcome to the Legislature. Good to see you in the gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I am pleased to welcome this afternoon in the chamber students from Resurrection Catholic Secondary School, who are here to observe proceedings. Welcome to Queen's Park. We're delighted to have you here.

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: a report concerning the Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I first met with representatives from the University of Western Ontario faculty here at Queen's Park, and one of the main concerns was that they were wondering what the Ford government will cut next in the PSE sector.

They wrote a letter, and I'm going to read the letter out loud to the minister.

“Dear Hon. Merrilee Fullerton....

“At a time when Ontario's universities already receive the lowest per-student funding in Canada, the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association urges your government not to cut operating grants to universities in the upcoming ... budget.

“A decrease in funding to post-secondary institutions will have a negative impact on the quality of education needed to make Ontario competitive.

“Budget cuts will most certainly affect university faculty members with precarious employment, many of whom work on short-term contracts that may not be renewed when universities face budget cuts.

“Contract faculty are among Ontario's best university teachers. They are a vital part of the high-quality education that our students deserve.

“Any further reduction in operating grants will leave our contract faculty colleagues, our universities, our communities and indeed our province further behind.

“We ask you not to cut operating grants and instead provide robust public funding for Ontario universities, which will only strengthen the quality of post-secondary education in our province.

“Can you commit to our request? We look forward to your response.

“Sincerely,

“Dan Belliveau,

“President.”

Also, Speaker, the UWOFA wants to meet with the minister.

Minister, can you meet with them? Yes or no? I hope you'll say yes when they contact your office.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Mike Harris: On behalf of the constituents of Kitchener–Conestoga and the residents of Waterloo region, I would like to commend our government's rapid movement to build out public transit across Ontario.

In particular, I wish to share Waterloo region's excitement for the work that the Minister of Transportation and Metrolinx are doing in expanding GO train service towards two-way, all-day GO to and from Toronto. In meetings with the minister and Metrolinx, the members for Kitchener South–Hespeler and Cambridge and myself have been assured that improved negotiations with CN

Rail and a new approach that leverages current infrastructure are producing real results, years ahead of schedule.

Let's review our government's accomplishments so far, Mr. Speaker. In September, we added more car and seat capacity on the Kitchener GO line. In January, GO train service was expanded by 25%, including a mid-afternoon train leaving Union Station at 3:35 p.m., resulting in now five morning trains to Toronto and five returning home to Waterloo region in the evening. And on March 9, just in time for March break, our government announced that kids under 12 can now ride free on trains and buses to and from their favourite activities, museums and parks.

What great progress we are making already. It shows that our government takes economic development seriously and understands the vital role that infrastructure plays in generating sustainable growth.

I am proud to be part of a government that realizes the great importance that two-way, all-day GO holds for Waterloo region and this province, and I'm thrilled to say that we are going to have two-way, all-day GO way ahead of schedule.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise to speak about the young people of York South–Weston. We are very fortunate to have some of the most educated young people in the world. With 20 world-class universities and 24 world-class colleges respectively, it is no surprise that many of them are Ontarians.

Ontarians young and old pride themselves in working to be the best they can be. We should be applauding them for that, Mr. Speaker. Instead, the Premier and his Conservative government are effectively turning their backs on young people and their aspirations for a brighter future.

According to Statistics Canada, Ontarians who had a high school diploma earned on average \$44,928 per year, compared to \$70,832 on average for those with a bachelor's degree. With the Conservatives' latest cuts to colleges and universities, and the cuts made to the Ontario Student Assistance Program, many young people will not be able to pursue higher education.

Mr. Speaker, not everyone is privileged enough to have families who can bankroll their education. In my riding of York South–Weston, with an average household income of \$69,954 per year, more often than not, students have nowhere to turn but the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

The young people of my riding are doing their best to improve their lot in life. They should be commended and supported. I implore this government to stop turning their backs on the students of York South–Weston.

NOWRUZ

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Today marks the first day of spring. However, to millions of Iranians around the world, including myself, today is also Nowruz, which translates

into “new spring.” Nowruz originated over 3,000 years ago, and is hundreds of years older than the Great Pyramid of Giza.

In 2009, Nowruz was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and in 2010, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed March 21 as International Nowruz Day. **1510**

On Nowruz, millions of Iranians from around the world and all walks of life, irrespective of religion, age, language, gender, race, ethnicity or social status, gather together with family, friends and loved ones to celebrate the new year. At its core, this 3,000-year-old celebration marks the rebirth of nature, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil. Nowruz represents much of what Iranian character, history and culture all about.

According to historians, our modern-day Nowruz celebrations were solidified during the reign of the Sassanid emperors, standing with Ardashir the First. Emperor Ardashir and his descendants formed the last great Persian empire before the advent of Islam. Nowruz is a secular celebration and has other joyful and interesting traditions.

To everyone celebrating Nowruz in Carleton, Ontario and around the globe, I wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous new year.

Remarks in Farsi.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I was a front-line teacher before politics and come from a family of teachers. Education is the future. Not every person in Ontario inherits a multi-million-dollar company. More students in a classroom means less direct time with the teacher and therefore less opportunity. The minister claims that students will be more resilient in larger classes. What's next? Classes of 50 or 60? Students are not like goats.

This government claims there will be no involuntary job losses. Catch that double negative? Look it up, government. Your voluntary decisions equal job losses.

My brother Sean has been teaching with the Hamilton–Wentworth District School Board for 12 years. He coached football for a long time and volunteers with his union, among other extracurriculars. Sean's board predicts that 178 teachers will be redundant and lose their jobs, while the union predicts 225 teachers will be cut. Sean has taught for 12 years and may lose his job because of this government.

Classes will be overwhelmed with upwards of 40 students, many in portables that are already bursting with 30 kids. Has anyone thought of fire code yet, or violence in the classroom?

This regressive Conservative government rejects logic, ignores facts, disregards science and makes deliberate and voluntary decisions that hurt children. Speaker, my constituents keep asking me: Why does this government hate children?

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister for Children, Community and Social Services will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister for Children, Community and Social Services will withdraw.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

We're still on members' statements. The member for Ottawa South.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M. John Fraser: Nous célébrons aujourd'hui avec fierté, en ce 20 mars, la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. La communauté francophone a toujours contribué de façon importante à la vitalité de la société ontarienne. Les francophones venus d'ailleurs qui ont choisi de s'établir en Ontario viennent enrichir son apport linguistique, culturel et économique. La communauté francophone a toujours joué un rôle important dans la culture, les arts et l'économie de l'Ontario.

Nous savons à quel point le bilinguisme est fondamental pour l'Ontario et établissons notre province en tant que chef de file mondial. En tant que gouvernement, toutes les mesures que nous prenons doivent tenir compte de son importance et de son impact positif pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Le français fait partie de l'Ontario. Le français est parlé sur cinq continents à travers le monde. La langue française a donné des milliers de mots à d'autres langues, en particulier à l'anglais. Elle témoigne aussi de l'histoire et du parcours des peuples francophones partout dans le monde.

J'invite tous les francophones et francophiles aujourd'hui à manifester et à partager leur fierté et leur solidarité avec la Francophonie du monde entier en utilisant le tweet français #mon20mars. Bonne Journée internationale de la Francophonie à vous tous.

ALCOHOL ADDICTION

Mr. Deepak Anand: Today I'm going to talk about an initiative started by a charity to combat a big public health threat that not only threatens my riding but other ridings as well: the threat of alcohol addiction, a public safety issue that needs to be addressed and corrected. Experts contend that the harms of alcohol can far exceed the overall costs to life and society than those of any other infectious disease, addiction or public safety issue.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, any addiction is bad. Alcohol addiction can cause serious damage to individuals and

their families. It can result in violence, dangerous accidents, health issues, and even death.

According to a report by the Canadian institute for substance use, in 2014 alone alcohol accounted for \$14.6 billion in health care, justice system, lost productivity, and other direct costs.

An alarming 40% of Ontarians drink over the Canadian low-risk alcohol drinking guidelines.

A team of volunteers from the Drug Awareness Society of Toronto—some of them are here in the members' gallery—have worked for years in alcohol and addictions awareness, specifically targeting the South Asian community. They're launching their annual Alcohol-Free April Challenge, giving a chance for drinkers to take a pause and engage in healthy dialogue surrounding alcohol, addictions and mental health. They will be on various media platforms. Over the last three years, I have personally seen the positive impact of this initiative. I also took this challenge to bring awareness and promote change, and I'm proud to say that I have been alcohol-free ever since.

I call upon everyone in the chamber to take the Alcohol-Free April Challenge, which happens to be at the same time as Sikh Heritage Month, and spread the word and be the ambassadors of positive change.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The Bruce Awad Summer Program is a program for school-aged individuals between the ages of six and 21 years old with high-needs autism spectrum disorders. The BASP has been running in Windsor and Essex county every summer since 1984.

The BASP is the only program that offers specialized, full-day support during the summer for children with autism in the Windsor-Essex area. The program costs are funded through a number of sources, including the Ministry of Education's Focus on Youth summer program. That funding allows Autism Services Inc., which administers the BASP, to employ high school students. Those students have received specialized training and were able to gain employment experience and leadership skills.

The problem is that the Ministry of Education has not told organizations like Autism Services Inc. if they will be continuing the Focus on Youth grant this year. Due to high demand, Autism Services Inc. is already forced to put families on a one- or two-year wait-list before accepting them into the program. They cannot afford to lose any funding.

That's why today I'm calling on this Conservative government to provide some clarity to Autism Services Inc. and organizations like them that provide such important programs, regarding the Focus on Youth program. They need to be assured that the funding is coming so they can focus on delivering excellent programming for youth with high-needs autism this summer.

I want to point out that there's another program like this, Kaleidoscope, which is facing the same fate as this program if this government doesn't step up and fund them through Focus on Youth.

ATTACK IN NEW ZEALAND

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Last week, the world was shaken by the horrific and unprecedented act of terror that occurred in Christchurch, New Zealand. The loss of 50 innocent worshippers during one of the most sacred days of the week for a Muslim is unimaginable. This terrorist attack is an affront to the people of New Zealand and to the Muslim community around the world.

I want to thank the first responders for helping during these tough times in Christchurch. I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues in this House for their outpouring of support through these difficult times for the community.

1520

I would like to thank our police officers across the province for protecting mosques all around during our Friday prayers, to make us feel safe and secure. There was no imminent threat in Ontario, but officers were there to show their support. We are very grateful.

We must acknowledge that such acts of terror are never welcomed—not here, not anywhere.

The immense support that myself and the community have received is reassuring. It reassures me and the community that there is hope, love and peace in the world. As Christopher Reeve said, when you choose hope, everything is possible. Violence and hatred are never the answer. This tragic attack brought us all together and made us all stronger, more united.

To end off, I'll quote Martin Luther King Jr.: "Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

HARRY WATTS

Mrs. Amy Fee: Last week, Kitchener, Ontario and Canada lost one of our great World War II veterans, Harry Watts. To truly highlight Mr. Watts's legacy, I would need hours in this Legislature, but a few things that I can say will show just how amazing he was.

At his funeral, Harry was described as just as much of a humanitarian as a warrior, and that couldn't be more accurate. During his time as a dispatcher in World War II in Italy, it was because of his advocacy that children in need got new clothes made out of former Canadian uniforms, and shoes that were made out of old tires.

In more recent years, Harry was a huge supporter of National Service Dogs in Cambridge, and that's how my son Kenner and I had the privilege of meeting Harry for the first time. Kenner liked to call him "the man with the big smile."

Sir David Sopha, with Portraits of Honour, did a portrait of Harry and called him one of his best friends. He told me last week about how dedicated Harry was to helping troubled students and new Canadians. And, of course, he mentioned Harry's smile and his laugh, which he described as more of a chuckle.

Although I met Harry only a few years ago through his advocacy work for service dog access rights, the last time I saw him, as I always did, I thanked him for his service.

