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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 February 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 février 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESTORING ONTARIO'S
COMPETITIVENESS ACT, 2019

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 21, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand that the member for King–Vaughan currently has the floor if he chooses to speak. I recognize the member for King–Vaughan.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to just conclude my commentary with a notation about the actions we're taking through this legislation. Before I carry on, if I may just note for the table that I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. Let the record be clear.

I want to just note that the focus for our government is very much on helping create an Ontario advantage by reducing regulations and red tape by 25%, as we agreed, to match the federal government's call to action on red tape reduction; by reducing the corporate income tax rate; and by increasing access to supply of skilled labour in this province. As a combination, together with our economic reforms, we feel a great level of confidence in the future of our economy and our prosperity. We're going to take every action possible—every single action possible—to give our industry, our businesses, our job creators and, in particular, our small businesses in rural and urban settings the opportunity to achieve their full potential to compete in a global marketplace, to get their product to market and, ultimately, to prosper in this economy.

I conclude with a great level of gratitude to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, who is in this House this morning, for bringing forth this legislation, and for having the courage of his convictions to tackle the great challenges facing our economy.

I now cede the remainder of my time, as I mentioned off the top, to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Good morning, and thank you, Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak about Bill 66, the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act. It's an important piece of legislation that is key to fulfilling the government's plan to put Ontario back on track towards competitiveness.

As I'm sure everyone in this House knows, and those of us who ran on a plan for the people, we were elected with a very strong, clear and decisive mandate. One of the biggest parts of that mandate is a commitment to reduce red tape across government, and that commitment is at the heart of Bill 66. This bill, if passed, would implement over two dozen actions to make it easier for businesses to create jobs and for people to find them.

Before I start talking about the specific items in this bill, I want to highlight why reducing red tape is so important. As part of my role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I attended the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference—ROMA—a few weeks ago. One of the many speakers was Premier Doug Ford, who highlighted a fact that bears repeating: Under the previous Liberal government, the number of regulations in Ontario grew to over 380,000—that's 380,000 pieces of regulation. That's a pretty difficult number to understand. It's just a really big number. But the effects of this overregulation are much easier to spot.

After 15 years of overregulation, companies have said that they have had enough of the high cost of doing business in Ontario. Many simply stopped investing in modernizing or expanding their operations here, putting them at risk of falling behind the competition in the US or elsewhere. Others still decided to take new investments to more welcoming places, or are actively exploring options to ship their entire operations to the United States.

This is a reality not limited to one sector of our economy, because the amount of red tape in our province affects every aspect of our economy.

This is exactly the message we heard last week when I was meeting with manufacturers in Wellington county with the member for Perth–Wellington. Manufacturers in that community vary from textiles to home construction, and they're all concerned about their futures in the Wellington community and in Ontario as a whole.

Those companies and the people they employ have a fantastic and strong advocate in the member for Perth–Wellington. The member for Perth–Wellington asked me, as the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to come and to hear first-hand the experiences of those companies in the county, and the

problems they're having. Quite simply, the kind of situation affecting companies like those is unacceptable for the province of Ontario and its people, who depend on a strong economy to find jobs and to access the products and services being offered to Ontario businesses. It would be irresponsible for the government to let the situation continue, and that is why we are taking swift action to fix it.

Heureusement, nous avons maintenant un gouvernement fort ici à Queen's Park. Nous sommes maintenant dirigés par un premier ministre et un ministre du Développement économique qui comprennent l'importance de la réduction des formalités administratives pour les entreprises ontariennes. Seulement quelques mois après les élections, nous avons déjà fait des progrès considérables.

Thankfully, we have a strong PC government here at Queen's Park, led by a Premier and a Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade who understand just how important it is to address the regulatory burden of Ontario businesses. In a few short months since forming government, there has been significant progress on this front.

As I was saying, this Legislature passed into law Bill 47, which was an ambitious first step to making Ontario open for business and open for jobs. Bill 47 made it easier for Ontario's businesses to thrive, while maintaining strong protections for workers, and changed regulation to allow businesses to hire more skilled workers.

Just last week, the Premier and the minister announced the province's Driving Prosperity plan, an ambitious plan to support Ontario's automotive sector. The plan helps protect the industry while ensuring that it can continue to meet the new demands of the 21st century.

This commitment to reducing red tape is core to the work our government is doing, and is reflected in many of our announcements. Whether we are eliminating the job-killing carbon tax or simplifying the process for commercial carriers, our government is on a mission to improve Ontario's prosperity.

This bill is rather big, and it covers a wide range of areas from pawnbrokers to upholstery to telecommunications. In fact, Bill 66 increases competitiveness in a wide number of sectors, including agriculture and farming, pawn brokerage, child care, energy, sub-metering, pensions, upholstery, wireless services, long-term care and more.

I am sure that to many of the people watching or listening to this debate, some of these things may seem boring. Honestly, this bill may not be a riveting bedtime story, but it's something that is very important to the people of Ontario. I may not be a pawnbroker or an upholsterer or a telecommunications professional, but people in Ontario are, and it's our job as a government, and it is our responsibility as members of this House, to look out for all of them.

0910

Although there is a lot to talk about in this bill, I want to use the bulk of my time here to focus on schedule 3 of the bill, which has to do with child care.

During the last session of this Legislature, I had the opportunity to speak on a motion brought forward by the member opposite, the member from Scarborough Southwest. The member's motion was regarding child care. It's an issue that's top of mind to many people in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore. During the debate on the bill, I highlighted the importance of being able to provide choice to families needing child care. Our government had recently provided more choice to families by removing the not-for-profit requirement that is placed on access to the provincial child care subsidy. Greater choice allows families to have easier access to more child care spaces and simplifies the process by which child care operators can offer available spaces to people who need them. In short, greater choice is beneficial for consumers and small businesses in Ontario.

This is the same principle of choice applied to the child care portion of the bill, as well. Let me be clear what this bill does to improve choice when it comes to child care. This bill does two main things. First, it removes restrictions on home-based child care providers, including allowing additional children. Second, it lowers the age of children that authorized recreational programs can serve, from the age of six to the age of four. These are common-sense, practical changes that will benefit home-based child care providers and the families who use them.

It's important to remember that many home-based child care providers are small business owners with limited resources to navigate needless and wasteful government bureaucracy.

There are a few benefits from these changes that I want to highlight. The Minister of Education has highlighted that her ministry receives a number of applications from home-based child care providers who want to look after more than two children under the age of two years old. By increasing the cap of children under two years old from two children to three, a large number of these applications will no longer be necessary.

These changes also allow home-based providers to schedule programming efficiently, without having to worry about providers' own children reaching school age and requiring a reduction in the number of children legally permitted in their child care. Again, these changes create choice and certainty for child care consumers and providers alike.

In reducing red tape and making Ontario competitive, the child care sector may not seem like the biggest priority, but I want to say it is a priority for the people in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and it is a significant piece of red tape reduction.

Growing up, some of our experiences with child care may be different. My mother was a teacher, and in those days—which I'm sure many people out there would have a hard time understanding—if you were a teacher and pregnant, you actually had to quit your job. So my mother quit her job when she was pregnant with my sister and was a stay-at-home mom. When I was born two and a half years later, my mom was still at home. When my brother was born two and a half years after that, she was at home

as well. After that, she did start a small business, as she was able to do that when my brother was two, and make a different type of living, because she decided not to go back to teaching.

I think the goal here is to allow parents to have choice, and I think what our government is doing is allowing that.

I'm proud of our government, and I want to make sure that these changes, which are vital to ensuring the success of Etobicoke small businesses and businesses across Ontario—and allow people to create jobs and create an income for themselves, and create a level playing field with big-brand franchises.

I am proud to be part of this government. I'm proud to be part of a government that is making life better for people in Etobicoke, for people in Toronto, for the business community and all the people they employ.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to start off this morning by giving a shout-out to a good-hearted gentleman whom I always refer to as my brother from another mother, and that's my friend Jagmeet Singh, who was successful in winning his seat in Burnaby last night. I look forward to seeing him over in Ottawa as he addresses and tackles the issues on behalf of the good people of Burnaby, but also on behalf of the good people across this country, from coast to coast to coast.

Now back to this bill, Bill 66, the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act: You look at the line that is being used by the government, "reducing red tape"—let's talk about some of that red tape and let's see who's going to be benefiting from the reduction of that red tape.

When you look at protecting tenants, there's going to be some skyrocketing hydro bills because some of the sub-metering issues that are going to be there are going to permit certain landlords to boost their fees. That's red tape that's going to help everyday people?

Let's look at stripping the Employment Standards Act in regard to the reporting and averaging of overtime hours. That's going to help everyday people across this province? I don't think so.

Let's look at less transparency and making it easier for long-term-care homes to access and get licences to operate. Well, there's going to be a lot of fly-by opportunities in order to create business for the private sector. That's going to help everyday people? I don't think so.

Let's look at the attacks they're doing on the environment with Bill 66 in regard to opening the door to repealing the Toxics Reduction Act under schedule 6.

Listen, let's call this bill for what it is: It's there for business. They're the ones that are going to be benefiting from this, and average, everyday people like me and you, Mr. Speaker, are not going to be benefiting from this bill.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to take 10 seconds at the beginning of mine as well to give a shout-out to my nephew, who got engaged this past weekend. He's the first of our family—with my brother and sister—to get married.

Getting back to the bill, though, one of the things that my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore pointed out is that we actually have an auto plan moving forward. We're looking at how we're going to make things better for the auto industry in Canada, in Ontario specifically, over the next 10 years.

She spent a lot of time talking about the child care funding and expanding that access so that not just the not-for-profits will benefit from it. In my riding, in particular, that's a major issue for us. If you're in a rural setting, it's a very different situation for child care than it is in urban settings. We don't have that critical mass of people, so having someone who is able to look after your children so that you can do things makes a big difference for us.

I'm going to talk about Buckhorn, in particular, one of my communities. There are about 500 people who live there. They're about 20 kilometres or so from the nearest larger area. In order for any of them to have child care for their kids—we're only talking about five or six kids. It's not a big enough centre for them to have a true child care centre that is staffed 100% the way that the opposition would like it to be. So home care is something that is massive in areas like my riding. Opening it up so that those families have that ability, then, to have child care for those kids is something that's very important, and I'm happy that we're taking the initiative to do that.

I've said this repeatedly and I will say it again, because it can't be said enough: Government's job is to legislate to the point of integrity, not to interference. We're way beyond interference now, and we need to get back to integrity to make it better for Ontario.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to wish a very good morning to a resident from St. Catharines who I know is tuning in this morning to get into the conversation of Bill 66, and that would be Pat Lindal.

I'd like to point to the issues surrounding schedule 10 within Bill 66 which will affect the Niagara region, specifically. Our goal here is to ensure residents are protected and their interests are taken into consideration. We need to make sure that municipalities are taking every scenario into consideration when cutting through the red tape the Ford government loves to talk about. Policy is in place for a reason.

If this government is able to circumvent highly important environmental and planning acts, we absolutely need to make sure that residents' health, drinking water and their rights as residents of this province are protected.

Land use planning, reviews and consultations are to be done by the provincial bodies that determine what is best for each region and how available land can be used most effectively. Growth plans are just that: important plans that dictate how a community grows, looks and functions. If "open for business" can supersede predetermined plans, municipalities no longer have a framework to manage short- and long-term growth plans. As we all know, development plans don't just come out of thin air or overnight; years and years of analysis have to take place to determine the current and future needs of all communities.

0920

It is ridiculous that this Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing does not have to conform to key policies of the Planning Act to protect our growth plans.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to thank the members from King–Vaughan, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Algoma–Manitoulin, Peterborough–Kawartha and St. Catharines for their comments on this bill.

I did have to come back to the member from St. Catharines's comments. I don't know if she was aware, but we've pulled schedule 10 out of this bill because we listened to the people. I'm glad that we were able to listen to your concerns on those things.

Speaking to red tape reduction: British Columbia gets by with 125,000 regulations. We have 380,000 regulations in this province. The last time I checked, buildings weren't falling down, water was safe and people were getting jobs in British Columbia, so I don't understand the hesitancy about getting rid of some of the overregulation that we have here.

Our Minister of Children, Community and Social Services has said that the best social program is a job. I guess that legislation comes down to what we feel philosophically about how we look at job creators, how we look at innovators and how we look at business. If you look at business as something that needs to be held down, to be overtaxed and overregulated, I suppose, then you would be against Bill 66. But if you look at business as the people that generate new growth, that generate innovation, that generate jobs, that give people opportunity, then naturally you would be supportive of Bill 66. I think it's really that philosophy that we're talking about back and forth here this morning with the opposition and the government side.

In order to best serve Ontario, we need to get as many people into the best jobs as we can. That's the thing that we have to do: We have to be open for business so that we can make this a better place to live, work, play and raise a family.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her final comments.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Peterborough–Kawartha, St. Catharines and Brantford–Brant for their comments today.

This is an important bill. I often worry when the members opposite of this side of the House fearmonger. As my colleague from Brantford–Brant had said, we have removed that piece of the legislation, which was schedule 10. This is a very positive bill. This is a bill that's going to help keep people employed in this province.

We have to remember that there are 370,000 pieces of red tape, and you know what? That's a ridiculous amount. That's just crazy, when you think about that. These are hindrances to getting jobs done. This is what's stopping people from getting work done. This is stopping people from hiring new staff. We have to move forward as a government, as people have said we need to do.

This province was an absolute mess when our government took over—an absolute mess—\$15 billion. This government has taken swift action to make this better for the people. This bill highlights some of the ways that we are going to start fixing the problems—start fixing the problems, because this is not an overnight change. This is something that has been happening for 15 years of neglect and overspending and over-promising. We need to buckle down and take some action and get some things happening, making sure that Ontario is not just open for business but open for creating jobs in this province.

Just to wrap up: I want to make sure that the members opposite and the people who are listening realize that things that we do in this government are not at the expense of health and safety or our environment. We are very careful to ensure that our environment will remain safe, our children will remain safe and our people will remain safe.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker, for having me speak on this bill, Bill 66. Many people have contacted my office expressing concern about numerous elements of this bill. I do believe this bill is going to make life worse for people, not better.

I don't believe the argument that this is a bill that is simply designed to eliminate red tape, because I don't believe that red tape is this mysterious pot of money that will somehow allow us to provide quality services and not raise taxes. I have a hard time believing that. When I look at this bill and I hear the words “red tape,” what I'm actually seeing are rules that regulate big business and big developers, and rules that help and protect Ontarians. I see not red tape but rules that provide environmental protections, that keep our drinking water clean, our food healthy, and our air free of toxins.

When I look at this bill, what I see is a bill that hurts the environment, loosens regulations on children, and makes life a lot harder for our low-income and our moderate-income workers, who are really struggling in today's economy.

I want to turn to schedule 5. Schedule 5 is a big concern to me. It's the enabling of the repeal of the Toxics Reduction Act and its regulations, which currently require large industries to develop plans to reduce their toxic use and to publicly report on the use of toxics and the generation of toxics. This seems like a pretty important act to me.

What I've heard from this government is, “Well, we don't really need it because it's simply a duplication of the federal government's act and regulation on toxics.” That's just not true. It's not true because environmental experts have looked at the differences between the bills and they have said that there is not duplication. When this government was asked to identify duplication between the provincial bill and the federal bill by the media, they didn't even bother to respond. It's pretty obvious what some of the differences are. The big one is that the Toxics Reduction Act is designed to encourage reduction on an

industry-by-industry and plant-by-plant basis. That doesn't exist within the federal regulation.

I find that deeply concerning because the regulation of toxics in Ontario is still extremely important. I'll tell you why it's important: because, in 2016, we produced more cancerous chemicals into our air, land and water than every province or state in North America, except for Texas. We produced 26,000 tonnes of cancerous chemicals and released them into the environment in 2016. That has a very real impact on people living not just in Ontario but all across Canada and the United States and beyond.

It makes me think of Grassy Narrows, which is the example of a toxic which is regulated by the Toxics Reduction Act—mercury—and the impact that the spill of thousands of tonnes of mercury had over 40 years ago on that community.

I think about Steve Fobister, who I have met many times, and his life, and how the mercury poisoning impacted him. He was a five-time chief and he spent his life as a fisherman, as an environmentalist and as a family member. When the mercury was released by the company, Reed Paper, the employment rate in Grassy Narrows was 90%. He was one of the many people who were employed by the fishing industry. But because of that mercury spill, which was not reported, he and that community and generations after him have suffered a legacy of poisoning, a legacy of sickness, which continues to this day.

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What we find when we look at Grassy Narrows is that they still have higher health problems and rates of learning disabilities than other First Nations communities. They have higher rates of death. They have higher rates of suicide. They have higher rates of neurological diseases, Alzheimer's, brain defects, brain tumours and a whole host of things which shouldn't have to happen.

I bring up Grassy Narrows because it is an example of what can happen if we don't properly regulate toxics. It's an example of what happens when we no longer require companies to publicly report on what kinds of toxics they are releasing. It's an example of what happens when we no longer require companies to come up with a plan and reduce their toxics over time.

Another example that I find deeply disturbing, and that is much closer, is what's happening with the Aamjiwnaang community and the Chemical Valley near Sarnia. Many of the companies that are in that area are regulated by the Toxics Reduction Act, and are required to report on what toxics they are releasing and to have a plan to reduce them. I fear that Bill 66 will impact the amount of toxics that are released and will make life more unhealthy for that community.

I've been following that issue for a while. I have a report here, and some of the stories are just heartbreaking. This one is about Ron Plain. This is part of an exposé that Global News, the Toronto Star and Ryerson did two years ago to look at the impact of toxic spills and the release of cancerous chemicals in that community. It talks about Ron Plain and how, when they interviewed him, he was likely going to be dead in 12 months. That was the expected life

that he had left. He was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer that prevents the blood cells in his bone marrow from maturing.

"It's an excruciating way to die: in varying states of languor and with pain that runs as deep as your bones until the very last exhale."

This is his typical day: "I get a blood transfusion every Tuesday, and then I go see my pain doctor, and I get 21 needles," he says. "And then I come home and I've got the energy to maybe wash the dishes, take a break and relax for a while, get up and sweep the floor, take a break. That's my day. That's my excitement. That's what I can do."

He said he expected cancer. "Nobody was shocked. My wife and I sat there in the chair" when he found out about the diagnosis, and he said, "Yeah we figured."

The reason why he figured is because that community knows that the industry in that area is, even today, not properly regulated, and are releasing chemicals into the air, the land and the water, and it's harming people's lives. This bill, Bill 66, is going to make it worse, because you're stripping away the basic right of people to know what toxic chemicals are being released in their backyard. You're stripping away the regulation that these companies should have to reduce the amount of toxics that they have over time.

Now, I'm not saying this bill is perfect—it's not—but it's better than what you are looking at doing. Instead of stripping it away, we should be building upon what this Toxics Reduction Act has, and properly enforcing it so that we can have clean air, clean water and healthy food. It's of deep concern to me.

Another concern that I have with this bill is the additional attack on workers' rights. So you've just done Bill 47. Okay, so you didn't increase the minimum wage from \$14 to \$15 an hour. You're getting rid of paid sick days. I've had infectious disease experts contact me and say that's a stupid idea, because it's going to actually increase the amount of sickness in the workplace, because people are going to go to work sick. Literally, I had someone from SickKids who is an expert with infectious disease, specializing in the flu, who said, "This is really not a good idea. I don't know why they're doing it."

And then, what we're doing here with this bill is, you are changing the rule so that companies are allowed to force workers to work more than 48 hours a week with no longer getting ministry approval.

I've heard this government say, "Look, that was just an unnecessary requirement, because the worker has to agree." Well, when you are a worker and this is your only job, and an employer comes up to you and says, "I need you to work 60 hours this week," you are not going to say no, because you need that job to get ahead in life and pay your bills, put your kid in child care, pay the rent and do all of the things you need to do to survive. You are not going to say no. So that's going to make life a lot harder for a whole lot of people who are already struggling to make ends meet.

What I also find really concerning about this bill is the elimination of the very, very basic poster that employers

are required to put in an obvious space so workers can see it, so that workers know their basic rights. I have heard this government say, “Well, they can just go online, or they can look it up.” People don’t do that. People don’t know. I remember my first job that I had; I didn’t know what my rights were, so it really helped to have a poster—this was in the United States—that you looked at and you could see what your rights were. It seems very obvious to me, and it doesn’t seem like it would cost a lot of money for an employer to get the poster and get a piece of sticky tape and put it on the wall. That doesn’t seem like a very expensive piece of red tape to me; it seems like a very cheap piece of Scotch tape.

I fear that this bill is not really designed to eliminate unnecessary red tape; this bill is designed to make it harder for workers to find out about what their basic rights are, so that employers can take advantage of them.

When I look at this economy and what’s happening in Ontario, I feel that workers in this economy, particularly low-income workers, already have it pretty hard. We have an economy that has become a precarious worker economy, where so many of the new jobs that we’re creating are the kinds of jobs that you cannot build a life on. These are jobs that are precarious jobs, minimum wage jobs, jobs where it’s hard to get time off, jobs where you don’t get paid for your sick days, jobs where you don’t know what your schedule is and it changes all the time. It’s very hard to have those kinds of jobs and lead a decent life in Ontario today. It’s very hard to have those kinds of jobs and pay for child care and pay for rent—which is now the highest in Canada, in Toronto—and it’s very hard to pay for food, which is going up and up and up. It’s very hard to pay for a lot of things.

This requirement of making it a lot harder for people to find out their basic rights, and allowing employers to force workers to do more overtime and have less access to getting paid for that overtime, is just going to make things worse, and quite frankly, it’s not right.

Another piece of this legislation that I have a lot of concerns about is schedule 3. Once again, this government likes to say, “Well, it’s red tape, red tape, red tape.” I don’t know if basic—

Interjection: Have you ever been in business?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I have, actually. Thank you.

This example of red tape is about the basic regulations that we need to keep our kids safe.

I have two children. Both of them are in child care. You know what it’s like, as a parent, when you drop your kids off at the daycare. You want to make sure your kids are in the safest, warmest environment possible. You want to know that the daycare workers really care about them and that things are not going to go wrong. I fear that these regulations on child care are going to make things a little bit more unsafe in child care spaces. I’m very concerned about the change to increase the number of kids under two in the care of the caregiver and the change to increase the number of kids under two in the care of an unlicensed caregiver. These things are deeply concerning to me, because these changes were introduced after we had a

number of baby and toddler deaths in Ontario. That’s why they were introduced. We don’t want to have those kinds of horrible situations happen again in Ontario because this government decided to loosen very important regulations.

I have an article here from the University of Toronto. These researchers are experts on child care legislation. They have done many studies on the safety of child care in Ontario, in Canada and in the United States. They say, “A disproportionate number of deaths occur” of children, toddlers and infants “in unlicensed home child care.... Many countries, including the US, Canada and Ireland, allow for these businesses to operate legally ... without any real government oversight.”

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What they found is that, in some parts of Canada, there are more regulations on dog walkers and hot dog vendors than there are on unlicensed child care providers.

I can send this to you if you want to look at it, and you can do your own assessment on the quality of this, by an academic who spent most of their life researching child care regulation.

What I find very concerning is that, certainly, the safety of dogs and the food we eat from street vendors is important. I don’t want to get food poisoning. And when someone’s dog is going for a walk, I certainly want it to come back happy and healthy and exhausted. But I am also very concerned about the safety of our babies and children. I fear that this regulation and these changes are going to make things a little bit more unsafe when they simply don’t have to be.

There is no doubt that child care is expensive in Canada. It’s very expensive in Toronto, I understand, and I agree with some of the comments made by members opposite that there is a shortage of child care spaces. It is very hard to find a child care spot. I remember that when I was looking for child care, I started to put my name on wait-lists before I told my parents-in-law that I was expecting my first child, for the very reason that I wanted to get my kid into daycare so I could continue to be a part of the workforce after I took my year off.

I’ve heard also many stories from parents who struggle with the cost of child care. Just recently, Jen Fitzgerald contacted me. She’s a lady who lives in my riding. Her youngest son, Keaton, is on the autism spectrum. He waited two years to get critical services that he desperately needs so that he can learn how to communicate with his sister and learn how to communicate in the classroom. In order to pay for the support her son needed, before she got access to government support, she had to pull her youngest child out of child care so that she could continue to provide support for her oldest son.