He held my hand that day and he said to me, "You know, you always thank me." Mr. Watts—Harry: I would like to thank you again for your service to our country and for the impact that you've had on my life. You will never be forgotten.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROHIBITING HATE-PROMOTING
DEMONSTRATIONS AT QUEEN'S PARK
ACT, 2019LOI DE 2019 INTERDISANT
LES MANIFESTATIONS FOMENTANT
LA HAINE À QUEEN'S PARK

Mr. Baber moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act respecting demonstrations that promote hatred on legislative precinct grounds / *Projet de loi 84, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative à l'égard des manifestations qui fomentent la haine sur les terrains de la cité législative.*

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 York Centre like to explain his bill?

Mr. Roman Baber: The title is, in short, the Prohibiting Hate-Promoting Demonstrations at Queen's Park Act, 2019. The bill amends the Legislative Assembly Act to prohibit any demonstration, rally or other activity that, in the opinion of the Speaker, is likely to promote hatred against any identifiable group from being permitted on the legislative precinct grounds. The legislative precinct grounds are defined as the area of land in the city of Toronto bounded on the east, south and west by Queen's Park Crescent, and on the north side by Wellesley Street West. The act will come into effect on the day that it will receive royal assent.

ELECTION FUNDRAISING
TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2019LOI DE 2019 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
DU FINANCEMENT ÉLECTORAL

Madame Des Rosiers moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to contributions / *Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections en ce qui concerne les contributions.*

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 Ottawa-Vanier care to explain her bill?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: The Election Fundraising Transparency Act, 2019, if passed, would clarify the language of the Election Finances Act to explicitly disallow the reimbursement of the value of a political contribution by a third party. It will also reinstate the mandatory donor certification, which demands that a donor state that their contribution is coming only from their own assets and will not be reimbursed by a third party.

C'est un projet de loi qui vise à réinstaurer l'intégrité dans notre système démocratique.

GOOD FORTUNE CORPORATION ACT, 2019

Mr. Babikian moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr8, An Act to revive Good Fortune Corporation.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

ALL TRADE QUANTITIES INC. ACT, 2019

Mrs. Wai moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr9, An Act to revive All Trade Quantities Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

RESPECTING PROPERTY TAXPAYERS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE RESPECT DES CONTRIBUABLES FONCIERS

Mr. Calandra moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 86, An Act to amend the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 86, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la Société d'évaluation foncière des municipalités.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: I just want to briefly, before I explain it, Mr. Speaker, thank my legislative intern, Nikki Romano, whose birthday it is today and who put a lot of work into preparing this bill. I just wanted to thank her very much for that work. She was very, very helpful.

Mr. Speaker, this is just a bill that continues the government's commitment to respecting taxpayers by adding four additional taxpayers to the board of the Municipal

Property Association Corp., thereby respecting taxpayers—another avenue by which we are respecting taxpayers.

1530

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DOWN SYNDROME

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Before I begin, I'd like to seek unanimous consent to keep these socks—Rock Your Socks for World Down Syndrome Day—on my desk.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow her to display some special socks on her desk while she gives her statement. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Speaker, and thanks to all members of this assembly for that wonderful moment because I know, right now at home, Hazel Seguin, who has sold these socks to most of the members in this assembly, is watching us today. So, Hazel, at home, I'm going to mention you a little bit in my speech, but we're very proud of the work that you're doing.

Today, we mark Ontario Down Syndrome Day, which will be recognized throughout Ontario tomorrow with flag-raising, dinners and other celebrations demonstrating the importance of acceptance in our province.

As with many proclamations that we recognize in this assembly, this day was introduced as a private member's bill in 2016, by the former member for Pickering–Ajax, Joe Dickson. This was supported in a non-partisan manner to express the unity of Ontarians for those with Down syndrome so we can better raise awareness as a province for those with this congenital disorder, or more well known as having an extra chromosome.

And this is an important day for us to mark as we strive for inclusivity and to honour our diversity in our great province.

As the minister responsible for social services, I have the distinct privilege of working with many children and adults who have developmental disabilities, including Down syndrome, and I interact with them often. For example, recently after visiting Tamir centre in my city of Ottawa, I sang with the choir; or the Reena Foundation here in the GTA, whose clients I have danced with; or the Oakville Community Living association, whose artists I've been able to make plaster bowls with.

I think again of Hazel Seguin from St. Gabriel's Catholic Elementary School in Windsor, who is seven years old and in grade 1 and who has been selling these socks for her Chasing Hazel Foundation. Her and her parents' advocacy has earned the respect and admiration from many in this assembly, including the member for Burlington, who has raised Hazel's cause in this House.

I think of Robert Pio Hajar, who was in a video from my ministry, who told us this: “I have 35 years’ experience living with Down syndrome. I know what it’s like to walk in these shoes. And I can tell you that being a friend to someone like me is a life-changing experience. People like me will help you grow. We will help you become better people. You will learn so much about yourselves.” Robert, truer words have never been spoken.

And I think of the Down Syndrome Association of Ontario, who is a leading voice on advocacy on social inclusion and support within our social services system, our education system and within our health care framework.

As Ontarians, we have a responsibility to those who have been marginalized in the past or who continue to be marginalized. Many Ontarians remember a time in our province’s history when those with Down syndrome were excluded, in some cases, ostracized and, in others, institutionalized.

By marking this day in the Legislative Assembly we, as Ontarians, as parliamentarians, are sending a strong message that those with Down syndrome are important members of our society, that their exceptionalities are to be celebrated and that we believe more importantly than anything in the equality of all. With one in 1,000 babies being born with Down syndrome in our province, this is an especially important message for us to send today.

So, as we mark Ontario Down Syndrome Day, I encourage all members to reflect on our collective desire for an inclusive and welcoming province where the Hazels and Roberts in our communities know they are loved, respected and supported; that they see a society that is compassionate and inclusive and where differences enrich us rather than divide us.

To all Ontarians with Down syndrome or whose loved ones are living with this congenital disorder, I wish you well as we lead into tomorrow. I’ll conclude with how Robert ends his speeches. He says, “I’m sending a very important message for people with disabilities. We are just like you. You have to understand abilities and value. I’m so proud of who I am. That’s why I always say to my speech every time: See me first, then see my disability. Or just see me.”

Robert, we see you, we’re proud of you and we’re going to continue to stand up for you.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

L’hon. Caroline Mulroney: Monsieur le Président et chers collègues, devant cette Assemblée, en ce mercredi 20 mars, je suis heureuse de souligner la Journée internationale de la Francophonie et de célébrer cet événement avec tous les francophones et tous les francophiles de l’Ontario, du Canada et du monde entier.

Depuis plus de 400 ans, la communauté francophone fait partie intégrante de l’histoire de notre province. La francophonie ontarienne a beaucoup évolué depuis ses 400 ans de présence en Ontario. La communauté franco-ontarienne s’est tissé une place enviable dans l’espace

politique, social, culturel et économique de la province et du Canada.

La communauté franco-ontarienne a à son actif une panoplie d’artistes, des lieux de diffusion culturelle, des médias et un ensemble d’institutions et d’organismes qui maintiennent et renforcent sa vitalité dans l’ensemble de la province. Au gré du temps, la communauté franco-ontarienne s’est façonnée à l’image d’une francophonie mondiale aux visages multiples et aux accents variés. La communauté franco-ontarienne est aussi le reflet de la diversité qui caractérise l’Ontario.

L’Ontario compte 1,5 million de personnes parlant le français, dont plus de 622 000 Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens, ce qui représente la plus grande population francophone au pays en dehors du Québec. Aujourd’hui, on recense dans le monde 300 millions de francophones. Au cours des prochaines décennies, d’ici 2050, on estime à 700 millions le nombre de francophones qui seront répartis sur l’ensemble de la planète. C’est dire à quel point le français va continuer de s’imposer non seulement comme langue de culture mais aussi comme langue économique.

Pour toutes ces raisons et bien d’autres, l’Ontario est fier d’appartenir à la grande famille de la Francophonie internationale. Le statut de l’Ontario comme membre observateur au sein de l’Organisation internationale de la Francophonie illustre bien l’importance que l’on accorde à ce sentiment d’appartenance.

Il est indéniable que le français et le bilinguisme qui en découle sont des atouts de marque pour l’Ontario au sein d’espaces économiques mondialisés. À cet effet, notre gouvernement s’est engagé à faire de l’Ontario une province ouverte aux affaires et ouverte aux emplois. Pour cela, nous misons sur des politiques qui favorisent la création d’emplois et, en outre, la mise en valeur d’une main-d’œuvre bilingue qualifiée. À cet égard, plusieurs rencontres avec divers intervenants clés du milieu des affaires nous ont permis de commencer à identifier les obstacles auxquels sont confrontées les entreprises et à récolter des idées en vue de dynamiser l’entrepreneuriat francophone en Ontario.

Tout en gérant les finances publiques de manière responsable, notre gouvernement mise sur des partenariats stratégiques viables à long terme qui puissent soutenir le développement économique de la communauté francophone.

1540

Par ailleurs, notre gouvernement se soucie de façon prioritaire du bien-être de toutes les Ontariennes et tous les Ontariens. C’est la raison pour laquelle nous comprenons l’importance qu’accorde la communauté franco-ontarienne à l’éducation par et pour les francophones, à l’accès à des services de santé en français de qualité et à un accès accru à la justice en français.

Bien que la réalité financière de notre province à l’heure actuelle nous impose une approche fiscale rigoureuse, notre gouvernement poursuit ses efforts concertés pour augmenter cet accès aux services en français à travers des modèles de prestation qui soient coordonnés et intégrés. Ces

services comprennent également la mise en place de meilleurs modes de recrutement et de rétention des nouveaux arrivants francophones.

Dans cette perspective, je tiens à souligner que l'immigration francophone constitue un grand atout pour l'Ontario qui bénéficie grandement de l'apport et de la diversité de tous ceux et celles qui choisissent de s'établir dans notre province afin de contribuer à sa prospérité économique, sociale et culturelle. Qui plus est, l'immigration renforce nos liens de proximité avec la communauté francophone mondiale en plus de donner une dimension unique à l'Ontario.

Je tiens d'ailleurs à saluer la Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada qui coordonne la 13^e Journée de réflexion sur l'immigration francophone qui se tient aujourd'hui à Halifax.

Chers collègues, chers amis, le fait français est un atout formidable pour notre province à la fois sur le plan humain, social, économique et politique. En cette Journée internationale de la Francophonie, je tiens à vous remercier toutes et tous, mes chers collègues, de votre appui et de votre soutien constant envers notre francophonie ontarienne. Je vous invite donc tous et toutes à partager avec moi et l'ensemble des Ontariennes et des Ontariens votre enthousiasme envers la Francophonie en relayant sur des réseaux sociaux le mot-clic #mon20mars.

Je vous souhaite une magnifique journée de la Francophonie internationale.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now we'll have responses to the ministerial statements.

DOWN SYNDROME

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to begin as the critic for disabilities in our party by acknowledging this gift from the minister. Thank you very much for these socks. I will wear them with pride tomorrow. Tomorrow is Rock Your Socks day for awareness for folks with Down syndrome. I encourage every member of this House to find your most colourful pair of socks and wear them into this chamber tomorrow.

Tomorrow is a day that's significant, as the minister mentioned. People with Down syndrome, as she said, have faced discrimination in Ontario and around the world. Half a century ago, people with Down syndrome were denied the right to education, they were given inadequate health care, and some were placed in institutions where their life expectancy was approximately 25 years.

People with Down syndrome, however, are people first, and they share the same human rights as every other citizen in Ontario. Like everyone else in our province, they need to have the opportunity to be their fullest selves.

Here is the good news on this commemorative day: Advances in medicine and also the social movements that have challenged discrimination for people with disabilities have improved the life expectancy and experiences of people with Down syndrome. People with Down syndrome are now living into their sixties and seventies.

People with Down syndrome are active, contributing citizens of the province of Ontario. Children with Down syndrome are attending mainstream schools and learning to read alongside their peers. Young adults with Down syndrome are attending college and living independently. Some are gainfully employed.

Despite advances, however, many people with Down syndrome living in Ontario continue to face challenges. Misguided and outdated attitudes about the abilities of people with Down syndrome can result in low expectations, discrimination and exclusion, resulting in communities where children and adults with Down syndrome can't integrate successfully.

But, Speaker, the research is clear: People with Down syndrome benefit from early, coordinated, inclusive and targeted interventions to support their development and foster success. For that to happen, the province of Ontario needs to make conscious investments—conscious, thought-through investments—with the lead of people with disabilities and organizations who are advocating for them to figure out how to raise the appropriate revenue and spend it in the right places. You know what happens when we do that? People with Down syndrome are then given opportunities to participate; all of us—all of us—benefit; and environments of friendship, acceptance and respect for everyone and high expectations are created.

Proclaiming the 21st day of March as Ontario Down Syndrome Day provides a dedicated occasion in this province to celebrate the abilities of people with Down syndrome, and we need to continue doing it.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M. Guy Bourgoin: En tant que porte-parole de l'opposition officielle en Affaires francophones et au nom de la chef du NPD, Andrea Horwath, je suis honoré de présenter une réponse ministérielle.

J'aimerais partager avec la ministre des Affaires francophones une copie du manifeste franco-ontarien que j'ai reçue ce matin de la part de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. Je vous la fais parvenir, madame la Ministre.

C'est après la création de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie en 1970 qu'on célèbre la vingtaine comme la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Je représente un comté dont 60 % de la population parlent couramment la langue de Molière. Nous sommes une communauté florissante et vibrante. Malgré ceci, notre histoire est marquée par la résistance linguistique. Par exemple, de 1885 à 1927, la discrimination à l'égard de l'éducation de la langue française était une question provinciale, ce qui inclut le très célèbre règlement 17 de 1912. Tout ça pour vous dire qu'on a l'habitude de se battre, de résister; ça fait partie de notre héritage.

Revenons maintenant à aujourd'hui : nouveau siècle, même revirements. Juste pour vous donner quelques exemples, le gouvernement conservateur a aboli le Commissariat aux services en français en tant que bureau indépendant; éliminé le financement pour l'Université de

l'Ontario français; coupé le financement aux organismes culturels francophones, tels que La Nouvelle Scène Gilles Desjardins; et mis en péril l'engagement de nouveaux enseignants malgré le fait que les conseils francophones débordent.

Il y a quelques jours seulement, on a entendu quelqu'un dire que la ministre est la meilleure personne pour défendre les droits des Franco-Ontariens. Franchement, vu l'histoire récente de son gouvernement et vu le manque de respect auprès des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, il est difficile d'être d'accord avec cette opinion.

Mon message à tous les francophones de la province : on ne lâche pas. Nous avons survécu la colère, le désespoir et la négation grâce à notre courage, à notre ténacité et à notre amour inconditionnel de notre langue et de notre culture.

Nous sommes, nous serons.

DOWN SYNDROME

TRISOMIE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm very proud today to stand in the House on behalf of our Liberal caucus to respond to both ministerial statements, acknowledging World Down Syndrome Day and la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

This year on World Down Syndrome Day, the Canadian Down Syndrome Society is encouraging all of us to get up and dance. They're starting an online dance party across the country to raise funds and awareness for their society. A campaign like the one we see today is so important, because we break the stigma surrounding Down syndrome. People with Down syndrome have faced discrimination in Ontario and around the world.

Dans ma circonscription d'Orléans, je suis chanceuse d'avoir un groupe tellement actif qui travaille fort pour le bien-être des individus avec des handicaps. Ce groupe, la Coalition des familles francophones d'Ottawa de personnes avec déficience intellectuelle ou handicap de développement, cherche à créer un espace d'activité pour les personnes handicapées, y compris les personnes atteintes du syndrome de Down.

Finally, I'd like to take a moment to thank my former colleague Mr. Joe Dickson for bringing forward Bill 182, the Ontario Down Syndrome Day Act, in 2016.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: C'est aussi avec une grande fierté que je me joins à l'ensemble des francophones et francophiles de l'Ontario pour nous souhaiter à tous et chacun, francophones et francophiles, une excellente Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

1550

Mais, malheureusement, lors du rassemblement ce matin devant notre espace, Notre Place, la réalité était autrement. Les récentes actions posées par le

gouvernement conservateur de l'Ontario jettent une ombre sur cette journée et font ressortir des sentiments que l'on pensait loin, loin derrière nous.

Vous me permettez, monsieur le Président, de citer quelques passages de Daniel Richer, crieur professionnel, et j'en profite pour le remercier de sa présence.

Il criait : « L'heure est à l'action. L'heure est à la passion. It is the time to join us in solidarity.

« Debout! » disait-il. « Un appel que personne n'attendait.

« Debout! À nouveau menacés dans notre fragilité ...

« Luttons contre cet adversaire coriace que nous connaissons bien. »

Il ajoutait, et je le cite encore : « En Ontario français, il n'y a qu'une histoire, il n'y a qu'une légende, il n'y a qu'une vérité, et elle a pour nom "Résistance". » Que dire de plus que ça pour défendre la francophonie ontarienne?

Nous avons réalisé, en collaboration avec les communautés et les organisations, des avancées significatives en francophonie au cours des dernières années sous le gouvernement libéral : l'adhésion à l'OIF, un commissaire aux services en français, la confirmation de la création d'une université de langue française gérée par et pour les francophones. On sait malheureusement ce qui est arrivé dans ce dossier. Où est la ministre pour représenter les jeunes francophones qui veulent vivre et étudier en français?

Toutes ces avancées ont vu le jour grâce à la contribution de jeunes et de moins jeunes femmes et hommes de conviction, et d'un gouvernement sensible et conscient de l'apport indéniable de la francophonie à la culture et à l'économie de l'Ontario.

Le fait français est incontournable en Ontario et partout au Canada. Nous nous différencions comme pays, comme province, par notre dualité linguistique. Cette synergie entre nos deux langues officielles est notre force culturelle et économique et certainement identitaire. La langue française et tous ses accents définissent nos racines, nos origines et notre histoire. Ce sont ces différences qui nous unissent et nous renforcent.

Je l'ai toujours dit, et nous l'avons toujours dit : la francophonie n'a pas de couleur et doit être au cœur des décisions prises, des objectifs que l'on se donne comme individu, comme collectivité, comme province, comme pays. Nous nous devons de reconnaître officiellement la dualité linguistique des langues officielles de notre pays et en Ontario. Nous n'en serons que plus forts.

J'invite, donc, tous les francophones et tous les francophiles en Ontario et partout au Canada à partager leur fierté et leur solidarité envers la Francophonie mondiale aujourd'hui. Gardons notre place, et ensemble disons : « Nous sommes, nous serons. »

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

PETITIONS

VETERANS MEMORIAL

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

“Whereas during the war in Afghanistan, Canada lost 159 military personnel;

“Whereas those brave souls were driven along the Highway of Heroes between CFB Trenton and the coroner’s office in Toronto;

“Whereas since Confederation, 117,000 Canadian lives have been lost in military conflict;

“Whereas there is a recognized and celebrated plan to transform the Highway of Heroes into a living tribute that honours all of Canada’s war dead;

“Whereas that plan calls for the planting of two million trees, including 117,000 beautiful commemorative trees adjacent to Highway 401 along the Highway of Heroes;

“Whereas this effort would provide an inspired drive along an otherwise pedestrian stretch of asphalt;

“Whereas the two million trees will recognize all Canadians who have served during times of war;

“Whereas over three million tonnes of CO₂ will be sequestered, over 500 million pounds of oxygen will be produced and 200 million gallons of water will be released into the air each day, benefiting all Ontarians in the name of those who served our country and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice; and

“Whereas there is a fundraising goal of \$10 million;

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

“That the current government of Ontario put its financial support behind this fundraising effort for the Highway of Heroes Tree campaign.”

I fully support it. I’m going to sign it and give it to Erynn to bring up to the table.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: I remain inundated with animal protection petitions, thanks to people like Brenda Thompson up in the visitors’ gallery. I just signed a visitor’s pass for Smurf the horse. I don’t see him here; I’ll introduce Smurf the horse, but he’s not present in the gallery, as I understand it.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you. I affix my signature.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition. I’ll be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Arthur to deliver to the table.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is entitled “Petition to Restore Provincial Portion of Operating Funding to Toronto Transit Commission and Provide Funding for the Relief Line.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the former Conservative provincial government reneged on an agreement to fund up to 50% of the TTC’s net annual operating budget;

“Whereas in 2016, the Toronto Transit Commission set an all-time record of 538.1 million rides, and TTC ridership has increased each year for the last 13 years without the assistance from the province that would now account for \$345 million in operating funding;

“Whereas the TTC receives the smallest government support per ride of all major North American transit systems—just \$1 a ride, far less than the North American average of \$2.60 a ride;

“Whereas the province needs to contribute their fair share of the cost of the relief line so we can get moving on construction;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately act to restore the TTC’s net operating cost subsidies up to \$345 million annually and to make the funds available for construction of the relief line.”

1600

As a TTC rider myself, I couldn’t agree with this petition more, and I’m happy to add my signature to it.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: “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.”

I will sign this petition and pass it to Niko.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Guy Bourgouin: J’ai une pétition intitulée « Ensemble, résistons!

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que la décision du gouvernement de dissoudre le Commissariat aux services en français et d’annuler le projet de création de l’Université de l’Ontario français met les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s en péril; et

« Attendu que les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s qui, jour après jour, doivent se battre pour maintenir leur droit d’avoir accès à des services de santé et d’éducation dans la langue officielle qui est la leur; et

« Attendu que les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s occupent une place importante en Ontario, et méritent d’avoir leurs droits linguistiques constitutionnels respectés, protégés et défendus;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de : rétablir le Commissariat aux services en français et à remettre sur les rails le projet pour une université francophone. »

Je supporte cette pétition, et je vais la donner au page Sanjayan.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Sara Singh: I’d like to present this petition, on behalf of the Fight for \$15 and Fairness campaign, entitled “Don’t Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’m happy to sign my name to this and send this off with page Gajan.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. Deepak Anand: “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 absolutely endorse this petition, sign it and give to page Katherine.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms. Jill Andrew: I am presenting the following petition:

“Petition to Restore Arts Funding and the Indigenous Culture Fund at the Ontario Arts Council.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has cut its level of base funding to the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) by \$5 million for the 2018-19 fiscal year...;

“Whereas the Ontario government has also cut its funding to the Indigenous Culture Fund (ICF) at the OAC by \$2.25 million for the 2018-19 fiscal year...;

“Whereas the ICF will not accept new grant applications this year while the program is under review, entailing the layoff of Indigenous staff in permanent positions;

“Whereas the arts are essential to the quality of life, cultural identity, social and community well-being, creativity, innovation, and economic prosperity of Ontario;

“Whereas the ICF was part of the Ontario government’s response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada;

“Whereas the ICF supported traditional culture, languages, teachings, protocols, knowledge, youth and elderled and engaged community cultural projects;

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

“(a) Restore OAC’s funding...;

“(b) Restore the ICF’s funding” and to restore these fundings, moving forward.

I absolutely support this petition, and I affix my signature and hand it over to page Arthur.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Ms. Marit Stiles: I’m pleased to present a petition entitled “Stop the TTC Subway Upload” on behalf of my constituents Emiko Nagato and Lara Cartmale, who provided this to me. It reads:

“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 to:

“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; and

“Match the city of Toronto’s financial contribution to the TTC so transit riders can have improved service and affordable fares.”

I am very pleased to affix my signature to this petition, and I will ask Sanjayan to please table it with the Clerks.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak in support of Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. I recently had the privilege to study this legislation at the Standing Committee on Social Policy, and I am very happy to see that it is back in the House today for third reading.