I don’t disagree that the cost of child care is a problem, but what I don’t agree with is this idea of loosening regulations in order to maybe increase child care spots. I think that there is a better way to address the child care crisis in Toronto and Ontario, and that could be to fund public and not-for-profit quality care, to roll out \$15-a-day care, and to top up child care workers’ wages so that they can earn a living wage. Every single parent needs to be

able to access a quality child care spot, but we shouldn't be doing it by cutting regulation.

I do want to close by drawing attention to something this government says that it is no longer going to do, but I'm, quite frankly, not so sure. That is schedule 10, which is to amend the Planning Act to allow for municipalities to move forward on an open-for-business zoning bylaw. I have read the news, and I've heard this government say that they are no longer going to allow that schedule to be moving forward. I've got to say, I'll believe it when I see it, because during the election, you ran around saying, "Oh, well, we're going to open the greenbelt up for development—"

Hon. Todd Smith: No, we didn't.

Ms. Jessica Bell: —and then you backtracked. And then we find, buried in this bill—Bill 66—another sneaky little way to open up the greenbelt for development. Then, for a while, you were saying in the news, "Well, no, we're not going to do that. No, no, no, we're not going to do that." And then the news got out and people actually read this massive bill, and municipalities and the public realized that it is actually what you're going to do. Then you went, "Okay, we're not going to do it." The intent is there.

I still have concerns about that schedule, and I will continue to have concerns about that schedule. I will continue to tell people who contact my office saying, "I'm worried about this government's plan to open up the greenbelt," until I see the amendments saying that you're actually not going to do it.

These are the reasons why I'm very opposed to this bill. I don't believe Bill 66 is a bill that is going to help people in Ontario. I don't believe it's going to make Ontario more competitive. I don't believe it's going to make Ontario a better place to live. I think it's going to make Ontario a worse place to live, a place with worse protections for workers, a place where our environment is going to be a little bit more unsafe and where our children will have less protection.

I think you can do a lot better than that, and I encourage you to do so.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It has been interesting, listening to my colleague's comments there. I would, however, suggest that she take a look at the news, because this past few weeks, when the Premier was at ROMA back in late January, he very explicitly said to a crowd of about a thousand people in attendance, including rural mayors, reeves and councillors—and he said loud and clear—"We have heard you on Bill 66 when it comes to schedule 10, and this is something we're going to be taking back and we're going to be revisiting." So with that in mind, I would suggest my colleague ask her staff to look into what our government has been doing.

The common recurring theme that we have is, we are here for the people, and we are here to listen. If something we proposed might not have—if there are reactions to it or if people have comments or feedback, we take that in and we listen, because that is what a government for the people is all about.

For that reason, I am so proud to be standing here today in support of Bill 66, because when it was first announced back on December 6, 2018, the Honourable Todd Smith, who is the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, said that the whole purpose of this bill is to reduce red tape and regulatory burdens.

Given that Ontario has the highest number of regulations—over 380,000 regulations—and given that even in my riding across Carleton, all I hear about is businesses being burdened with these unnecessary regulations, I am glad that we are moving forward with this bill in just under a year of being elected here.

We have been a government for the people, and we will continue to be a government for the people.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Bill 66, making Ontario competitive, the government's slogan of being for the people—I return to the question: Which people? Are you there for sick people? Are you there for people who are struggling to make ends meet? You have abandoned the minimum wage increase.

I had the pleasure yesterday of meeting with Bruce, Lisa and Gloria from the Time to Care campaign. I have a problem with schedule 8 of Bill 66, which is going to make Ontario supposedly competitive. What it's going to do is place a lot of vulnerable populations at possible risk—vulnerable populations like the seniors who are living in long-term-care facilities, where there are not enough staff to take care of their needs, where seniors are having to stay in soiled beds—feces, urine—for hours because there are no staff available to take care of them in a timely manner.

What we really need, if we want to make Ontario competitive, is to make Ontario safe. What we need is to have four hours of hands-on care for residents at long-term facilities every single day. We shouldn't be cutting services for people who are vulnerable, who are in need. We should be adding services—more beds, more behavioural nurses, more staff—and that is not happening. That is not happening.

If you want to make Ontario competitive, start with making it safe and start with making it better. Ontarians deserve better, seniors deserve better, our grandparents deserve better.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: It's a pleasure to be able to rise in the House today and take part in questions and comments on the debate on Bill 66.

I wanted to go back to something the member from Peterborough—Kawartha—I hope I got that right, Dave.

Mr. Dave Smith: God's country.

Mr. Mike Harris: God's country—you're right; exactly.

He said earlier, when we were talking about child care in this province—my riding is roughly 1,000 square kilometres. The northern part of that is quite rural. It could be half an hour to 40 minutes between larger population

centres, where you would have a larger daycare, if you will. Home daycare is something that is very prevalent in my riding. I've had the opportunity to visit a few home daycares. My sister-in-law actually runs a home daycare, albeit in New Brunswick, but I'm very familiar with what goes on at these home daycares. I think there are some really, really great, responsible people out there who are providing care for our children.

I think, as a parent—and a lot of us in here are. I know that pretty much every time I get a chance to mention my kids, I'm always happy to mention them. But as a father of five, I want the choice to be able to decide where I best spend my child care dollars. Is that going to be at a licensed daycare centre? Is that going to be at a home daycare? Is it going to be having a caregiver come into my home?

But in the case of rural Ontario, often you don't have a lot of options. So I think this, Mr. Speaker, is a great first step in reforming child care here in Ontario, making it easier for parents to be able to get out there, making sure that they're able to take part in the workforce and that their children are in a safe and secure environment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Bon matin, monsieur le Président, et merci.

Je voudrais aussi dire félicitations au chef du NPD fédéral, Jagmeet Singh, pour sa victoire. Je suis sûr que Jagmeet va faire un travail excellent pour le Canada et puis faire avancer nos valeurs.

J'ai entendu parler de « red tape » et la bureaucratie. Je peux vous dire que, pour un gouvernement qui se dit un « gouvernement du peuple », il est plutôt pour les compagnies et non pour les travailleurs. Je pense que c'est ma collègue qui l'a dit le mieux : on remarque dans le projet de loi qu'il enlève les droits des travailleurs, qu'un employeur n'est même plus obligé de mettre les droits des travailleurs sur un mur au moins que le monde sache ce qui sont leurs droits pour se protéger—pas fort. Je pense que le travailleur a droit à ce minimum de service-là de son employeur.

Elle l'a dit aussi très bien, quand on parle des heures de travail : les travailleurs aujourd'hui ont de la misère à mettre les deux bouts ensemble. Les familles ont tellement de pression. Puis là, aujourd'hui, avec ce nouveau projet de loi, ça veut dire que l'employeur va pouvoir arriver le matin et dire, « Excuse, Guy, tu vas travailler 60 heures. » Qu'est-ce qui arrive à la qualité de vie? Qu'est-ce qui arrive? Et puis, on se dit « gouvernement du peuple »? On n'a pas la même vision d'un gouvernement du peuple. Je peux vous dire que les travailleurs méritent beaucoup mieux.

Je ne sais pas ce que ce gouvernement-là a contre les syndicats, mais d'éroder des conventions collectives ou d'éroder le langage de contracteurs—les employés des contracteurs méritent les mêmes heures de travail et les mêmes conditions de travail que les syndicats. Je pense que c'est la moindre des choses. Je pense qu'un travailleur mérite d'avoir ce droit-là.

Je voudrais vous remercier, monsieur le Président. Bon matin.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Merci. Now back to the member from University–Rosedale for her final comments.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the members for St. Paul's, Carleton, Kitchener–Conestoga and Mushkegowuk–James Bay for your comments.

I am looking forward to when there is an amendment to schedule 10 so that the greenbelt is not opened up for development. But as I said earlier, until I see it, I'm not going to believe it, because this government has not acted in a way that is trustworthy for me.

I also am very concerned about the idea that this is a government for the people. The government is here for a few people. It's here for big developers. It's here for the wealthiest among us. But there's also this politics of division that this government is pushing for, where there are a whole lot of people that this government is not for. That includes people such as the people in Sarnia who live in Chemical Valley, who are now going to know even less about the toxic chemicals that are being emitted by the industry in that area. They're not for the people in Grassy Narrows and for the future people who might experience something similar to what Grassy Narrows is experiencing, people who won't know what kinds of chemicals are being released in the groundwater in their own backyard or near them. I don't think this government is for them with this bill.

I also have really serious reservations about whether this government is for the minimum wage workers in Ontario, the one million people who live on \$14 an hour in Ontario, who are struggling to make ends meet. This government is not behaving in a way that they have those people's interests in mind, because if they did, they wouldn't require them to do forced overtime when they're already struggling to make ends meet and live a decent life. This bill is not for them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, I would like the debate to continue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Therefore, further debate.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you to the House leader for allowing debate to continue on this important bill. I rise today to speak on Bill 66.

Mr. Speaker, the government talks about restoring Ontario's competitiveness, but we need to be clear about what they want Ontario to be competitive in. The Premier's agenda suggests the government doesn't want to be competitive in the fast-growing clean economy, a \$7-trillion-a-year global economic opportunity. The government doesn't seem to want to compete in the high-wage economy after they froze Ontario's minimum wage. Bill 66

shows the government wants to compete in a race to the bottom, a race that most people in Ontario don't want to win.

We've heard members of the government wax on about small businesses that are buried under paperwork. If this legislation were about making life easier for small businesses, then I'd be on board. If the government wanted to reduce red tape for low-income people who are forced to fill out mounds of paperwork and navigate lots of bureaucracies to obtain the services they need and deserve, then I'd be on board. But that's not what's happening here. Under the guise of cutting red tape, the government has threatened to punch holes in Ontario's greenbelt, threatening our food-growing farmland. They've opened the door to unravelling clean water laws put in place after the Walkerton tragedy.

In December I asked the government why they were creating legal paths for municipalities to pave over the greenbelt and violate the Clean Water Act. At the time, the minister accused me of fearmongering. Well, Mr. Speaker, the response from municipalities and citizens was on my side. They told the Premier to keep his hands off our greenbelt. They said protecting water and public health is not red tape. Countless municipal councils passed resolutions saying they were not willing to sacrifice our water and green space for a campaign slogan. And so while I applaud the minister for tweeting that schedule 10 of Bill 66 will be withdrawn, I ask the Premier why the government considered it in the first place.

I want to thank the thousands of citizens who mobilized to protect our water, our food-growing farmland and green space, and I ask those citizens to remain vigilant because this government has a number of reviews already under way that threaten farmland, water, green space and endangered species.

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How can any government consider itself fiscally responsible when it threatens the environmental services like clean water and farmland that nature provides for free? The greenbelt alone provides \$3.2 billion of environmental goods and services to the people of Ontario every single year. The food and farming sector contributes over 800,000 jobs and \$40 billion to Ontario's economy. What government that is open for business would threaten to pave over the asset base of all those jobs and all that wealth?

Speaker, in my limited time today, I want to focus on two other schedules in addition to the dreaded schedule 10. The first is schedule 5, on the Toxic Reductions Act. Of all the ways to cut red tape, why loosen requirements around reducing toxins? Ontario already has some of the highest emissions of toxins of any jurisdiction in North America, second only to Texas. Instead of eliminating the Toxic Reductions Act, we should be strengthening it, because clearly the previous government's act wasn't getting the job done.

Do we really want to attract businesses to Ontario that don't want to be straight with the people of Ontario about the toxins they are putting into our environment and that

are affecting our public health? The health minister is making an announcement right now about changes to the health care system, and one of the most fundamental ones is making sure that we have a healthy environment.

Next, I just want to touch on schedule 3, which increases child care ratios in the Child Care and Early Years Act. We need child care to be available along a range of options so that people can choose safe and licensed providers, but the current ratios were put in place to save children's lives. What government considers regulations that were put in place to protect the people we love as red tape?

I urge this government to remove those schedules from Bill 66 as well. Let's have an honest conversation about ways to reduce red tape on small businesses and ways to reduce duplication and paperwork, but, Mr. Speaker, not at the expense of public health, public safety, our environment, the foodland, the farmland and our water.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to rise and speak to the member from Guelph and Bill 66. A number of changes are going to be made there if it passes at committee.