This legislation proposes important amendments to a number of acts, including the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act, the Teaching Profession Act and the Education Act. As I said when I spoke to this legislation at second reading, Bill 48 will keep students in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence safer—and in all the other ridings, of course—by making common-sense reforms to teacher discipline in the province of Ontario, requiring that those found guilty of sexual abuses by the discipline committee of the College of Teachers or the College of Early Childhood Educators be subject to mandatory revocation of their certificates of registration.

1610

It will also ensure that students and teachers alike are more prepared for the return of fundamental math instruction, which the Minister of Education actually outlined

more details about just last week. It will reform the governance structure of the Ontario College of Teachers, ensuring that parents and the public have a stronger voice in the governance of the teaching profession, and it will put into place fair, open, transparent, consistent processes to be followed when families make requests for service animals to accompany children at school. These are all important changes in making sure that our students have the resources and supports in the classroom that they need to learn, and we are also making sure that these students are safe.

Teachers and early childhood educators do important work, and I am very happy to acknowledge that work, but we also have to keep in mind that it puts them in a position of trust and authority with a vulnerable segment of our society. That's why our government wants to hold these professionals to a high standard of professionalism and accountability. I think it goes without saying, Speaker: Our government has zero tolerance for sexual abuse of students and children. The proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act under this proposed legislation certainly make that clear.

Currently, mandatory revocation is only used for a list of specified acts. We are strengthening those provisions and making sure that all sexual abuse leads to the loss of a teaching licence or certificate. Educators found guilty by the college's discipline committees of a prescribed sexual act that is prohibited under the federal Criminal Code would also be subject to a mandatory revocation of their certificate of registration. That's really how zero tolerance works, Speaker. Teachers and early childhood educators who commit these crimes will lose their licence immediately once found guilty.

I want to be clear, Speaker, because this came up at our social policy committee hearings when we were reviewing the bill: We certainly recognize that educators may need to speak about physical health in the classroom, and these conversations may include speaking about sex, especially in the context of delivering the health and physical education part of the curriculum. Other educators, early childhood educators or teachers may assist children and students with their care and hygiene as necessary, including diapering, toileting, washing or dressing. That's why our proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act, as well as the Teaching Profession Act, clarify that sexual abuse of a student or child does not include touching or behaviours that are necessary in terms of dealing with their professional responsibilities.

I know that many educators and professional associations agree with us on zero tolerance for educators who commit acts of sexual abuse. I personally heard from many of them at the committee.

Nick Milanetti from the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association said, "OCSTA fully supports Bill 48's overall objective of keeping Ontario's publicly funded schools safe, supportive and accommodating for all students. We support the various amendments outlined in

schedules 1, 3 and 4 that clarify definitions of professional misconduct, as well as the new requirement that revokes a member's teaching certificate if the College of Teachers finds them guilty of an act of professional misconduct involving the sexual abuse of a child or student."

Darlene Edgar from the College of Early Childhood Educators said, "The college welcomes amendments that will strengthen our ability to protect children from sexual abuse. The changes mean that all acts of sexual abuse, not just a specific list, would lead to mandatory revocation of a member's certificate of registration. We've previously advocated for these changes."

In the College of Early Childhood Educators' written submission, they said, "The college is firmly of the position that there is no situation in which a professional in a position of trust should retain their membership and their professional designation after having been found guilty of any sexual touching, behaviour, or remarks of a sexual nature towards a child."

Nicole van Woudenberg from the Ontario College of Teachers said, "In April 2018, when we were last here, we addressed a need to make the law clearer and the penalties for sexual misconduct against students tougher. For example, we asked that the government strengthen the definition of sexual abuse in the Ontario College of Teachers Act. Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, does that. Our council is fully supportive of the expanded definitions. It helps to protect students knowing that there are no grey areas when it comes to defining sexual abuse and understanding what constitutes professional misconduct. Bill 48 also enables victims of sexual abuse to receive therapy and counselling. We welcome the direction and clarity these proposed changes represent."

While it's unfortunate that the previous Liberal government didn't see fit to eliminate those grey areas in the existing legislation, I am very happy to see that our government is moving forward with these common-sense amendments—amendments that have very wide support from parents, from educators and from stakeholders.

I want to thank the Minister of Education and her parliamentary assistant, the member for Niagara West, for their work in bringing these measures forward in Bill 48.

Of course, while an important part of this legislation—what I've just been discussing—Bill 48 is about more than just the provisions dealing with sexual abuse. It's also about supporting students and making sure that students have the resources they need to succeed.

Speaker, nobody has more influence on a student's education than the teacher at the front of the classroom. Our teachers bring a commitment, passion and dedication to everything that they do in the classroom. That's why we have a responsibility and an obligation to ensure those teachers are well positioned to help Ontario's students learn the fundamentals, and nothing—or no one thing—is more critical to the jobs of today and tomorrow than fundamental math skills.

1620

I think everyone—or maybe almost everyone—recognizes that Ontario has fallen behind in mathematics, sadly.

Under the previous Liberal government, math scores declined to the point that, shockingly, half—50%—of our grade 6 students failed to meet the provincial standard for mathematics. Believe me, I heard about this many times during the election campaign from parents who were very concerned that their children were not being prepared properly. To me, this is unacceptable, and I think it's unacceptable to parents and to most educators as well.

We have to do better. We have a responsibility to students. We owe it to them and their parents to ensure that they are prepared, especially for things that are so fundamental, like mathematics. The reality is that math is a basic skill fundamental for most occupations that they might obtain, and jobs they might obtain in the future. It's a skill that is important to open many doors and career paths to students down the road.

I am proud that our government recently conducted the largest education consultation in Ontario's history, hearing from more than 72,000 parents, students and educators. One of the subjects that we consulted on was ideas about how to improve student performance in STEM—science, technology, engineering and mathematics—how to improve learning, and how to improve student performance.

The Minister of Education recently unveiled reforms to our education system that will include a four-year math strategy, one that moves away from discovery math and refocuses on the fundamentals. The first elements of this new curriculum will be available by September 2019. For the teachers already in the system, the government will be providing funding to support additional qualification courses in math.

But for new teachers, Bill 48 proposes that they will pass a math content knowledge test before entering the classroom in a professional capacity so, if passed, new teachers after the spring of 2020 will be required to pass this test in order to be certified by the Ontario College of Teachers. This is, of course, about ensuring that all new teachers entering the classrooms have a strong foundation in math, and more importantly, Speaker, that they have confidence in the skills that they will have to teach in the classroom. Parents can have confidence in knowing that our government is working to help to ensure that Ontario teachers have the foundational skills to teach math.

Together, these initiatives will help to improve student performance in math, help students solve everyday math problems and increase the employability of all students for the jobs of tomorrow. It will also increase their options, the types of jobs that they will be able to obtain. As the Minister of Education has said, "our government looks forward to ... working with stakeholders to ensure that teachers entering the profession will be equipped to set our children up for success," and to work together to develop the test. But in order for that work to begin, we need to pass this legislation.

Speaker, I mentioned earlier in my remarks that one of the changes proposed in the legislation involves governance changes to the Ontario College of Teachers. Currently, the Ontario College of Teachers governance model includes 23 members of the college who are elected by their

peers and 14 members of the public appointed by the government of Ontario. There has been some public criticism of the college that the public interest is not being well served and that there is an inherent conflict of interest when teachers have the majority vote on the council of the college.

Indeed, the Ontario College of Teachers has been conducting their own governance review. That's why the proposed legislation will repeal current provisions in the Ontario College of Teachers Act that set the specific size and composition of the council, replacing it with a framework that allows the number of elected and appointed members to be prescribed in regulation. This framework will ensure that our government is able to respond appropriately to the governance review currently under way by the Ontario College of Teachers.

We are also taking steps to dissolve the public interest committee under the Ontario College of Teachers Act because, frankly, it hasn't worked. The committee has not met in over two years. Public interest committees are still available as an option to the education minister for advice on matters of public interest. We can do better, and we must do better.

While discussing this bill, I would be remiss if I also did not touch on provisions regarding service dogs in the classroom. I spoke at length about these provisions at second reading and, of course, I noted that this part of the legislation was inspired by the advocacy of one of my colleagues, the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler, so I want to take a moment to recognize her work on this important file and that of her son Kenner, and to thank her for her dedication to this issue.

Students and families have told us that the process for requesting the use of a service animal can be confusing and ultimately frustrating, and that's just not right. We know that service animals can assist students with a range of physical and mental needs, and this can include medical, therapeutic and emotional support. My daughter also has autism and, although our dog is not a service animal because it hasn't been properly trained, having a pet is really important for her emotional well-being, so I do understand, in part, how this helps calm children who need that extra benefit and extra support.

There is no legislation in Ontario currently that explicitly addresses the use of service animals in schools, and the Ministry of Education does not provide direction to school boards on these matters. That's why our government is committed to implementing a clear and transparent process for requesting that service animals be able to accompany children to school.

This legislation proposes to give the Minister of Education authority to establish policies and guidelines in respect of service animals in our schools. School boards would then be required to comply with these guidelines when creating their own locally informed policies. We recognize that there are important considerations to take into account, such as considerations around allergies and religious or other cultural concerns, and these will be taken into account when the ministry develops guidelines. Our

government will continue to consult with school boards, community agencies and service animal experts as we move forward with this important initiative.

With Bill 48, our government is moving forward on an important commitment to put students first, providing them with a safe and supportive learning environment. It builds on that work that we've done consulting Ontarians—as I mentioned before, the largest education consultation in Ontario's history. Together, we will ensure that Ontario's students are well prepared for the jobs and the professions of tomorrow.

1630

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I appreciate the comments of the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I particularly appreciate that she has very personal reasons and cares a lot about special-needs children, which is an issue very dear to her heart. I know that she has mentioned that to us previously. I really appreciated her comments.

I want to just refer a little bit, though, to a couple of points she made because I think, again, that there are aspects of this legislation, as we've made clear repeatedly on this side of the House, that are critical. We do believe that the definition of sexual abuse and misconduct must be expanded, and we really, really appreciate the opportunity to provide therapy and counselling for victims.

However, we have asked repeatedly for the government to explain why it is that victims will have to wait another delay of 13 more months after this legislation passes to be able to receive this compensation, this therapy, this counselling and the support that's so critical. We've asked repeatedly why that has to be delayed, what we can do to make this better and how we can strengthen this legislation. The government members at committee refused to pass any of the amendments—not even one amendment that was brought forward, on behalf of the many stakeholders who appeared at committee, by our caucus members present.

I also want to mention that when we talk about this issue of safety and supportive classrooms, we've heard the minister herself say how important the role of teachers in the classroom is.

Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a \$1-billion cut to education. People for Education just put out a report outlining the impact of these cuts. We're looking at 10,000 fewer adults in our classrooms. That is going to limit the safety and supportive nature of our schools.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Our government is committed to develop and supply the best-quality education to our Ontario students. Teachers are our asset and partners to achieve that. We recognize the need to improve students' performance in many aspects; for example, mathematics. We are helping our teachers to be in the best position possible for success through making sure they get the training they need.

Mr. Speaker, the world is changing. Every professional group has to do ongoing training to make sure their members are up to date. For example, doctors do a specific number of CME points—continuing medical education—to renew their licences. Information technology professionals like me: Every two years I have to renew every professional certificate I have through exams.

We need to add checks and balances to make sure we have the best-quality and updated educators. We need to add online training and get our students familiar with online courses. This is the future of education.

Professional training, on-demand online courses, and CBT—computer-based training—are the future of education. We are advancing our students' skills for tomorrow's job market.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I don't doubt her sincerity on the subject, but this bill does not address the core problems that we have in our schools.

It's clear that there's a broken funding formula. We have classrooms that are massively underfunded, and recent changes will make that worse. Class sizes continue to grow and, more frequently than not, are operating at capacity. The resources we have for special education students or students who are struggling are not enough. Teachers have too many students and not enough time for one-on-one help for the kids. Every day we hear stories about teachers having to pay out of their own pockets for supplies. Those are the kinds of teachers we have in the province of Ontario, and these changes that have been recently made are not going to make classrooms safer and more supportive.