The reduction of regulations is something I talked about for a long time in opposition, and now in government, I'm glad to see that we're moving there.

About consumers being able to understand their wireless service rights: There's an amendment in there as well.

On June 7, we ran on a platform of reducing red tape and making Ontario open for business—and "open for business" means open for jobs.

The part about the Toxic Reductions Act—I heard the other member talking about that—it does affect Sarnia-Lambton. What we're doing there is, the federal laws—we're going to subscribe to those. So there's a duplication, having the provincial mandate of those regulations and duplicating it with the federal regulations. Anyway, it's not the issue that some people would try and make it to be.

I think one of the more important issues too is amending the Labour Relations Act to deem public bodies such as municipalities, school boards, hospitals, colleges and universities and others so that their non-construction employers—this is major. It will open up the bidding and contracts so that people will be able to bid on those projects. Hopefully, because it's tax dollars that are paying for those facilities, it will keep those costs down and allow greater responsibility and opportunities for people to work in those industries.

The streamlining of pension plans for employers is another issue, and amending the Private Career Colleges Act is another important issue, but we'll maybe touch on that later.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to be able to participate for a couple of minutes in the debate on Bill 66, the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act. You know, Speaker, I think the problem that we have seen with this government is that they equate competitiveness with removing regulatory oversight, and there are lots of

occasions where a good regulatory framework can actually contribute to competitiveness. Some of the most successful economies in the world—Germany, for example—have more regulations in place than Ontario.

There are good reasons for regulations. Not all regulations are unnecessary red tape, which is what this government seems to think. Regulations are developed in order to protect the people of this province. We see in this bill a move to eliminate many important regulations that we have relied on in Ontario for decades to protect us.

We heard earlier my colleague talking about Grassy Narrows. Close to my home in London, southwestern Ontario, the legacy of Walkerton is very real, and it's a huge concern. That this government would even contemplate—would even contemplate—allowing businesses to ignore the Clean Water Act as a means to improve their so-called competitiveness is just appalling, Speaker. It's unconscionable.

The other issue, of course, is around child care. The regulations that were put in place around ratios were there to protect children. They were put there in the wake of some deaths of children in the GTA. We can't water those down if we are to do our job to protect children.

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

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Let's really think for a second: What is the purpose of a regulation? What is it? It's meant to preserve, protect, regulate, encourage, but it is certainly not meant to strangle. When you have a regulatory body that is out of control, that is the result.

Let me just give a few examples that I have locally that might demonstrate the fallacy of this. Twenty years ago, in our area, approximately 8% of the entire health care budget was spent on administration in our hospitals—8%. Now, up to 30% of the entire health care delivery budget in our hospitals is spent on administration. That is money that is not spent on direct-line services.

Many, many years ago, I was a municipal councillor and deputy reeve, and I can recall there were building permits coming forward, people wanting to put a subdivision in or just transfer a lot. The regulatory process all through the developmental approval took approximately a year—occasionally, if it was extremely complex, maybe two. Now a standard, standard building process is five to six years. That is absolutely untenable, Mr. Speaker. What that does is that, of course, builds the cost into that, and the cost then is transmitted through to the people who need housing, whether it's affordable housing, regular housing, commercial housing or industrial buildings. We're driving a cost out of being competitive.

We don't live in our own backyard. We live in a global economy where we have to compete. When we price ourselves out, what happens? We not only can't compete, but we suffer the effects of an economy that really, really hurts, and who does it hurt? The people who need the help the most, Mr. Speaker. So what I would like to say—do I have time to go on? Because I'd love to. Can I go on for the next five to 10 minutes, I'm assuming? I can't? Well, thank you.

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

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I just wanted to talk about something that was sort of glossed over by the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore: pawnbrokers. Now, it doesn't sound very sexy or anything like that, but there's something that they did with this bill that I think they glossed over and I think we should be aware of.

With regard to pawnbrokers in Bill 66, what the government is doing is, they're making it easier for criminals to steal, and to steal your stuff. I'll tell you how they're doing that: They're cancelling the responsibility of pawnbrokers to keep basic records about who sold them the goods. What's the purpose of that? That's what they're doing right now. The records that are a tool for police investigating crimes are no longer required. We believe it's wrong for the government to take that tool away from police officers, which could lead to increased burglaries and more work for already overloaded police services.

What they're doing is, they're sneaking it in the bill, and they're removing that basic item. What's going to happen now is that municipalities will have to choose whether or not to require and enforce record-keeping, which would be another cost piled on to cities and towns. The result is clear: People fencing stolen items will win, and Ontario families and law enforcement will lose.

I ask the government, who made this decision, why are they making it easier for people to sell stolen goods in Ontario? What sort of backroom deal did they cook up for this to go through?

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to thank the members from Sarnia–Lambton, London West, Hastings–Lennox and Addington, and Brampton North for your comments.

The one thing I would like the members opposite, in particular, to understand is that I haven't heard any opposition members say they're against any kind of regulatory reform. In cases where there might be some delays or added costs or added paperwork, it probably makes sense. I've had some businesses come to me and say, "You know, in one province, the form to comply with this regulation is 16 pages, and in another province it's two pages, so why not go with the two-page form?"

But I think what I'm saying, and what I hear a lot of opposition members saying, are things like protecting children, protecting public health and safety, protecting us from toxic emissions, protecting our water and farmlands. That is not red tape. It's just not red tape. I don't know what company wants to invest in a province that's not going to have strong laws to protect their children or to protect our green space, our water—things that are essential to public health and the public welfare.

I want to just point out a point that the member from London West made: In many cases, regulations have actually made businesses more competitive, because they've created a better environment for investment to take place in because they've created a society that people want to

live in and want to invest in. We can't forget that, because if we do, then we're not leaving the livable legacy that we want our children to enjoy in this province.

So I ask the government to make changes to Bill 66 at committee.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for debate this morning has now expired.

It is now close to 10:15. Therefore, this House will stand recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: a report entitled Expenditure Estimates: A Review of Ontario's Proposed Spending Requirements for the 2018-19 Supply Bill, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): With us today in the Speaker's gallery are some special guests: Erinn Jones and Grae Pollard, who are students from the University of Akron in Ohio and who will be working at Queen's Park for the next few months. They are joined by Jenni Fitzgerald, manager of internships from the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron in Ohio, and table research clerk Meghan Stenson. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Ms. Jill Andrew: It is my pleasure to say that our page, Anika Sood, has her family here visiting us at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We have Niru Kumar, we have Alok Sood and we have Keshav Sood, as well. Thank you very much for being here.

We also have a few classes from Eglinton LINC in my riding visiting today, as well as Ashley Bomberry, an arts and culture worker from Six Nations of the Grand River. She's also here with Aylan Couchie, a writer from Nipissing First Nation; Andrea Goulais, youth secretary of the Nipissing First Nation youth council; and other Indigenous community members, as well as Kate Cornell of the Canada Dance Assembly. They're here at Queen's Park organizing and participating in the Indigenous Culture Fund rally which is taking place today at noon in front of Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind members that we keep our introductions brief and to the point.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to welcome the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to the Legislature. I'd also like to invite everyone to come to their reception this evening from 5 to 7 in the Legislative dining room to enjoy some of Ontario's best food. Joining us at question period, we have

Bart Rijke, Nick Thurler, John Wynands, Sid Atkinson, Will Vanderhorst, Bonnie den Haan, Albert Fledderus, Murray Sherk, Mark Hamel and Steve Runnalls. Welcome to Queen's Park. We look forward to this evening.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Today, I would like to welcome from our riding the mayor of Red Lake, Fred Mota, and Red Lake's chief administrative officer, Mark Vermette.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd also like to add my warm welcome to Mark Hamel, a director at Dairy Farmers of Ontario. He hails from the amazing riding of Huron-Bruce, and I look forward to catching up with him later tonight.

Mr. Joel Harden: It's with great pleasure that I welcome to the people's House today the CUPE workers' committee for people with disabilities: Peter Stapper, Kimberly Goode, Terry Batley, Gerry Boily, Michele Gardner, Mary Miele, Gary Sprague, Peter Vambe, Diana Doucette and Stephanie Malinsky. Welcome to the people's House.

I would be remiss if I didn't also mention that the mayor of my city, Jim Watson, is in this House for a reception for people from Ottawa and all of us, so come and join us.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: There are a number of other dairy farmers here today: Henry Wydeven, Patrice Dubé, Shikha Jain, Sean Bredt, Rey Moisan, Bitu Farhang, Kristin Benke, Loral Adams, Bryan Zeiler-Kligman, Naomi Shuman and Joseph Ragusa.

I would also like to introduce Rebecca Clothier. She is a clerk and administrative officer of the municipality of Perth South.

Miss Monique Taylor: It give me great pleasure to welcome Cheryl Clark to the House today. She is the mom of six-year-old Drew, who is on the autism spectrum. Welcome to Queen's Park today, Cheryl.

Mr. John Fraser: It's Ottawa Day today at Queen's Park, so there's a reception tonight. I'd like to welcome Mayor Jim Watson and councillors Jenna Sudds and Stephen Blais, as well as Cheryl Jensen from Algonquin College and Jack Kitts from the Ottawa Hospital. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I would like to welcome today Jenna Sudds, city councillor for Kanata North, and Veronica Farmer, the interim executive director and director of operations for the Kanata North Business Association. Welcome to Queen's Park, and have a good Ottawa Day.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to welcome Alex Kolanoff, Donald Hingston and Katie Miller from St. Catharines Holy Cross secondary school. They participated in the Youth Arts Program yesterday. Welcome.

Also, Francesca Delano, my constituency assistant, who will be filling in—thank you for coming.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the great privilege of welcoming to the Legislature and introducing to the members of the Legislature Eric and Marie-Augé Noue from Grimsby in my riding, who are the parents of page Joséphine Noue. Thank you for being here today.

Ms. Doly Begum: It is my pleasure to introduce Mr. Ziaul Alam and Luminous Jamsheel to the House this

morning. They're the wonderful parents of four-year-old Rio. Thank you so much for being here today.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I would like to introduce Lily and Farhan from the Canadian Federation of Students. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. David Piccini: I just wanted to give a special welcome to Queen's Park to two dairy farmers from my riding: Sid Atkinson and Will Vanderhorst. Welcome to Queen's Park. Thanks for joining us, gentlemen.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome members from Dairy Farmers of Ontario: Henry Wydeven, Albert Fledderus, Nick Thurler and Kristin Benke. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome members of the Economic Development Council of Ontario who are with us today—in particular, their CEO, Heather Lalonde, and Delia Reiche, who's the project director from Elgin Middlesex Oxford. Welcome.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to rise on Ottawa Day at Queen's Park. It's my pleasure to introduce: Mayor Jim Watson, a former member of this assembly; Jenna Sudds and Stephen Blais, who are city councillors, as well as my Nepean mother, Councillor Jan Harder, a long-time city councillor; Serge Arpin, the chief of staff to the mayor of Ottawa; Mathieu Gravel, director of issues management; Steve Willis, general manager of planning, infrastructure and economic development; Matthew Eason, economic development officer at the city of Ottawa; Michael Tremblay, president and CEO of Invest Ottawa; Veronica Farmer, executive director of the Kanata North Business Improvement Association; Mark Kaluski, chair of the Ottawa Council of Business Improvement Associations; Lise Bourgeois, president of La Cité; Pascale Montminy from La Cité; Michael Crockatt from Ottawa Tourism; Ian Faris from Ottawa Board of Trade; Ian Sherman from Ottawa Board of Trade; Julia Forbes from the Shaw Centre; Benoit-Antoine Bacon from Carleton; Jacques Frémont from University of Ottawa; Cheryl Jensen from Algonquin College; Lise Sarazin, president of Regroupement des gens d'affaires; Bruce Harvey, film commissioner of the city of Ottawa; and Dr. Alan Forster and Bernie Etzinger from the Ottawa Hospital.