Kids with autism are going to be added to classrooms all across the province, and there are not the supports there to support them.

This government has put sexual abuse of children and math tests for teachers into one bill, which I find both appalling and wrong. It takes away from the debate on both of these very important issues. For months, we saw the education minister answering questions about sex education by talking about math testing. The Conservatives like to change the subject, and the minister has become very, very good at it.

Recent changes are not going to make things better—slashing \$250 million from the education budget every year. By the end of this government's term, more than a billion dollars will be taken away from children in their classrooms. That doesn't make classrooms safer and more supportive. We're looking at a loss of 10,000 or more jobs for educators. This minister promised no lost jobs. How is this safe and supportive? We owe it to the children of Ontario to do better than this, and I think we can.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Our government has been listening to the people of Ontario, which is why Bill 48 puts parents and students first.

Safe and supportive classrooms:

—safe because we all believe that there should be zero tolerance for sexual abuse of our precious students and children;

—supportive because we are providing clarity regarding the process of requests made for service animal supports in our schools, especially for those children with special needs. I've seen what a difference a pet makes to a child's life. This now provides us with a consistent, fair and transparent process;

—supportive because our government recognizes the need to improve our students' performance in math. Parents need confidence that our teachers are best equipped and trained to teach and ensure that our students are fully ready to compete in what we have, a global world.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence makes a personal and very clear point that our education system is flawed.

I encourage all members of this House to support Bill 48 because we know that we have to put our students first. Our students need to know that we are there and respect them and all their needs.

I think this is the first time in at least 15 years that a government has decided to make sure we have a great education system that makes sure that all of our children are there and ready to compete in this world. We are very excited to make sure this happens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for her final comments.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'd like to thank the members from Davenport, Mississauga–Erin Mills, Niagara Centre, and Mississauga–Streetsville for their comments, which I listened to with interest.

It is a very important bill. The member for Niagara Centre said it won't solve all the problems in education. That's true, but it's a step in the right direction. We have to take steps in the right direction.

I do think it addresses a number of important issues that needed to be addressed, which we have gone over. The provisions that it has address the issues that most people agree on. I read a lot of the quotes from the people who came to the committee about how supportive they were of the changes with respect to the sexual assault provisions, so that if there is a problem, we have mandatory revocation. All of the educators and education stakeholders supported that, as well. They wanted to see those changes made. I think we have proceeded with those changes in good faith and with their support.

I also think that it is important to take the opportunity to address some of the other insufficiencies of our current education system. Certainly, one that we heard a lot about was the math scores and what we were going to do to fix math scores. That is something that we really think is important to act on, and we've made it a priority. Parents want to make sure that their children have those basic skills, especially in something as fundamental as mathematics, and I think that is why we've made these important changes right away in this area.

1640

The other thing, of course, is the provisions surrounding service dogs in schools and making that important. I think these are all important initiatives, not solving all the problems but making a good step in the right direction.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to rise and talk about Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, which makes significant changes to the Early Childhood Educators Act, the Education Act, the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Teaching Profession Act.

I have to tell you, Speaker, this bill—although we've seen it in this House before under the previous Liberal government and the Conservatives—really is a modge-podge of things all lumped in together. Some really do deserve their own individual attention and could be pulled out of this and dealt with on their own.

I have notes, but the government side has talked at length about math scores, so I'm going to start there. I'm going to put the notes away and start there. They are talking about math scores and improving math scores. They are talking about new teachers having to themselves pass a math proficiency test. Some of those teachers will never be math teachers, by the way; they'll never be math teachers. But there's nothing about current teachers and them upgrading skills. There's no real clarification about what this extra learning or the testing for these new teachers is going to look like to make sure that they have some math proficiency. They don't really talk about even what grade level of math these new teachers are going to have to pass themselves.

It's not surprising, because they're Conservatives and we all know how the Conservatives love the Fraser Institute and how much the Fraser Institute loves the EQAO, because what they do is they put numbers out there without really qualifying the numbers.

Not every child is going to excel at math. Not every child is going to excel at other subjects. We have to accept that each kid is an individual. They learn in their own way. There are certain things they are going to excel at naturally. There are things that they'll be able to excel at with some extra help. But instead of actually supporting those students, this government recently announced—and we're not making it up; the teachers have come out, the support staff have come out, the school boards have come out and said that their new education plan, their recent announcement, is going to take thousands of educators out of classrooms. Some of them are really good math teachers, and they're going to rip them out of the classrooms.

The Minister of Education gets up and talks about “no involuntary job losses,” so let's be clear: If people leave, if people retire, if they are offered a buyout package to go early and they leave the profession and you don't replace them, those are job losses. Those are job losses.

When you want to talk about this bill that they say is going to be supporting students, raising student achievement, bringing up math scores, you can't do that when you're taking teachers out of the classrooms.

Ms. Lindsey Park: Watch us.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: You can't do that when you're increasing class sizes. Because for some of the students, the best way they learn is in smaller groups where they can have that one-on-one extra support from a teacher who can take the time to go through the math curriculum and support them that way. But that's not what this government is doing.

Some of those students have special education needs. Now, some of them excel, and because they're good, they become bored with what they are being taught and they need a teacher to be able to focus on that particular student's needs and provide them with the extra material, the extra learning, the extra lessons in order for that student to continue to excel. But some of those kids have developmental disabilities or learning disabilities, and what you're going to do—in the case of young students with autism, you've just ripped away therapy from them, but for any of those students with a developmental disability or a learning disability, you are now going to throw them in classrooms with more kids, and you're not giving them the extra support that they need.

To call this bill "Safe and Supportive Classrooms" but not address the fact that already school boards, our education system, is grossly and chronically underfunded when it comes to special education—you've really missed something here in this bill. When you're not talking about investing in front-line staff—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I've just been informed that you've already spoken to this particular bill at third reading. Therefore, I now turn it over to further debate in the Legislature.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, thanks for giving me the opportunity. I'm pleased to stand in the House today and speak in support of Safe and Supportive Classrooms, which would, if passed, make important amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act and the Teaching Profession Act, as well as the Education Act.

Our government has made the decision to proclaim certain sections in the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act which would require all colleges to provide funding for therapy and counselling to students who have been subject to sexual abuse or an act of child pornography committed by an educator. The safety and the security of our children is utmost for our government. This section will come into place on January 1, 2020.

When parents send their children to school, they trust us. They trust their educators that their children are safe, and Bill 48 will encourage that. These amendments make it clear that our government has zero tolerance for the sexual abuse of Ontario students and our children. The previous government didn't go far enough to protect Ontario students, as we all know.

In one week, for five days out of seven days, for eight hours, our children are actually in school, and they have

the right to feel safe in their schools. The previous government, in their legislative power, neglected their responsibility to serve and protect our children by not giving them the safe environment and support they need to truly thrive in the schools.

Mr. Speaker, if these amendments are passed, the proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act would ensure that educators who are found guilty of any act of sexual abuse would be subject to mandatory revocation of their certificates of registration. In addition, educators found guilty by a college discipline committee of a prescribed sexual act that is prohibited under the Criminal Code would also be subject to mandatory revocation.

The educators of our students are in a position of trust and authority, and work with a vulnerable segment of our society. It is crucial for the government that our students are well-protected as they work towards their bright future.

We understand the difference between education and care versus abuse. We do acknowledge that an educator may need to speak about physical health to the students, which may include speaking about sex or remarks that are pedagogically appropriate. We are also aware that educators may have to assist children and students with their care and hygiene while in school. To that end, the proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act and the Teaching Profession Act would clarify that sexual abuse of a student or a child does not include touching or behaviours that are a necessary part of the educator's professional responsibility, especially those acts that are a necessity for the purpose of hygiene, toileting, diapering, washing or dressing. So, Mr. Speaker, we do understand the difference between abuse and care.

1650

I want to talk about how, in our short time in office, we have already demonstrated that we're absolutely dedicated to strengthening our students' public education system for years to come. We are focused on getting it right and giving students the opportunity to pursue their dreams while making sure they're surrounded by a safe learning environment. Bill 48 is an important step in providing that very thing. The Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act will not only ensure that students and children are learning in safe and supportive spaces, but it's also going to make sure that we have one of the best education systems in the world.

Mr. Speaker, by our government moving forward with the changes proposed in Bill 48, we're giving a clear message: The health, safety and well-being of our children, our students, in this great province is our number one priority. Since the day we took office, our government has been focused on ensuring that our education system accomplishes two goals: respecting parents and ensuring that our children are prepared for a bright future.

Our government is already working on building a better Ontario by making changes to improve our education system. As of September 2019, the first elements of the new curriculum will be available, being phased in over four

years. It will ensure that students have a strong understanding in the fundamentals of math for all grades. It is crucial that in Ontario's publicly funded schools, students are begin given all the tools they need for their post-secondary education and career.

I want to talk about one thing. Often I go to meet parents, and they think that the education system in Ontario is free. When we go and meet them, they say, "The schools are all free." It's not free; it is actually funded by our tax dollars. It's a publicly funded system. We need to consider that.

If Bill 48 is passed, we can continue making changes for Ontario to have one of the best education systems. We made a promise to get back to the basics, and, unfortunately, if we look at the data, half of Ontario grade 6 students—only 50%—meet provincial math standards. That has been happening under the previous government's watch, Mr. Speaker, and that needs to be changed.

We need to invest in our students. We need to invest in our education system, to better prepare our students. To do that, we need teachers who have content knowledge of math. By doing so, teachers will have to complete the test before they'll be given a teacher's certificate to teach in Ontario's publicly funded schools. I think that's an important investment, Mr. Speaker.

Under this bill, we're going to allow for the government to respond to the governance review under way by the Ontario College of Teachers. Depending on the outcome of the review, we will evaluate the amendments relating to the council. This could allow our government to better Ontario's teaching profession by introducing changes that better serve and protect the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Mississauga–Malton. I personally know many teachers. I believe that we have some of the best teachers from the world in our province of Ontario. I can tell you that they're very dedicated and committed to helping their students achieve their goals, and I have seen it many times. I go to pick up my daughter, and she says, "I've got to meet my teacher. I have a question." And it's after school. They go above and beyond the call of duty.

We have some of the best teachers available. All we're doing is, we're giving them the tools so they can help the students for a better future. We're working towards a fantastic education system that produces great students, and that's all we want—all of us. I believe Bill 48 is working on that progress. Our minister is doing a wonderful job. But I feel we still need to do more.

Our government believes that our students deserve better. As our students exit high school, we want them to be confident as they enter the workforce, with the necessary skills they need to be successful. We're committed to giving the students of Ontario every opportunity they need.

Mr. Speaker, ever since I got elected, I've met many times with the employers in my riding and spoken to many of my colleagues. Every time we talk about employment, when it comes to skilled trades, there are more jobs available than the people who are applying for those jobs. On one side, we have people looking for a job, but then there

are jobs looking for skilled employees. There's definitely a gap, and it's simply supply and demand. There is a gap that needs to be fixed so that we have a supply, which is the unemployed youth, and there are the jobs which they can fulfill.

How are we doing this? The Ministry of Education is dedicated to bettering Ontario and is working with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. By doing so, they will increase both student and parent exposure to skilled trades, technology and apprenticeship training. This way, these high-demand career pathways will be promoted. To achieve this outcome, we must give our students the education and the support they need to follow a career path that works well with their abilities as well as their interests. Students all over Ontario require tools that will allow them to pursue apprenticeships, attend colleges or universities, or enter the workplace directly after high school.

Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Mississauga–Malton, there is a large number of youth and new Canadians. The youth population under the age of 19 is approximately 26%, which is the highest in Mississauga.

Talking about unemployment in Ontario: In Ontario, unemployment is at 5.9%, in my riding it is 10.5%.