I welcome all members tonight between 4:30 and 6:30 p.m. in room 228 and 230, as we celebrate Ottawa Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I, too, will introduce a special guest, I think, for the fourth time now, a former member of the Legislature in the 38th Parliament and 39th Parliament, representing Ottawa West–Nepean. Jim Watson is here today. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Since the news broke about the secret wait-list freeze, families have

struggled to understand why the government would withhold services from their kids. Trust has been broken. Families feel betrayed.

Can the minister tell us how many children were denied service while the government imposed their secret freeze?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to be in the Legislature today to once again defend our government's plan to clear the wait-list of 23,000 children who were denied service by the members for Don Valley East and Don Valley West.

1040

Let me be perfectly clear: The list was not frozen. Since I inherited office, I injected an emergency \$102 million into the system to ensure that we could bring an additional 2,500 children into service since June 29. So we have actually increased the children receiving service. But what I'm really excited about, Speaker, is that on April 1, 23,000 children will actually have hope at the end of the tunnel when we start to clear that wait-list over the next 18 months. That's a great-news story for this government.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Miss Monique Taylor: It sounds like the minister should have read her own memo asking regionals to put a pause on this wait-list.

I have yet another story of a family impacted by the government's secret wait-list freeze. Cheryl's son, Drew, is six and has been on the wait-list since 2016. Last summer they were told that their spot was coming up, but in the fall they were repeatedly told that no spots were available, and they were not told how long they would have to wait. Like many parents, Cheryl was not told that the OAP wait-list was frozen. She was strung along for months. Cheryl told me that all she wants is honesty and transparency so that she can plan her son's future and her finances. How many other families went through what Cheryl and her family did?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'm glad to hear Cheryl's story on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. There is hope for Cheryl's family. For the first time, those children who were trickling off the wait-list have an end goal in sight. That's why I went to the Treasury Board and secured an additional \$102 million, so that we could have an annual spend this year of \$361 million and a \$321-million spend moving forward, up from the \$256 million that the Liberals spent.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me be perfectly clear: Our goal is to ensure we have early intervention. The best way to do that is to double the investment in diagnostic hubs and to ensure that we clear the wait-list of 23,000 children. Right now, one in four children who have autism are receiving service in this province. I think that's unacceptable. It is my job as children's minister to ensure all children—the other three quarters who are being denied service by the Ontario government—receive that service, and we will do that within the next 18 months.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: This minister's job is to be at that table, fighting for kids in this province, not putting a program together that doesn't make sense.

My office has heard from many families that were about to enter services, only to find out that their services were mysteriously unavailable. We have heard conflicting claims from this minister as to why this happened. Last Thursday, the minister said they froze the list because the program ran out of money. Yesterday, in a statement from the ministry, the government said they never froze it at all. But we know for a fact that they did. We've seen those leaked emails. We've read the leaked messages.

Will the minister do the right thing now? Either step down immediately or replace this plan and start being honest with the families of this province.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Throughout this entire process the last seven months, my parliamentary assistant, Amy Fee, and I myself travelled across the province, held dozens of round tables, spoke with stakeholders, met with parents and heard some very gut-wrenching stories. So what we did during that period of time was, we needed to try and sustain the broken—and broke—system that we inherited from the previous Liberal administration, which allowed 23,000 children to languish on a wait-list. We, through that period of time, ensured that there were an additional 2,500 children that were brought into the program, and we're going to continue to support families.

But what we have to do, Speaker, is go towards early intervention where we know it's scientific and evidence-based. We have to double the investment into the diagnostic hubs and we have to provide directly to the parents, so that we can empower them, so that they can choose the services that are in the best interest of their child, whether that's behavioural therapy, whether that is caregiver training, whether that is respite or whether that is a technological aid. But I'll tell you, I want all children—

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

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Yesterday, in question period, the minister read a quotation from a Windsor mother, Sherri Taylor. Sherri has four children with developmental disabilities. Well, I've heard from Sherri, and she has already written a letter to the minister: "The statement read by Minister MacLeod yesterday in the Legislature on my behalf is proof of her manipulation, and outright untruths to the public and makes a mockery of every parent who has a child with developmental disabilities, autism or otherwise."

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I was reading someone else's words, but I will withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And conclude your question.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Sherri is disgusted with the way she has been used. Does the minister think this is acceptable behaviour?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: My understanding is that she provided a quote to our office, but if I used that quote yesterday incorrectly, I unequivocally apologize.

But what I will not apologize for is lifting a wait-list of 23,000 children who are being denied service by their Ontario government because of the previous Liberal administration—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: —program; 8,400 children by March 31 will have been receiving support through the previous program.

As the minister responsible, I injected \$102 million in additional funding so that we could not only preserve the program and also bring more than 2,500 children on—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I will continue to advocate for—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: —doubling investment in diagnostic hubs and I will continue to support empowering parents so that they can choose the services they need, whether that is a technological aid, whether that is caregiver training, respite or behavioural services. But we are going to clear the wait-list in 18 months.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: That is a hollow apology, considering that Sherri told me the minister's office asked her for a statement before they announced changes to the autism program. She showed me the emails where she was told specifically to add the line, "The government is on the right track" to her statement. She was not told what the statement was to be used for, or that the minister would be reading it aloud yesterday.

What does the minister have to say to Sherri, and parents like her, who have been threatened and used by her?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Again, I want you to know, and parents across Ontario to know, that we are committed to ensuring that we bring in parental empowerment and direct choice for families to clear the wait-list of the 23,000 children who have been languishing. It's not right that three out of four children in the province of Ontario with autism were denied support by their previous Liberal government. That's why we're committed to ensuring that we clear that wait-list over the next 18 months by investing in diagnostic hubs and ensuring that parents have the choice to invest in the types of therapies that best work for them.

That's what we're going to continue to do on this side of the House. We are committed to this plan, and we are

committed to implementing this plan. As the minister responsible for this plan, it will be implemented on April 1.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Sherri feels manipulated. She emailed the minister's office a number of times after the autism changes were announced, to share her serious concerns—no reply. It's like her usefulness to this minister has expired.

The minister has bullied, threatened and manipulated families like Sherri's and service providers like ONTABA into giving their support to a plan before they even laid eyes on it. She has taken advantage of their willingness to participate and engage with her office in good faith, only to use their voices and twist their words for her own political gain. This behaviour is completely unacceptable for anyone, let alone a minister of this Legislature.

Will the honourable minister finally actually do something honourable and resign?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to once again get up and talk about our government's plan to clear the wait-list of 23,000 children who are being denied support from their Ontario government.

It's not fair that three out of four children with autism in the province of Ontario are languishing on a wait-list and—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: —that we had an unsustainable program that cost us an extra \$100 million in the last several months.

We're committed to this plan. This government is committed to ensuring that it's implemented on April 1.

To the honourable member opposite: I want her to know that I will be the minister responsible for implementing this plan on April 1.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, through you to the Acting Premier: For months, the Premier has insisted that his only vehicle request to the OPP was for a modest, possibly used van, but court documents show that the Premier's staff had sent a detailed request for a brand new van that included \$50,000 worth of upgrades.

Can the Acting Premier explain the disconnect between the modest second-hand van that he was describing in public and the over-\$100,000, off-the-books, taxpayer-funded super-van that he was demanding in private?

1050

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: A request for a used van for a Premier who actively engages in talking to the people of Ontario, all across Ontario, from Windsor West to Thunder Bay, means that he wants to continue to engage in the important work that we're doing in government, which is speaking directly to the people, making sure that we're working for the people, to find out what they believe our government should be working on. That includes ending—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the minister for interrupting. I'd ask the opposition to come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the government side to come to order.

I would ask the minister to conclude her response.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. I simply want to reinforce that the Premier's request for a used van was to ensure that he could continue to do his work while he is travelling from community to community.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The vehicle the Premier asked for sounds like the Taj Mahal on wheels. It includes a mini-fridge. It includes a 32-inch television, a leather power-reclining sofa couch in the back and, of course, a Blu-ray player. This is of course paid for entirely by the taxpayers, off the books.

When the Premier said that he wanted to stop the gravy train, Speaker, it's clearly because he needed time to get on board. Acting OPP Commissioner Brad Blair said, "No way," but Ford family friend Ron Taverner is on the record defending the Premier's personal pleasure wagon. Is that why the Premier offered him the job of OPP commissioner?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe that the member is ascribing motive. I would ask him to withdraw.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And the Minister of Community Safety can respond.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that the member opposite wants to have some fun with this, but let's be clear: A request for a used van to allow our Premier to continue to do his work while he travels from community to community to speak first-hand to the people of this province is, I think, a perfectly reasonable use of resources. He asked for a used vehicle. That's what we're talking about here. You can play games—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again I apologize to the minister. I have to interrupt her. I can't hear the minister because of the voices on the opposition benches. I'd ask you to come to order. The clock is ticking.

Minister, please conclude your response.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: While the members of the opposition continue to play games, we will do what we were elected to do in June, and that is to govern and work for the people of Ontario.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Doug Downey: My question today is for the Attorney General.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that yesterday the Attorney General spoke to the Police Association of Ontario about our government's new policing legislation. Members of our caucus know that police officers, women and men who protect our communities with honour and integrity, risk their lives every day for our safety. I'm proud to be part of a government that recognizes the work that they do.

Our law enforcement professionals respect the importance of their roles. We respect the importance of their roles. I'm proud that our government's legislation promotes a strong, fair and transparent partnership between police, the people and the government to ensure safe communities across Ontario, including the communities in my riding of Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us what the Police Association of Ontario is saying about our proposed changes?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to thank the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte for his question this morning. Our government knows that police officers are everyday heroes who risk their lives to keep our communities, our children and our families safe.

Yesterday I spoke with members of the Police Association of Ontario, and they are very supportive of our proposed changes. They said that they spent three years advocating for thoughtful modernization of the Police Services Act. They said, "Ontario's front-line police personnel welcome today's announcement by the Ontario government and are hopeful that this new Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act will serve to restore fairness and respect for professional policing, make oversight more effective, and improve governance, training, and transparency." Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what our legislation will do once passed.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Doug Downey: I would like to thank the minister for her work on this important file.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte know that Ontario is the best place to live, work and raise a family. They want to know that our communities are safe and that police have the tools they need to get the job done.

Minister, yesterday, the very hard-working parliamentary assistant put it best: "Our front-line officers are everyday heroes, and when they speak up about concerns ... that put public safety in our communities at risk, it is our responsibility as a government to listen and to act to ultimately keep the people of Ontario safe."

Through you, Mr. Speaker: Minister, could you please share with me more about what our government for the people is doing on this important file?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I was proud earlier this year when, through the CRIA grant program, many police forces across Ontario, including in Durham, York, Sudbury and Sarnia, received funds for important projects like fighting human trafficking.

Our government is committed to keeping our communities safe. One of the first things our government did was press pause on the Liberals' reckless Bill 175. We promised to fix the legislation and let me say: Promise made, promise kept.

The Police Association of Ontario knows they have a true partner in our government, a partner who recognizes the importance of independent and effective oversight, but also a system that treats officers with respect and fairness.

The police association has said that they are committed to working with our government to ensure that Ontario continues to be a safe place to live, work and visit. Our government is committed to keeping our communities safe.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Acting Premier. My question is about ethics in government and the integrity of our electoral process.

Media reports late last week indicated that the Premier's party was struggling to sell tickets to the Premier's fundraising dinner, and that's why the Premier's staff are telling lobbyists that their access will be cut off if they don't help fill the room.

Does the Premier have any justification for this blatant violation of Ontario's election finance rules?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the question this morning. I can tell you that no lobbyist is going to influence our Premier, the Premier of Ontario. The Premier of Ontario is so in touch with the people of Ontario. The Premier of Ontario is out there criss-crossing Ontario, meeting with everyday people in communities every day. Those are the people we're working for in this government.

He has been having \$25 spaghetti dinners in communities right across Ontario, meeting with grassroots people in our communities. In fact, he had one in Kitchener a couple of weeks ago. The people were thrilled with the action that this government has been taking since we have been the government of Ontario in the last—

Interjections.

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

I have to caution the House: I have to be able to hear the member who is asking the question and the minister who is responding.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I appreciate the minister's answer to the question. But he's supposed to end with the punchline, not begin with the punchline. Speaker, it was hilarious.

It's becoming more and more clear how things work under this Ford government. If you're a lobbyist who can

help fill the empty seats at the Premier's fundraising dinner, you get access, and you get results. If you're a family struggling to pay for treatment with autism—not so much. The Ford government has absolutely nothing to offer to you except the bill for the reclining leather couch in the back of the Premier's personal pleasure wagon.

When is the Premier going to stop worrying about his backroom friends and start listening to the families that are hurt by his decisions?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks for the question. I don't know if Yuk Yuk's is still operating or not or if they have a stand-up night, but maybe the member from Essex couldn't make it that night.

1100

But I can tell you that our government has been out there holding spaghetti dinners right across the province, talking to people in our communities, on our main streets, and hearing from the people of Ontario. Our business community is thrilled now, because Ontario is again open for business and open for jobs.

Listen, I'm not going to talk about the success that this party has had with fundraisers, because we've had a lot of success. Maybe, according to the CBC story I heard the other day, the NDP should think about having a fundraiser, because they're not doing so well—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. A report released last week by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that farmers are struggling with the barriers caused by red tape and the time required to do the paperwork they need to fill out. I've heard from farmers in my riding, and they're struggling with the same concerns. It's an obvious thing, but they've said that farmers want to spend their time farming.

Last week, the minister announced improvements to the Feeder Cattle Loan Guarantee Program at the Beef Farmers of Ontario AGM. Could the minister please explain what improvements were made to the Feeder Cattle Loan Guarantee Program that will help our hard-working farmers focus on what's really important—their farms?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to thank the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for the question. I was honoured to attend and speak at the Beef Farmers of Ontario AGM last week, where I also got to enjoy some of Ontario's—the world's—best food.

Last week, our government announced improvements to the Feeder Cattle Loan Guarantee Program that will help make sure the province's agriculture sector is open

for business, better able to create and protect jobs, and grow the economy. These improvements would reduce unnecessary costly credit checks in the program, which will save co-ops time and money. The revisions would also streamline the transfer of ownership of livestock once the loan has been paid off. They are the result of listening closely to the beef farmers, hearing their concerns and acting on their ideas to fix long-standing issues in the program.

I look forward to continuing to work with our beef farmers to find ways to make life more affordable for all.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the minister for his answer. I agree with the minister, and I'm proud to say that we have some of the best-quality food and beef in the world here.

I'm happy to hear the minister is tackling the red tape that's driving jobs and investment out of this province. Our government has a plan to reduce the unnecessary regulations and cut through the burdensome red tape. We're removing 25% of that burden, and we're going to maintain the highest food safety and animal welfare standards.

Can the minister please tell us how these proposed changes will support this government's open-for-business mandate?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thanks again to the member for his question. Ontario's beef farmers are among the many impacted by out-of-date, unnecessary government red tape that's adding to their operating costs and hurting their competitiveness. These proposed changes are part of our Open for Business plan to add to the more than 30 red tape and regulatory reductions to reduce the burden on job creators, while protecting our environment, our food safety and our animal welfare standards. We want to hear from farmers and others in the agri-food industry about how our government can make changes to eliminate burdensome requirements that slow businesses down and make them less competitive.

Like I said before, we have the best-quality food here in Ontario. We want to support our farmers, our producers, our agribusinesses and our agriculture industries so they can continue to provide the best food in the world, from the field to the fork, for all Ontarians.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is to the Minister of Health. After spending a month denying that this government has been cooking up a secret scheme to overhaul our public health care system, the minister today will be tabling a bill that will do just that. Dr. Rueben Devlin, who has been paid \$1 million to consult with Ontarians about ending hallway medicine, hasn't even made a single recommendation yet, but this government is prepared to move forward with their disastrous plan that will carve out parts of our health care system to for-profit interests that they know will leave patients lost in the shuffle.

Minister, why is this government so insistent on plowing ahead with their ill-conceived health care privatization scheme?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'm very happy to address this question because there have been a number of misconceptions out there for weeks, started by the official opposition. In fact, the plan that we unveiled this morning, and the legislation that I will be introducing this afternoon, concentrates on strengthening our public health care system. That's what it's all about. It's to put the patient at the centre of our health care system and connect the patient to their care.

There is no element of privatization in this plan. It is about making sure the people continue to have access to our publicly funded system of care, and they will continue to pay for their care with their OHIP cards.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock again. Supplementary.

Ms. Sara Singh: Back to the minister: I think we all know that privatization can happen in different ways. We know that it can happen when public dollars are siphoned off to for-profit private operators, padding their profit margins rather than going towards those public health care services that everyone in this province deserves.

We saw privatization creep in the last time the Conservatives were in government, when they privatized home care. Now we all have a home care system that doesn't meet the needs of everyday families.

So I'll ask again: Why is this government ignoring what Ontarians want and plowing ahead with a disastrous bill that will outsource parts of our health care system to for-profit providers?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I believe that when the legislation is introduced this afternoon, the member opposite—in fact, all of the members of the official opposition—will understand just how wrong they are.

This is about strengthening our public health care system. What we are talking about is creating Ontario health teams that consist of local providers. They can come together in any way they see fit: in partnerships, in joint ventures, whatever they want to do.

If any funds are left over from one year to the next, they will be derived directly back into patient care. That's where they will be going. No private providers will receive money from this. This is about strengthening our public system of health care.

I can also tell you that in my years of opposition—six years as health critic—and my time as Ontario's first Patient Ombudsman, and as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, I have heard from thousands of people—

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Next question.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Health. The minister announced big changes in health care today.

Minister, I want to talk to you about palliative care and something that's small but really important. Being able to die at home surrounded by your loved ones is a common desire.

Yesterday, the member from Windsor West re-introduced Dan's Law for the third time. I congratulate her for that. It was inspired by Dan Duma, who moved back from Alberta to die at home with his family and was told, "You have to wait three months to get home care." Dan's Law waives that three-month wait. This shouldn't happen to any family.

Minister, you and I have talked about this, and I know that the member from Windsor West has raised it as well. There is a solution that's on the books. It has been on the books since June 18. It can happen today.

1110

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister commit today to changing regulation 552?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question, and the member from Windsor West for her continued advocacy on this issue.

The issue of Dan's Law, as I understand it, has been something that my ministry has been evaluating to determine what options exist for patients moving back to Ontario from other provincial jurisdictions. Home care is an essential component of our health care system for patients and a key element in addressing the issues of hallway health care. We promised the people during the election that we would end hallway health care and that we are modernizing our health care system to put patients first.

I will have further to say in the supplementary on this specific question, but it is something that is very important to me as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I thank the minister for her response. It's something that we can all agree on. It has taken too long to do this. It's not something that can be negotiated at the federal-provincial-territorial table. You just can't get people's attention. There's a solution there. It affects a small amount of people so much. It happened in my riding of Ottawa South last year and it's happening right now. We just don't see it. It's happening today.

Minister, I'm going to ask you again. I'd like you today to commit to changing regulation 552 and making sure that this does not happen to another family. Thank you.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Yes, I will commit to changing regulation 552, and I thank the member, and the member from Windsor West for their work on this.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Before the last election, the Liberal government passed a deeply flawed piece of legislation that ignored the everyday realities of the difficult jobs that our brave police officers are asked to do every day. Our government for the people has remained committed to public safety across this great province and to fixing the policing legislation that the previous Liberal government broke.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this House how the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act will support front-line officers in their work to keep the people of Ontario safe?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for this important question and for your advocacy to ensure that our communities remain safe.

Mr. Speaker, our government sees the police, the people and their government as true partners in public safety. That includes a fair and transparent police oversight system and it keeps our communities safe.

Bill 175 would have weakened the public trust in police because it was confusing, plagued by delays, unaccountable and based on a presumption that the police were often wrong. Imagine being subject to an investigation that could drag on for months and months simply because you were doing your job. This was the fate of the officers who responded so heroically to the Danforth shooting, and it is often the fate of officers who respond to suicides.

Our proposed legislation would restore trust and accountability in police oversight and support front-line officers who do this important work to keep Ontario safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank the minister for her response. I'm proud to stand here today knowing that our government is committed to rebuilding the confidence of the people and the police in an oversight system that will ultimately help build safer communities on a shared foundation of restored trust and accountability. The men and women of our police services know that our government for the people is listening to them and will continue to work to ensure public safety across this great province.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain to the House now how this proposed legislation will restore respect for police officers?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It would be a pleasure. Mr. Speaker, public safety is everyone's business and everyone in Ontario has a stake in keeping our communities safe. Our government was elected with a mandate to fix the Liberals' broken police legislation. The Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act is driven by a simple principle: Trust between the police and the public they serve is essential for public safety.

When it comes to police oversight, our proposed legislation, if passed, would restore transparency and trust to a police oversight system that had previously left the police and the people they serve in the dark for too long. It proposes to focus investigative resources where they are

needed: on possible criminal activity within a police oversight system that is transparent, fair and effective.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud to be regarding police officers with the respect they deserve, and we will always stand by these brave men and women.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Minister of Education. The government's very callous changes to the Ontario Autism Program will mean that thousands of children will lose access to vital services as early as April 1. Families are, I think it's fair to say, terrified and worried about what will happen to their children as they re-enter a school system or spend more time there, a system that we all know is already stretched so thin.

Can the Minister of Education tell parents what specific plans have been made to ensure that children with autism spectrum disorder will have the supports they need at school when their funding expires in just four weeks?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the opportunity to speak about what our government is doing to make sure that we're treating children with autism and their families with the respect that they deserve—and I'm speaking about all of the children with autism in Ontario, unlike what the previous administration did under Kathleen Wynne.

With that said, I am very pleased to share with you that last fall, we actually started doing some work in addressing this situation very seriously—

Interjections.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: If the members opposite would care to listen, they would know that we extended a pilot project last year with regard to improving school-based supports for students with ASD. Again, last summer, one of the very first things that I did was to start looking at the inconsistencies from board to board to board in this province, and I found it very, very concerning that there wasn't one common approach to supporting children with autism who required companion dogs.

I heard from people, specifically from the region of Waterloo, who were disgusted—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It boggles the mind. We know that school boards already, today, spend more money than they get from the government on supports for children with special needs. And we've just heard over the last 24 hours from boards that came to the social policy committee that they haven't heard one single word from this minister about what's coming in four weeks and what supports are going to be there—not one directive, not one word.

We know that our educators, our teachers and our educational assistants do their very best to support students every single day, but they are stretched to the limit. The truth is that this government has cut supports to students with special needs.

I want to know, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Education will tell parents and families if they are going to be hiring more teachers, educational assistants and support

workers to ensure these children get the support they need in schools. Will the minister at least consult with the school boards?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Honestly, I think the members opposite would be very well advised to take a look at what we've done thus far with regard to school boards, because we've been working with our school boards right from day one. School boards will be receiving \$3 billion in special education funding this year. Also, above that, I repeat the fact that we extended the pilot program examining how we can improve supports for students with special needs such as ASD.

Another thing I would like to do, Speaker, is I would like to thank everyone who stood in this House last week to support the passing of second reading of my bill, Bill 48, safe and supportive schools, because we absolutely are committed to ensuring safe and supportive classrooms for teachers and their students, so parents have confidence in a system that crumbled over the last decade.

Again, we are moving forward and working with our school boards. We've already done so much, Speaker, and I look forward to speaking about what we're doing in the coming—

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

Interjections.

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

Next question. Start the clock.

1120

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question today is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. I'd like to ask this question on behalf of parents and on behalf of children with autism here in the province of Ontario, so they can get a bit of clarity on some of the numbers the minister has been using.

Here are a couple of facts. In 2016-17, the government expenditure for autism was \$317 million. The budget, as of April 1 of last year, was \$321 million. Now, the minister keeps using a number of \$256 million, so one would conclude that they had to have made a cut in order to add the additional \$102 million. Can the minister please explain where she got the \$256-million expenditure from?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: As the former minister on this file, he should know that it was his government that put a \$62-million holdback on this program. I had to go to Treasury Board not once but twice to clear up his mess, the one he created when he ignored three out of four children in the province of Ontario who were stuck on a wait-list without any hope. I was able to, with the support of the Treasury Board, get \$102 million extra to sustain a program that his government allowed to fail. If anyone should be standing here and discussing numbers, it should be the honourable member opposite who led this program into bankruptcy.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Coteau: This is exactly why we need to know the numbers, because what just came from the minister does not sound right. Mr. Speaker, it takes a really strong person to admit something is broken, but it takes a stronger person to stand up and fix it. At this point, we know that the budget was approved for \$321 million by the previous government. How did the minister get to \$256 million?