Talking about youth unemployment: If overall, in Ontario, it is 10%, the youth unemployment in my riding of Mississauga–Malton is about 25%. So there's a huge gap.

Talking about the risk index: In Malton, the risk index is 6.1.

When we look at these data, what comes to our mind is that the best tool we can give to our youth is good employment, and to give that good employment, we can give them the training—and that needs change. Our government is dedicated to make it right not only for today, but for our youth for their tomorrow. This is why Bill 48 is so important for us. It is a step in the right direction. We understand that we have a long journey ahead of us. We're not going to stop until we get it right.

As an important part of Bill 48, our government is also working to support students with special needs and their families to make the request process for service animals in school easier. In Ontario, there is currently no legislation that addresses the use of service animals in schools. The Ministry of Education does not currently give directions to school boards about the use of service animals. So we can clearly see there is inconsistency.

It is currently up to each individual school board to decide upon their own process for managing the request from families for service animals. Some school boards do allow service animals to attend school with their owner; unfortunately, others don't. In fact, only 39 school boards out of 72 across Ontario have specific policies in place to address service animals in schools.

1700

Some schools allow service animals in schools, as well as therapy dogs that come in for a couple of hours to reduce the stress students feel at school.

The policies vary from board to board, which means that there is limited consistency in how these requests are

treated. Bill 48 will help establish much-needed consistency so that parents have peace of mind, all across.

Our goal as a government is to reduce the stress and frustration families feel during the process of requesting a service animal in their child's school. We want all children to have the support they need to get the education that they deserve. Families should not have to make difficult decisions when it comes to their children's education. The Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act would allow our government for the people to provide more open, consistent and fair processes for families when making requests for their service animals to accompany their children to school.

Our government is committed to supporting students and their parents in our education system. Make no mistake: Minister Thompson has, without a doubt, shown her dedication to supporting teachers, parents and students in our education system.

As a government, we're committed to getting it right for all Ontarians, which is why the input from the public, our education partners and stakeholders will be central to this process. This is a step in the right direction to support students, families and school boards across the province. We are confident that this is the right way, as we continue to hear about all the benefits our students across the province receive when they have access to the supports of their service animals.

Every child—I repeat: every child—deserves to feel supported in the classroom every day they show up to school. Every family deserves to have their voices heard when it comes to what's right for their children's education and development.

Mr. Speaker, another thing I want to talk about is science. We're living in the 21st century. Talking about the GTA, especially, or Ontario, for that matter, we have a cluster of technology. Our government is committed to preparing Ontario students for success by equipping them with the skills they need in science, technology, engineering and math. We believe that the new K-12 Ontario STEM education strategy will enable our province to become a global leader in STEM learning. By partnering with educators, students, parents and post-secondary education institutes as well as industry leaders, the government will create new and enriched learning experiences in STEM.

We already talked about the skilled trades, Mr. Speaker. Another thing I want to touch on with you is, when I go and meet people door to door, there's a huge need for financial literacy. We want our youth to be financially independent. To make them financially independent, we need to give them the tools. We need to make them understand and learn financial literacy. Financial literacy learning, in my opinion, is essential to student success, to building a well-educated, responsible workforce and preparing Ontario for a more prosperous future. Financial literacy will be a major component of the mandatory learning in the revised career studies courses. I believe that by understanding financial literacy, we're making them more responsible.

Our government is dedicated to focusing on not only the short-term interests of Ontarians, but also the long-term outcome and results. We will do everything in our power to set our future generations up for success.

Bill 48 will give more confidence to parents that their government is working hard to keep their children safe. It will also provide reassurance to the teachers that they have been given the skills that they need to help their students pursue their goals. It will provide assurance to the students that they and their families have the support they need in their classrooms, especially for students with special needs.

Our government is taking action to support all parties involved. We want our students to get the education they need, as well as the support they need to succeed. With Bill 48, we are once again delivering on our government's commitment to support Ontarians by making our schools safer and more supportive for everyone. Mr. Speaker, this is another promise made, promise kept.

As leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure the safety and the security of our children as they work towards thriving in their studies and their future. Simply put, the children of Ontario are the future of Ontario. We must do everything in our power to ensure their success. Let us equip the students of Ontario with the necessary basic tools, such as appropriate support and a safe environment, as well as qualified and caring teachers, so that they can focus on their bright future.

With Bill 48, we are committing to support students, teachers and parents, while strengthening our education system. I am looking forward to all members supporting this bill. By doing this, they will be supporting all stakeholders and all Ontarians.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Following on the member's comments from the other side: It is important to listen to members of all stakeholder groups. I feel as though the one key, central group that the government has never listened to is the students. We have seen that through thousands of students walking out en masse from high schools, from colleges, from universities, sharing their dismay with this PC government's attack on education.

On Bill 48, with sexual abuse, there's no argument. If you sexually abuse a child, you should have the book thrown at you. In fact, I'll speak more to that in my 20 minutes. There's no question about that. But what this government is doing is that they're taking an opportunity to put a good piece of legislation—because we do need to expand the definition of sexual abuse, and we do need to get those people out of our education system, away from our kids—but they're doing that while also taking away the agency from organizations like OCT, who are there to advocate for students, to advocate for education policy.

Our member for Windsor West was giving a very passionate plea to the government to listen, to listen to the students, to listen to the educators. She said that you can't support kids by taking teachers out of the classroom, and the member across the floor from Durham said, "Watch

us.” That’s the state we’re in: A government with an ego that prefers to do what they want than to listen.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: It is my honour to rise and speak on Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. When passed, Bill 48 will make supportive amendments to the Early Childhood Educators Act, the Education Act, the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Teaching Profession Act.

Our government has a zero tolerance policy for the sexual abuse of Ontario students. Currently, the law only permits for the mandatory revocation of their licence if sexual abuse falls within a predetermined list of activities. Groping or inappropriate comments, among others, are not included on that list.

1710

Speaker, passing Bill 48 will ensure that educators found guilty of any act of sexual abuse by the courts or their regulatory body’s disciplinary committee will be subject to a mandatory revocation of their licence and registration certificate.

These proposed changes will also clarify that sexual abuse does not include behaviours that are a necessary part of an educator’s role and responsibilities, like toileting, washing or dressing.

The amendments suggested here will ensure that the students and the children of Ontario will have a learning environment that is safe and secure.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: My concern with this legislation, as many of us have mentioned in the past, is that it does very little to fulfill its namesake. The legislation claims that it’s in promotion of safe and supportive classrooms, yet this government cut \$100 million that was to be used for school repairs. They’ve scrapped after-school and parent-led programs by cancelling that funding. They’ve cancelled math upgrading support for teachers. They’ve scrapped a curriculum that allows students the information they need to make safe choices, both online and in person. These are all dangerous positions that put children and young people in the province at risk. They do not support safe and supportive classrooms.

Students should be safe at school; we all agree. However, many of the provisions in this bill do not target the issue. Cuts to continuing education funding for teachers further undermine those goals, and there’s no evidence to suggest that a test of the nature that has been put forward will improve test scores. Ministry staff could not point to examples or evidence from any other jurisdictions that those tests would improve test scores.

I’d also like to address the fact that—and many of the speakers have touched on this—the \$1.4 billion that was promised by the previous Liberal government represented a bare minimum in funding required to meet routine maintenance and repairs in Ontario schools. That’s routine maintenance and repairs. How can we support classrooms, how can we support students, when they’re cold in the

spring and the fall and when the school is falling down around them? It’s ridiculous to talk about math scores when we have schools that are falling apart. Let’s maintain our schools. Let’s repair them properly and then give students and teachers the support they need to really be in safe and supportive environments.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you so much to my colleague from Mississauga–Malton for his excellent remarks about this very important piece of legislation.

There’s two things I’d like to comment on here, Mr. Speaker. The first involves the provisions to strengthen our protection against sexual assault in our schools. I think this is something that is incredibly important. It strikes home with me because of a story that came out earlier this year, in November, about a series of very disturbing events that took place at schools in my riding and just outside my riding in Ottawa West–Nepean, a series of incidents of students being sexually assaulted by teachers. This series of stories that the CBC ran with in November was enough to make anybody’s stomach turn. This is something that has absolutely no place in our schools, so to be passing some legislation that is going to take action to make sure that teachers who are convicted of sexual assault or sexual misconduct have no place in our schools is truly wonderful news to make sure that our schools are safe.

The second point I just want to touch on is something that I’m really proud of a colleague of mine for, and that’s, of course, my colleague from Kitchener South–Hespeler and her work to make sure that service animals and individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities that have service dogs are able to use them in schools. This is something that I know my colleague was passionate about, it was something that brought her into politics, and I just think it’s so wonderful to see that now coming into reality in a piece of legislation, so I commend her for her work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return now to the member from Mississauga–Malton for his final comments.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, as I was listening to our member from Don Valley North—whether it’s the member from Toronto–St. Paul’s or the member from Niagara Centre or the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, we need to understand, at the end of the day, that each one of us has been elected to do a job. The people who have voted for us have voted for us for a reason: so that we can understand their needs and we can provide the solutions which will make their lives better. That’s exactly what this bill is doing.

When my daughter or the other children go to school, I want to make sure I have peace of mind. I want to make sure that I don’t have to be worried about how they will be treated, what’s going to happen, are they going to be safe. And let’s be crystal clear, Mr. Speaker: Not everybody is good in this world. There are people who need to be reminded, and this bill is doing exactly the same, trying to make sure that there are rules in place so that sexual abuse

of a student or a child by a member of the Ontario College of Teachers or the College of Early Childhood Educators—they know the implications. They're aware of what could happen to their licence.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Ottawa West–Nepean brought in the discussion about service dogs—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Further debate?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Before I start, I just want to give a shout-out to OCADU students and all students across Ontario who walked out of their schools in dismay from this Premier's attack on post-secondary education.

In any case, I am thankful to stand in the House again to speak to this Conservative government's bill, Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. The primary objective of this government bill is to protect children from sexual abuse. The government wishes to make it easier to revoke the teaching certificates of teachers who are found guilty of the heinous crime of sexual abuse. I couldn't agree more with that. Let me repeat again: As a registered Ontario College of Teachers educator, a professional student services personnel and a survivor myself of child sexual abuse, I wholeheartedly agree with this aspect of Bill 48. Sexual abusers should have the book thrown at them and, quite frankly, the teaching licence should be only the beginning of the wrath of justice against them.

When parents and caregivers send children to school, they place them into our hands. Our job is to nurture and care for them, to educate them by helping them uncover and hone their intellectual curiosities, and to remind them at every turn of the page that their voice and their potential are boundless. While I cannot speak to all the multi-faceted responsibilities of a teacher in these brief remarks, keeping children safe from abuse and all forms of violence while facilitating enriching and positive learning opportunities should be our foundation.

Disappointingly, I am unable to agree with the rest of this Conservative bill in its current state, because not only does it not speak comprehensively to the multitude of issues that the government must address if they are in fact ready to be serious about creating safe and supportive classrooms for kids, but it attempts to address two completely unrelated goals: addressing sexual abuse and improving math outcomes for students by creating mandatory proficiency tests for teachers, even though the government has cancelled the supports for the teachers to prepare for this test.

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One of my residents, Emily, is currently at OISE becoming a teacher. She's set to graduate and she's worried about what September will bring. She's received no information on what the bill's requirements for math tests will actually look like for new and graduating teachers. She's also a person with a disability, and there has been no information about accessibility and equity considerations in writing this test. She's frustrated that, for primary/junior candidates, the test is targeted above the grade level that she will ever teach. Her intermediate/senior colleagues who will never teach

math and don't have math as a teachable subject will also be required to write the test.

There's no compelling evidence that shows a link between mandatory teacher testing and increases in student performance. Rather, when introducing teacher testing, it has led to demoralizing and devaluing professionals and an allocation of education dollars that could be spent in other ways, such as really supporting our students with autism, as opposed to downloading them to schools that are not prepared and that are under-resourced.