This is what we know, Mr. Speaker: There has been a lack of transparency on this file. Parents do not believe the numbers that are coming out from the ministry. We know that people feel like they've been threatened. In addition to that, now people are suspicious about the wait-list, that it has been intentionally held back.

Would the minister do the right thing and step aside, and let someone come into this file to actually bring some clarity to these numbers and to help the children here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I appreciate that, but under his plan, they had budgeted \$256 million. His own government withheld \$62 million which I had to go to the Treasury Board for before it was released, in addition to an additional \$40 million—\$100 million in emergency funding.

Their program ignored three out of four children in the province of Ontario. They had a wait-list of 23,000 children. Since I've assumed this position, not only did I get that \$102 million, but we cleared another 2,400 children through the system.

I will tell you, Speaker, if anyone should be resigning in this House, it should be the seven independent Liberal members who allowed that wait-list to languish with 23,000 children. Step aside.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Last week, the Premier travelled to Washington, DC, with the Premiers of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. The group of Premiers, representing the Council of the Federation, called for an end to American tariffs on steel and aluminum.

Twenty-five per cent tariffs on steel and 10% tariffs on aluminum have been in place since June of last year. These tariffs are hurting Ontario workers and Ontario businesses. Over 16,000 people in Ontario work in the steel and aluminum industries, including many in my riding of Durham. Could the minister please outline for this House what our government is doing to get these tariffs lifted?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member for Durham for the question and the great job she's doing in Durham.

Speaker, our government believes that free trade benefits families and workers on both sides of the border. Over nine million jobs in Canada and the United States depend on our historic trading relationship.

As a government for the people, we have a duty to protect all those jobs. That's why the Premier travelled to Washington, to bring the message that these tariffs and the

uncertainty they cause are harming American and Canadian workers and families.

While in DC, the Premier met with six governors and US trade representative Robert Lighthizer, who is the American trade negotiator, reminding them of the damage that these tariffs are doing to jobs on both sides of the border. Since coming to office, the Premier has engaged with 20 governors directly and delivered that same message to them.

Speaker, we're doing everything to get those tariffs lifted, and I know—

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: It's a relief for families in Durham and across our province to hear that our government is doing our part to resolve the uncertainty caused by tariffs.

I know that during the trip, the Premier had the opportunity to share the work of our government in making Ontario open for business. From regulatory reform to reducing taxes, our government has been moving quickly to reverse the damage caused by 15 years of Liberal mismanagement. Could the minister inform the House how our message was received?

Hon. Todd Smith: I'm surprised at the heckles I'm hearing after my last response. It sounds like the NDP wants to keep these tariffs in place.

Speaker, business leaders here in Ontario and around the world are glad that our province has a Premier and a government that actually understand business, unlike the members opposite. They don't seem to have a clue when it comes to doing business.

While in DC, the Premier had the opportunity to share the work our government has done with American investors. He met with 30 business leaders from big companies, big companies like Apple, John Deere, Amazon and the American Chamber of Commerce—very important, influential businesses on both sides of the border.

The Premier says they're hearing that Ontario is serious about being open for business and open for jobs. In fact, the governor of Kentucky actually gave the Premier a big red pin, talking about the work they've been doing in cutting red tape—work that we're doing here in Ontario that the NDP seems to be against, Mr. Speaker. We're going to do everything in our power to make Ontario open for business and open for jobs, despite what the NDP—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Ms. Jill Andrew: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Today, Indigenous community members are gathering outside Queen's Park at 12 p.m. to rally support for the cancelled Indigenous Culture Fund. I hope the minister will join us.

Last week, the minister made a ministerial statement to recognize Ontario Heritage Week where he said, "A full

appreciation of our Ontario heritage also embraces the experiences of Indigenous communities."

Indigenous culture should never be treated like some commodity the Conservative government deploys when it benefits the province's tourism industry. How can the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport encourage Ontarians to explore their heritage when he does not see their cultural revitalization projects—in essence, the exploration by Indigenous peoples of their own cultures, languages and heritage through the Indigenous Culture Fund—worth funding?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that very important question. As you know, our government for the people recognizes that artists and arts organizations, such as the Ontario Arts Council, play an important role in building a strong economy while contributing to the quality of life of Ontario's communities.

Unfortunately, the previous Liberal government's irresponsible and reckless handling of the province's finances left us with a \$15-billion deficit. Every dollar that we pay in interest could be money that could be used for programming, including Indigenous programming. Unfortunately, due to the mismanagement of the province's finances by the previous government—

Interjection.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Toronto—St. Paul's, come to order.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: —we have been forced to make tough decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Mr. Speaker, we were elected on a clear mandate to restore trust and accountability to the province's finances, and that's exactly what—

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

Supplementary: the member for Kiiwetinoong.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Andrea Goulais, youth secretary of the Nipissing First Nation Youth Council, has travelled down to Queen's Park to speak this afternoon about how cancelling the Indigenous Culture Fund will be particularly harmful for our young people. One example of a funded project in her community teaches our members about traditional ways of harvesting, foraging and gardening, and addresses issues of food security.

What does the minister have to say to Andrea and other Indigenous youth today who are facing the loss of their elders' oral teachings, traditional knowledge, ways of being and languages with the cancellation of the Indigenous Culture Fund? Meegwetch.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that question. Our government is reviewing the Indigenous Culture Fund to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used efficiently to maximize the impact of Indigenous cultural support. Individuals who have already received grants through the ICF will not be affected during this review. Our government will continue to invest in the Ontario Arts Council at the 2017-18 level of \$64.9 million.

We do have programs that are funded through the Ontario Arts Council that offer supports to Indigenous artists, including Curatorial Projects, Dance Training Projects, Indigenous Artists in Communities and Schools Projects, Indigenous Arts Projects, Indigenous Presenters in the North, Indigenous Visual Artists' Materials, and Skills and Career Development.

Our government will continue to support the Ontario Arts Council. Our government also supports the arts through the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund—

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

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Ross Romano: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Although 10 years may seem like a long time to some, those of us in the north remember the fierce debate that occurred when the former Liberal government forced crippling legislation on the Far North without meaningful consultation. No one from the Far North asked for the Far North Act. This was a plan conceived by the former Liberal government in an effort to pander to supporters of special interest groups living in their downtown air-conditioned condos.

Finally, we have a government that is working for the people of northern Ontario. Finally, we have a government that is listening to the people of northern Ontario. Can the minister please update the House on our plan to get northern Ontario back on track and to fix this terrible mistake?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie for the question and for his unwavering commitment to the north.

As the member well knows, our government for the people was elected on a promise to finally open up the incredible resources of our north, to make our northern communities open for business and open for jobs. It's important that we get this right. In Ontario, we are blessed with an abundance of natural resources, much of which is located in the beautiful Far North.

Yesterday, our proposal to repeal the Far North Act was posted to the Environmental Registry for public input. I will be reviewing the feedback once the comment period closes, and I look forward to working with Far North First Nations and the people of the region to make the Far North open for business and open for jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I know that the 24,000 people living in the Far North will be encouraged to learn that they will finally be able to have their say on the Far North Act.

Between this minister and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and, of course, our Premier, the people of northern Ontario finally have a government that will look out for their interests. We finally have a government that will ensure that we are open for business and that we are open for jobs in northern Ontario.

Of course, one of the major sources of opposition to the Far North Act came from remote Far North First Nations. Many asked the previous Liberal government to withdraw this legislation, but to no avail. I can say, Mr. Speaker, having attended many of those communities myself, the frustration I heard from many of those chiefs with respect to this.

Can the minister please expand on the benefits this will bring to First Nations in the north, and how we will work towards building a meaningful collaborative process with respect to this?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I thank the member again for his supplementary.

As I said yesterday, we will listen carefully to what the Far North First Nations have to say about our proposal to work together to make the Far North open for business and open for jobs.

Our proposal would repeal the act while retaining approved land use plans through changes to the Public Lands Act and continuing forward with plans already at an advanced stage. Along with my colleague the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, we will have direct engagement sessions with Far North First Nations communities and tribal councils to gather their feedback.

Our government for the people believes wholeheartedly in the potential of northern Ontario. We will always support development that will be beneficial to the people of the Far North, including our First Nation communities. Once again, we are making the Far North open for business and open for jobs.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Back in November, two parents, Ziaul and Luminous, visited my Scarborough community office to seek help for their beautiful four-year-old son, Rio. They are here with us today in the Legislature. In June 2017, Rio was diagnosed with autism at the age of two and referred for early intervention services at the Aisling Discoveries centre in Scarborough. He has been on the wait-list for those services ever since.

The last child to receive treatment through this program applied in 2016. We know now that the minister had frozen the wait-list and was instructing service providers to hide this from families as they made plans for their new one-size-fits-all program.

My question is, why did this government hide the truth about freezing the wait-list from families like Rio and his parents?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: The member opposite may want to correct her record. At no time did anyone in this government freeze the wait-list. In fact, what we did is, we went to Treasury Board and sought an additional \$102 million and put forward 2,500 more children into the program since I took office as the minister responsible for the autism program.

I have heard from parents right across this province. I'm happy today that I have Councillor Jan Harder here, who

worked with me to establish the South Nepean Autism Centre 13 years ago in Barrhaven. When the previous Liberal administration didn't provide us with any support, we went back to our community.

As minister responsible for this program, I am proud that our government is committed to \$321 million as an annual budget. We will double our investment into diagnostic hubs, and we will clear the wait-list in 18 months by going directly to parents to allow them to provide the support they need for their child, whether that is behavioural support, technological aids, respite or caregiver training. We are 100% committed to making sure this is implemented on April 1 to clear that wait-list.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Doly Begum: I hope the minister can promise these two parents right here that they will receive full support, not just four hours—full support.

Through you, Speaker: A year ago, Rio's mom had to leave her job as an assistant manager at a grocery store to take care of her son full-time. If she returns to work, they're now facing the prospect of losing even the little bit of funding that they could have received under the new scheme, because their household income would go above the \$55,000 threshold.

How can this government justify a scheme that keeps women like Rio's mom out of the workforce and takes away hope from families like Rio's and many others in this province?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to speak directly to Rio's parents. Under the old system that was implemented by the previous Liberal government, children were trickling off the wait-list. We went to the emergency measure of injecting an extra \$102 million so that we could continue to move kids through the process.

What we're going to do is clear the wait-list, so that Rio can finally get off the wait-list, and get support directly to his family, upwards of \$140,000 per child for up to the age of 18. So parents who want to support their child through behavioural therapy, technological aids, respite care or caregiver training—that's what we're doing. We're going to empower parents so that for the first time in Ontario's history, we will clear the diagnostic wait-list. We will also clear the service and support wait-list.

1140

Speaker, we are proud of this plan. We're moving forward with this plan. This government is committed to clearing the wait-list—

Interjections.

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

TOURISM

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Late last year, our government for the people announced that Ontario would be

developing a new tourism strategy to make us more competitive for tourism operators, more appealing to visitors, and to allow for greater job creation in the industry. In fact, I was very pleased to join the minister this past January at his round table in Ottawa, engaging with some of our key stakeholders, including several from my riding of Carleton, like Saunders Farm.

But this strategy, Mr. Speaker, also includes engaging Ontarians via the government's online tourism strategy. And so, through you, Mr. Speaker: Can the minister please provide this House with an update on our government's online tourism strategy consultations?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member from Carleton for that question. As of yesterday, I'm pleased to report that we've received over 7,000 responses from visitors from Ontario and beyond, industry stakeholders and students across the province. I'd like to encourage all members of the House to encourage their constituents to get online and take part in this important survey. I'd also like to give a gentle reminder to everyone that you have until the end of the month to submit your ideas.

Over the last few months, I have had the chance to meet with tourism stakeholders from all areas of the province. I'm proud to say that as part of our consultations, we've heard from stakeholders in northern Ontario and our Indigenous stakeholders. These two sectors have an enormous potential for growth in the tourism sector in the near future. Our new tourism strategy will ensure that we encourage growth in this important sector as part of our government's approach to make Ontario open for business and open for jobs.