I have also not been able to find any academic literature to substantiate a relationship between teachers with high or low math scores and their propensity for child sexual abuse. Where's the connection? I guess there is none.

This is another reckless bill from this Conservative government that does not allow this House to debate either of these important objectives in a comprehensive fashion. Sexual abuse is the front issue, while a host of other opaque objectives are slid into this bill to demonstrate the government's lack of respect for the voices of educators, parents, caregivers—and this government's key stakeholders, our students.

Despite the tens of thousands of students who have gone out of their schools across Ontario and have made it very clear what they need for safe and supportive classrooms, they're not being heard. It's rather tragic and ironic, considering the Conservative government's own Ministry of Education website speaks so highly of Student Voice. Here are the actual words from the website. From the Minister's Student Advisory Council, here goes:

“What is the Minister's Student Advisory Council?”

“The Minister's Student Advisory Council is a group of approximately 60 students from all parts of the publicly funded education system and regions across the province.

“These students share their ideas and provide advice to the minister”—for goodness' sake—“on a variety of topics ... MSAC is a place where all students have a voice and where they will be heard.”

I've got to repeat that last line: “MSAC is a place where all students have a voice and where they will be heard.”

Clearly, we are recognizing that this is just a slogan, and one that is not quite telling the truth, because here I will read out of the mouths of babes, the students themselves, former and current members of MSAC, their letter to our Premier Ford and to our Minister of Education.

“We write to you concerned with the recent changes announced to Ontario's education system. As current and former members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council, we have all had the unique privilege of advising governments of the past decade on key reforms within our education system, and we feel the recently announced policy puts much of this progress in jeopardy.

“Student Voice is at the heart of an education system which puts students first”—these kids have worked. They have consulted with the ministry, but they're not being heard.

“Speaking from our experience as students, and people who care about quality education, we know that your proposed class size requirements will negatively impact all

learners. Students across Ontario have unique needs, and increasing workload for teachers hinders their ability to support every student in the way they deserve to be supported. This will affect generations of Ontarians if it is implemented in our classrooms.”

E-learning: The students also talk about e-learning and the fact that it alienates differently abled students and disenfranchises students from low-income households.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I have a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): Point of order, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: We’re talking about Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. I have been listening to the member opposite and she seems to be talking about other provisions, but not about the provisions of Bill 48. So, under rule 23(b), I believe, we’re supposed to discuss the matter at hand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeremy Roberts): I appreciate the point of order. I’ve been listening carefully, and I think she is tying in generally. But just a friendly reminder to make sure that we keep it tight onto the bill at hand.

I return to the member.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Here’s how I’ll tie it into the bill at hand: The bottom line about this letter that has been publicly shared online by hundreds and thousands, or whatever, of students, educators and stakeholders, is that they haven’t been consulted. At the top end of my speech, I said that the most important people, the students, have not been consulted. In fact, the letter ends with them saying, “Why haven’t you met with your advisory council of students this year?” That, to me, says students aren’t consulted. I mean, what do I know? I just have a PhD in education.

The government claims to want to put forth an education vision that works for you. The bottom line is, according to these kids, according to stakeholders across the province, according to the thousands of people who have marched out, according to the thousands who wore black just earlier this week, the education vision does not work for them. So what’s your next step? Your member from Carleton yesterday said that her mentor taught her to listen, so why are you not listening to the students—to the thousands of students—who are saying that this education vision does not work for them?

This government cannot claim to want to modernize the curriculum while the Premier keeps tooting bargain-basement slogans like “back to basics.” I wonder, what are these “back to basics” that we’re going to? Are we going back to basics with broken-down schools that are leaking? Because to me, if we are going back to basics, let’s go to the foundation. The literal and fundamental foundation is the building, the \$16 billion of school repairs. That’s the most important thing, if we’re talking about going back to basics.

Another thing with back to basics, in my opinion, as well, is the heteronormativity that the Minister of Education so gleefully shows in her public announcements about her education vision. When you keep saying things like

“mom and dad” over and over and over again, you’re excluding families where “mom and dad” isn’t quite the constitution of their family. You’re excluding single-parent families. You’re excluding LGBT families. You’re excluding children in care or under the care of caregivers.

LGBT and trans students have been excluded for a long time. As we know, if you really cared about making and safe and supportive classrooms, you would create a curriculum that’s inclusive of LGBT lives. You wouldn’t include their lives at grade 8, as if somehow their lives stop for six years in between grades 2 and 8.

Egale Canada Human Rights Trust have a report called “Every Class in Every School,” the first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in Canada. I know those are words that you all never use; I haven’t heard them once in nine months here. Sixty-four per cent of LGBTQ students and 61% of students with LGBTQ parents reported that they feel unsafe at school. How does the government Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, address this? It doesn’t.

Another constituent of mine—her name is Julia Brown. She was registering her oldest child in kindergarten and realized that the registration form for her particular school board, the TDSB, just had two options: male and female. She spoke to her school. She spoke to her trustee, who is a great advocate for the community of Toronto–St. Paul’s. Every caring adult said, “Hey, it’s the Ministry of Education’s issue. We’ve asked them to make it more inclusive” so that they could match the birth certificate. But according to Julia Brown, the Ministry of Education hasn’t quite gotten back to her with any answers.

Again, how do we create safe and supportive classrooms when certain people can’t feel safe and supported in the classroom? What we don’t do is that we don’t cut a billion dollars from schools, and we don’t toss 10,000 teachers out. That’s not how we make safe and supportive classrooms.

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Every time we’ve talked about that disposal of 10,000 teachers—you know, the people who go to school and get trained to be teachers so that they can actually teach—the PC government is always, “Oh, no. No jobs are being lost. We never said that.” But as I said, your member from Durham said, “Watch us.” After our member said you can’t keep throwing out teachers, her response was, “Watch us.” So to me, that really says that it’s the plan.

Going on to “back to basics”: We’ve talked about mom and dad and the heteronormativity in that. We have talked about Egale stats. Let’s go back to basics even further. We’re talking about safe and supportive classrooms, but nowhere in this bill do you address anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism or just plain old racism, right? To me, a bill to protect students has to also address the students who are the most marginalized and the most vulnerable in our school communities across this province.

Let me see if I can find that document. Oh, yes: the anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism Toronto report, Hurdles To Higher Learning: Black Youth Voices on Barriers and Challenges to Post-Secondary Education in

Ontario—high school students, again, consulting. I don't know if the government has a similar report; I couldn't find it on the PC website. This report shows alarmingly disproportionate rates of dropouts for Black, Indigenous and racialized students.

How is the government addressing this in Bill 48? We're talking about safe and supportive classrooms. We're talking about going back to basics. At the end of the day, to be honest with you, whether my grade 6 math sucks or is amazing as a student doesn't really matter if I'm getting beaten up in school every day, or if I'm dealing with teachers who see my potential as less because of the colour of my skin, or if my two moms come into a parent-teacher interview and they're made to feel unwelcomed. The math scores don't really matter at that point if I can't walk into the classroom, into the school, and feel like a human being.

That's what it's really all about, right? I don't know how many of you have a BEd or are child and youth workers or ECE workers.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I actually do.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Well, shame, shame, shame. I'm sure the entire ECE community is quite embarrassed by the member from Durham and her support of Bill 48, so shame on you.

Author Robyn Maynard's acclaimed text *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* describes the impact of racist, white supremacist ideologies and practices in education and beyond, and their impact on our children's lives. I'm here to express to you that when your policies don't address racism, when your policies don't address homophobia and transphobia, when your policies don't address the special needs of disabled students, they are in fact anti-Black racism. They are in fact homophobic and transphobic.

Whether you think you are—maybe you have a Black friend; I don't know. Maybe you've got a gay friend. Maybe you've even got a disabled friend. But when your policy doesn't—

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I'm sorry, Speaker. Point of order.

Mr. Roman Baber: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I'll recognize the first point of order over here, from the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you. This is just outrageous, and it's disgraceful. As a person of colour, being told that I'm a racist, and all of my colleagues here, who are great people, are being called racist—I absolutely think that's disgraceful behaviour. I'm sorry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I will caution the member on inflammatory language and to stick specifically to the bill. I understand elements and aspects of what you have been saying—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: Mr. Speaker, I'm of the view that the member's comments are unparliamentary. To accuse the government of white supremacy is not only non-parliamentary; it's unbecoming of this House—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I appreciate that. That is not a point of order. But she—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

I will again caution the member, based on that point of order, again, that the use of inflammatory language or imputing motives—just be very careful with that. There's a very fine line there.

I will now allow you to go back and complete your time in debate.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I go right back to my notes, I'd like to clarify something, and I'm saying it on the record. In no way, shape or form did I name a single person in this room as a racist or a homophobe or any such word. What I said is that policies that do not address and that essentially systemically ignore people who are racialized, queer or trans or disabled are in fact policies that promote—I can give you some more language—and perpetuate racism and homophobia and transphobia and ableism.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: How does it promote—

Ms. Jill Andrew: Well, I can give you that course. I've actually taught many at colleges and universities on exactly that.

The bottom line is—

Mr. Roman Baber: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me.

I recognize the member from York Centre on a point of order.

Mr. Roman Baber: With respect, Mr. Speaker, there is no difference between alleging that the members of the government are something or other or saying that they promote—

Ms. Jill Andrew: Look at the Hansard.

Mr. Roman Baber: Excuse me—or saying that they promote policies that amount to the same thing. There is no difference between the allegations. I kindly ask that the member withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I will take that under consideration.

Again, I would ask that you finish up your points and be very careful.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Oh, brother. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my last 36 seconds, what I will say is, one of the other back-to-basics ideologies that I would challenge this government to refrain from is this consummate promotion of STEM and not STEAM. Science, technology, engineering, arts and math are a good thing, too. Recently, on Metro Morning, the Minister of Education seemed to throw arts under the bus and seemed to think that it wasn't a commendable professional vocation. Well, it is. So let's change your back-to-basics—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Lindsey Park: The member opposite highlighted a number of criticisms she had, which were a bit off-topic

from the bill, but nonetheless important discussions, so I'm going to address them.

Our government will not apologize for teaching kids the basics. I think the member opposite's criticism of that was that somehow that didn't include rebuilding physical foundations of schools in the curriculum. I want to remind all members of the Legislature that school boards—and someone with a PhD in education should know this—are responsible for providing their students with a comfortable and safe learning environment. That's within their mandate. This responsibility includes ensuring their schools are in compliance with provincial and municipal health and safety requirements. To somehow use that as a criticism of teaching our kids the basics in schools doesn't add up, and it shows a misunderstanding of the education system.

Beyond that, let's talk about the bill at hand, which our comments and debate should be about: the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. I remember having a discussion before we were even sworn in with the member opposite—and she clearly cares about education. It's why she chose to pursue a PhD in it. I know that some experiences are very personal to her and connect to this bill, which she referenced in her comments. Those examples highlight the importance of this legislation, the importance of highlighting, right in the Ontario College of Teachers Act, in the Education Act and in the Early Childhood Educators Act, the seriousness of sexual misconduct in the school system.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I want to start by saying how very much I appreciate, as always, the enormous effort and research that the member from Toronto—St. Paul's puts into her comments on a piece of legislation like this. We all have many competing priorities in our critic responsibilities and our communities, but she always gives an extra effort to come in with some really thoughtful analysis, and I appreciate it. It is exactly the kind of thoughtful conversation we should be having and that we should have had more of in this place.

One of the things that I think for many of us has been the most frustrating is how the government has time-allocated this bill and, again, not allowed the kind of deep consideration—frankly, most importantly, the fact that when we went to committee to discuss this bill and hear from the people who care and who have the expertise to make this legislation really, really great, really effective—when we went to committee, stakeholders were literally given four hours of notice in the afternoon to request a place to speak.

The members opposite will say, “Well, they could send in a written report,” but I just want to give one example: Dr. Mary Reid. The Premier himself has referenced her work recently but, as she has noted online, mis-referenced it. She came in. She's a professor of education, she teaches teachers and she is often cited as an expert. She had incredibly important arguments to make for why a test at

the end of the teachers' college program was not going to be an effective way of improving outcomes for students. She had many other really important ideas and research, and it has actually been put into effect in one of the programs. It would really do us all a great service if we could have an opportunity to continue to have a conversation about that legislation.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: I've got three kids myself, ages 4, 5 and 6. They are obviously very important, as is everyone's child to them. I think about the education that my kids receive, and I think about the tools that their teachers have. The teachers are excellent. The teachers are doing the best with the tools they have. The problem we've seen as parents and as parliamentarians for the last number of years is significant in that our students are not getting the education they need, because their teachers don't have the tools they need.

This bill is giving those teachers those tools, to make sure that our kids get the education they need, so that our kids in Ontario are at the bottom of the barrel when it comes to math scores, so that our kids are learning important lessons in reading, writing and basic math. These are the tools they need to be able to advance themselves in the future, to be able to gain a good education that will lead to a good post-secondary education, that will lead to good jobs and into the jobs of tomorrow. These are the tools that we are creating and giving our teachers so that they can in turn give those to our students, and these are the tools that we are giving them through Bill 48.

As a parent of three young children, I am exceptionally grateful for the work that is being done through this bill.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to one of the issues. I was listening to the comments going around the House as the member was making her speech. I came here some 30 years ago. It was a much more homogeneous place. We are very lucky in this Legislature today on both sides that we have people who have come here from different countries, different backgrounds, different religions and different philosophies who are able to come to this Legislature and speak the truth that they see, as they see it. A Black person, a person from Pakistan, a person from China or somebody from northern Ontario—we don't look at things the same way. And, yes, we get challenged when people speak to their reality, to what it is that they see as being part of the problem. That's what was going on here.

I just remind members—and I'm as guilty of it as anybody else as far as—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Please. I'm as guilty as anybody else as being a white man growing up in Canada, born in the 1950s, and having some pretty non-progressive views. But over the years, my colleagues that I have met in this place and the people that I have worked with that are people of colour, that are gay, that are trade unionists, that

are business people, that are people from different backgrounds, have taught me that the world is a much bigger place than I originally thought when I looked at it from the perspective of a little boy coming out of Timmins. So I have a very much different outlook when it comes to the things that challenge us and the things that we do.

All that this member was trying to do was say, “I have a life of experience of living in this world as a Black woman and advocating on behalf of Black people in our community.” There’s a very different reality, as we all know, to what the experience is that they felt and they continue to feel. That’s what she was trying to speak to. I commend her, and I encourage her to keep on doing it, and I encourage us to listen on all sides and try to figure out how we can move the yardstick forward for all citizens in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return to the member from Toronto—St. Paul’s for final comments.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Bill 48, Safe and Supportive Classrooms: I’ll end with this. The \$16-billion repair is your responsibility. It’s not the responsibility of individual boards. That’s called passing the buck. And if we want to create safe and supportive classrooms, if we really want to go back to basics—yes, we go back to human rights. We go back to equity. We go back to inclusivity. We go back to classrooms where kids aren’t getting nosebleeds because it’s so hot; classrooms where kids aren’t wearing coats and gloves because it’s so cold.

Maybe you all don’t know them, but I have had the honour and the distinct privilege of working in education for most of my adult life. So when I stand here and I speak to this PC government, when I offer criticisms around where I think bills could be better, when I speak about race in this House, when I speak about homophobia or transphobia or women’s issues or the need to end gender-based violence or anything at all—or arts education, which, as I said, the Minister of Education seemed to throw under the bus earlier—when I speak to these issues, I’m speaking from a place of both professional and lived experience. It’s actually called feminist praxis or feminist pedagogy. You can google it. I’m not just coming in and making things up off the top of my head.

I would like to think that, moving forward, this government won’t be so quick to get their backs up and their feathers all ruffled when they’re criticized, but that they will listen to the criticism, go back to stakeholders and students, and go back to the drawing board. Thank you.

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

Mr. Doug Downey: I’m thrilled to stand up and talk about Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. We have been talking a lot throughout this debate at second reading and third reading about some of the bad actors, some of the teachers who abuse their positions, and how they need to be dealt with. I will get into a little bit, but I also want to recognize the thousands and thousands of excellent teachers who are out there. This is not about them; this is about protecting our children from the other teachers.

I was thinking about some of my old teachers. I had Mrs. Vernon and Mrs. Reynolds and Mrs. Lloyd. Mrs. Pong I had for two years. That wasn’t two years in the same grade; she taught grades 2 and 3, so it’s all good. I had Mrs. Fortune and Mr. Breen. I know his first name: Jim Breen. I don’t know any of the other first names, to be honest with you. They’re all Mr. or Mrs. to me; that’s what I grew up with—all the way up to Mr. Madill. Mr. Madill was my grade 8 teacher, and the interesting thing about Mr. Madill, who was an excellent teacher, was that he was really hesitant that I had applied to this program to go to Toronto and be a page. He actually tried to talk me out of it. Other than that, he was an excellent teacher. It was just such a great experience.

1750

Mr. Speaker, there are excellent teachers out there, so I just want to distinguish that we need to recognize them, and we do: There are awards of excellence and whatnot. But there’s a magazine that comes to my house. It’s called Professionally Speaking. It’s a teachers’ magazine, because my wife is a teacher. It’s human nature: You always flip to the back of the magazine, because in the back of the magazine are the discipline hearing decisions, because we’re curious. In almost every single magazine, when I flip to the back, there is some example and I go, “Really? They did that and that’s all that happened?” It’s much too frequent. It’s not every time, but it’s frequent enough that it concerns me.

Mr. Speaker, we do all speak from our own experience and we all speak from our own knowledge. I’ve been in the education system for a long time. Including my university years, I’ve spent 24 years in school. It’s something that I have some sense of. I’m particularly attuned into power differentials. Power differentials don’t have economic class, necessarily. They don’t have consistent markers. People who abuse their power are often people who look for openings, for vulnerability.

My mother was an abuse counsellor. She was a founding director with the York Region Abuse Program. She was a family counsellor. She was a nurse. I grew up having very interesting discussions about who the abusers are and who the victims are. The victims can be anybody, because the abusers have a nose for it. They gain some sort of power, some sort of leverage, and they use that power or leverage for their own depraved reasons. Those are the people that we’re talking about in this bill. Those are the individuals that we’re going after in this bill, because they exist. They exist in every walk of life, but they exist in the classroom where our children are their most vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree that our children need to be protected and that we need to do everything we can, so it’s very difficult. And I don’t hear the opposition saying, “You shouldn’t be protecting children.” That would be ridiculous. We’re having a discussion about how and what mechanisms are there.

Our government in this bill has taken a clear position: If you abuse your position at the expense of a child, you’re out. That’s it; you’re out.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You should be.

Mr. Doug Downey: That's the way it should be, absolutely. Thumbs up from across the aisle. We don't have a lot of debate on that. There are different parts to this bill. I think we can almost put that one to rest and say we're all on the same page there. We have to protect the children. We have to get rid of the bad actors.

Again, I don't want to malign the good actors. There are some excellent teachers. But there's something that those bad actors do, and it doesn't have to be in schools. It can be in other sectors as well. It's this concept of grooming children. What they do is, they put themselves in a position where they help to steer conversations and steer thoughts. Quite frankly, I want teachers helping to steer my children's thoughts, because that's what they're there for, so I want to make sure that we have the right people doing the right kind of steering. If anybody is off-side, they are out, 100%.

I'm not going to say any more about that, except that it's something I feel passionately about. It's something that I think many members of our caucus feel passionately about. It's the kind of thing that our government is taking action on at other stages of life, whether it be human trafficking or sexual abuse centres, that kind of thing. But that's not part of this bill, so I won't wade into it.

I want to take a more measured approach than some people in the debate and I want to talk about math because I had a teacher in grade 10 who told the whole class—once we calmed down, because we were goofing around. He said, "Somebody in this class is going to be an engineer designing an airplane that I have to fly in, so I wish you would pay attention." I thought that was pretty good, because that is what happens: The kids that are in school doing math end up becoming the engineers. They do the roof trusses. They do the floor joists. They build machines. Of course, they move on to do other things. We need solid math skills to make that happen.

I've spoken earlier in the House about carpentry. I did a lot of roofing and a lot of farming. I was sort of an assistant carpenter for a guy for the summer. It was amazing to see him do the math. He could calculate things so fast, and cut. You know the old adage, "Measure twice; cut once"? He'd measure once, and he was good to go. It was unbelievable.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was metric.

Mr. Doug Downey: Mr. Speaker, the member from Timmins is absolutely right. There's the metric and the imperial. He was imperial. When I build, I use the imperial, I have to admit.

Math foundational skills are so important in every walk of life, whether you go into a science job, an engineering job, and we get into the STEM world—of course math is important there, but math is important in every part. If you're grabbing a three-eighths socket, you need to know what a three-eighths is, and if they say, "Well, that's a little bit too small," you need to know that a half-inch will do. You have to have that skill to do your job properly.

We're getting back to basics on math. Again, I don't know how you argue with that. I thought about it. I thought: What would be the counterpoint to arguing about

good, solid math skills? And it was the previous government's policy. That was the counterargument. It was discovery math, that somehow that is a better system. When I try and explain to people what discovery math is—you estimate, and then you tell me how you feel about it. Those are kind of the discovery math skills.

You need to actually get back to basics. It's adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. Again, we've all heard the anecdotal stories about making change at the cash register and that sort of thing, but it's more fundamental than that. This is about safety. This is about building things properly. When we hear the odd horror story about a bridge being built upside down or you hear stuff happening—earlier today, we heard about asphalt issues in Pickering. There's math in those problems, and somebody missed the boat.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how somebody can stand up and complain about going back to math unless you just don't want to get into the facts. This government is dealing with the facts. We're dealing with the facts of the debt and the deficit, and it's all very math-based. If you're doing discovery math about how you feel about the debt, that doesn't make me sleep well at night. I would rather deal with how you reduce the debt. That is a math skill. The President of the Treasury Board is here. He knows exactly what I'm talking about.

I want to turn now to service animals, something that my colleague in the back, Mrs. Fee, has done so much work on and, quite frankly, has educated me and educated most of our caucus, or many in our caucus—I won't speak for all of them—on the importance on service animals in the classroom and the fact that they weren't allowed in some schools. That's kind of interesting and unfortunate.

We're turning the corner on that. I try to visit schools when I'm on a constituency week. As I go into schools now, I see principals or vice-principals with an animal in their office—not necessarily a coping dog or a fully trained dog but certainly a dog of comfort. Of course, the students all rally around it.

One of my daughter's teachers brought in eggs, and then they hatched into ducklings. The kids took turns taking care of the ducklings. Animals in general are good for kids to interact with. Service dogs serve a very particular function and are very critical.

I'm glad that we're doing this. It's clearly the right thing to do. Again, it's really hard to come up with counterpoints on some of these sometimes. That's why the opposition finds itself railing against things that aren't in the bill, because the bill is excellent. It covers off really basic stuff.

Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that we'll have support from students and families and school boards, but we'll also have support from teachers. Like the first point I made, about vulnerability—teachers support that. Teachers understand. When I talk about service animals in the classroom, most of the teachers support that. They understand. They want what's best for the children and the kids. When we have certain rules, rules that have certainty, then

that's good for the children, it's good for the parents, it's good for the teachers and it's good for the system—when we lay out the rules to say that we're not going to have a checkerboard system of service dogs in some schools and not in others.

Mr. Speaker, I think we're—I'm just watching the clock as well. I'll conclude there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): To the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte: You will

have additional time when this bill is brought back into the Legislature, and then we can continue with questions and comments.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now time to announce that the magic hour is upon us. It's 6 o'clock. This House will stand adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
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Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
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Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
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Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
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