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

JAGMEET SINGH

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has a point of order.

Mr. Michael Mantha: On behalf of our leader, Andrea Horwath, and our entire caucus, and on behalf of everybody in this room who was a colleague of his, I want to congratulate the new MP for Burnaby, and I want to congratulate my good friend and a guy I refer to as my brother from another mother: Jagmeet Singh. As you take your seat over in Ottawa, good luck to you. You're going to do well for everybody across this country.

Applause.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Davenport has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Education concerning supports for students with autism spectrum disorder in our schools. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

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

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to welcome a friend from Brockville, Janet Jones. I want to welcome her to Queen's Park this afternoon.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Today in the gallery, I would like to introduce the mayor of Cavan Monaghan, Scott McFadden; Councillor Cathy Moore; Councillor Timothy Belch; and Deputy Mayor Matthew Graham. Welcome to Queen's Park and to the Legislature this afternoon. Thanks for coming down.

Ms. Doly Begum: I would like to welcome my good friend Chris Watson and the entire CUPE team who are here today. Thank you so much for all your hard work and dedication for the health care file, but also everything else. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Faisal Hassan: On Saturday afternoon I hosted an emergency community meeting on changes to the autism program. I was amazed that this diverse group of people, reflective of my riding of York South–Weston, were able to talk, listen and hear each other. In that room, there was such a strong sense of caring, respect and understanding with that group of strangers. The common denominator was that they have a child or care for a child with autism.

I learned so much in those two hours. I heard that these parents are fearful, scared that this new system is setting their children up for failure. I heard that one size will not fit all; that children's needs are unique; that an iPad is a tool, not a treatment; that the families are profoundly disappointed with the so-called consultations. I listened as these parents wrestled with questions: Where is the evidence? Where is the transparency? Why is one child worth more than another? How will their family survive with this diluted service?

These families need adequate funding, support, services and respite care. I heard the support, the experience in the room shared: One woman cautioned that if services aren't provided now, then the government will certainly be paying later. Parents with older, now adult, children warned those with young ones to get all the services that they can, so that their child would develop to their fullest potential.

AIR CADETS

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Since I was elected in June of last year, I have been very fortunate to attend a number of events across Oakville and throughout the province.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: You've done a great job.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you.

Oakville is proud to be home to the 540 Golden Hawks Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron, the largest air cadet squadron in the province. I'm pleased that I have been able to meet with the cadets and the officers of the squadron. Cadet units play an important role in our communities,

such as on Remembrance Day, when they march in local parades to help commemorate the service of our past and present men and women of our armed forces defending our country.

As a former cadet myself, I can state that the cadets learn valuable lessons in teamwork, develop leadership skills and challenge themselves further in personal growth. Cadets support the fundraising efforts of the annual poppy drives in the lead-up to Remembrance Day, which support the Royal Canadian Legion, veterans and a number of other community activities. The skills they learn and the experiences they encounter help them for their futures. They build a solid bedrock from which to grow and be community-minded members of our society who help others.

This week, the 540 Golden Hawks squadron will be hosting their annual mess dinner. Mess dinners are a wonderful opportunity for the community to interact with the cadets, allow these young people to share a meal with their friends and family, and celebrate their accomplishments over the year.

Oakville is proud to be the home of the 540 Golden Hawks, and I look forward to sharing in their celebrations this evening.

ALBERT JACKSON

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I wish to pay tribute today to Albert Jackson. He was born a slave in the United States. Before he was two years old, his widowed mother bundled up her seven children and lit out for Canada. They had help on the Underground Railroad and got here in 1858.

In 1882, Albert Jackson became Canada's first black letter carrier. But his white colleagues wouldn't work with him, so management made him a hall porter. Toronto's black community protested. Albert was described in the media as an "obnoxious coloured man" and as "the objectionable African." Those headlines caught the attention of Sir John A. Macdonald, who was running for re-election, and two days later Albert was reinstated as a letter carrier. Albert Jackson delivered mail in Toronto for 36 years. He died in 1918.

Last spring, he was honoured by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers with a commemorative poster. A roadway in Toronto has been renamed Albert Jackson Lane. This month, there's a new Canadian stamp featuring Albert in his postal uniform—Canada's first black letter carrier.

Speaker, Albert Jackson's great-granddaughter lives in Windsor. Christine Jackson is a nurse who says Albert went on to become a respected landowner and a patriarch of a successful family. It's fitting, I believe, in this Black History Month to remember Albert Jackson, and it's a shame it has taken this long to do so.

MOIS DE L'HISTOIRE DES NOIRS

M^{me} Gila Martow: Samedi dernier, j'ai assisté à une célébration du Mois de l'histoire des Noirs du Centre francophone de Toronto. L'équipe de la directrice générale Florence Ngenzebuhoro a organisé un événement

très réussi. C'était au centre Beanfield du Parc des Expositions. Je peux confirmer qu'il y avait plus de 500 personnes. Ils ont dansé. Ils ont chanté. C'était un excellent, excellent événement.

Je veux dire que le Mois de l'histoire des Noirs est l'occasion de rendre hommage au parcours exceptionnel de femmes et d'hommes qui ont façonné le patrimoine et l'identité de notre province et de notre pays. Il est extrêmement important de rappeler l'apport exceptionnel des communautés noires à l'enrichissement culturel et à la diversité de la grande famille francophone. Cette diversité fait notre force. Elle nous permet de bâtir une société ontarienne plus riche, inclusive et ouverte sur le monde.

Je veux dire que j'étais très chanceuse d'être assise avec M. René C. Viau; M. Jean-Luc Bernard; Florence, la directrice générale; M. Marc Trouyet et sa famille, le consul général de France à Toronto; et M^{me} Marlène Thélusma Remy.

PARTICIPATION HOUSE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I rise today to congratulate Participation House as they recently celebrated their 30th anniversary of creating an inclusive community. Participation House provides meaningful support services, recreation and engaging activities for people living with disabilities, and their Project Hope gives support to medically fragile and high-needs individuals.

We celebrate the movement away from the asylum model, but there aren't enough spaces in the community for people living with disabilities. Their care providers, their parents, are often pushed to the limit and only receive residential placements if the family is on the brink of collapse and/or tragedy. Medically fragile individuals end up in hospital when their family can no longer provide care, and a year in hospital can cost more than \$1 million. As my friend from Windsor West noted in her private member's bill, Noah and Gregory's Law, wait-lists for supportive housing can be 22 to 24 years long, and sometimes even longer.

During my tour with Participation House CEO Brian Dunne, I was shocked to see an industrial-sized fire sprinkler system in a modest, four-person bungalow, the exact same requirement for a multi-storey nursing home. This regulation is completely overboard and an unrealistic barrier prohibiting fantastic groups like Participation House from creating new dwellings for individuals living with disabilities. To the members opposite, cut this red tape and help fantastic organizations like Participation House.

I want to thank Participation House for all they do, and thank the great residents of London for supporting Participation House.

1510

MOIS DE L'HISTOIRE DES NOIRS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Moi aussi, je veux me lever aujourd'hui pour célébrer l'histoire des Noirs au Canada

et en Ontario, et particulièrement dans le comté que j'ai le privilège de représenter, Ottawa–Vanier.

It's always a pleasure to rise in this House during Black History Month to speak about and celebrate the incredible contributions that the Black community has made in the riding of Ottawa–Vanier and across Ontario.

La communauté noire contribue énormément dans tous les secteurs de l'économie.

The Black community has made vibrant contributions to our civic, our cultural and our professional communities in Ontario, often in the face of structural discrimination and adversity. Several Black trailblazers who have left inspiring legacies need to be celebrated, and that's what we are doing this month.

Nous n'avons pas besoin de regarder ailleurs qu'à Ottawa pour reconnaître les contributions irremplaçables qui continuent d'avoir été faites par la communauté noire. John G. Dennison était un homme qui a travaillé pendant 25 ans pour célébrer le multiculturalisme. Finalement, on a fait un prix en son honneur, et la dernière récipiendaire était une jeune femme qui travaillait exactement pour célébrer la diaspora noire à Ottawa.

I also want to say briefly that I had the privilege of going to the Global Community awards last Saturday night. Young high school students were celebrated for all the things they had done for their community. They have made history, they will continue to make history, and we salute them today.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mrs. Daisy Wai: February is Black History Month. That is why we have this time for a lot of us to celebrate and to recognize the important contributions that Black Canadians have made to Canadian society.

"Know the Past, Shape the Future" is the theme of this year's celebration organized by the York Regional Police. Every year, I join the York Regional Police to kick off Black History Month in York region. In fact, this is the first event I attended when I first served as a board member with York Regional Police 13 years ago.

I am very impressed with the inclusiveness promoted in York region and in Ontario. We respect and celebrate the success and contributions of every diverse community. This is what is making Ontario and Canada so vibrant. We get to learn and appreciate each other's culture and recognize their strengths and accomplishments. What an encouragement to know that York region is committed to creating a community that is welcoming and inclusive and that recognizes and celebrates all dimensions of diversity.

Last night, Minister Tibollo and Minister Phillips led us to welcome and celebrate Black History Month right at Queen's Park as well. We enjoyed their success, their programs, their food and, most importantly, their company.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: It's always a great pleasure to meet with my wonderful constituents of Parkdale–High Park who are involved in many different initiatives and

programs that serve our community, especially the most vulnerable. One such person is Nancy Gale, whom I met with a few weeks ago and who shared with me information about a program that she is involved in, the primary care low-back pain program.

As we look into how we can improve our health care system in Ontario, we must preserve programs that provide dignity and equal access to our public health care options. We must speak for all people.

We know that multidisciplinary health care teams make a difference, and programs available to patients without the financial means to access such care are essential. The primary care low-back pain program is one such example that ensures equal access to people with fewer resources, fewer options and fewer supports.

Take, for instance, Lisa Morris. She was suffering from arthritis and the effects of physical and emotional abuse. Lisa had no options and relied on her opioid prescription to medicate her chronic pain away. Through the primary care low-back pain program, Lisa eliminated opioids and all pain medications, and she's working. This program adds no physical infrastructure or administrative overhead. All costs are for specialized health care professionals to deliver direct patient care.

As you know, equal access to health care is a fundamental right of every Ontarian. Let us remember that there are people—vulnerable people—impacted by changes to our health care system. Let us keep what works for them.

MILTON'S WALK OF FAME

Mr. Parm Gill: This past Saturday, I was pleased to join the Milton Historical Society at a ceremony where eight outstanding individuals were inducted into Milton's Walk of Fame.

Kayla Alexander was recognized for her achievements in professional basketball in the WNBA.

Matthew O'Meara was recognized for playing in the CFL as an offensive lineman.

Scott Hogarth was recognized for his 11-time martial arts world champion title and for being part of 10 international action movies.

Matthew Sewell was inducted for his many athletic accomplishments with the CFL, including playing for the Toronto Argonauts.

Bert Wasmund was recognized for being a driving force behind the success of Hatch Ltd.

The late Arthur Henry Fleming was inducted for his contributions at the Throp Polytechnic Institute.

The late Dr. George Sherwood Hume was inducted for his many accolades as one of Canada's leading geologists.

The late Oscar Ernest Fleming was inducted for his achievements in law, business and the hydroelectric system in Ontario, and he was instrumental in the building of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

These members, along with all of the other members of Milton's Walk of Fame, make Milton and Canada very proud. I would like to again congratulate each and every member, their families and friends for this wonderful recognition.

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL AUTOSHOW

Mr. Mike Harris: It is a pleasure today to rise and speak a little bit about the Canadian International AutoShow that rolled into town last week, running from February 14 to February 23. From Formula One exhibits to Metrolinx GO buses, there was a little something for everyone at the auto show.

Personally, I took the opportunity to visit the Toyota exhibit—Toyota is a big producer and distributor of automobiles in Waterloo region—as well as the World-War-II-era vehicles display, reflecting on the fact that this year marks the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

I also had the opportunity to participate in some associated media opportunities while at the auto show. These were great opportunities to deliver the pro-auto message being advanced by our government. Over the course of three interviews with the Greg Carrasco Show, the Tim Hudak Show and Norris McDonald at the AutoShow Live Stage, I highlighted the ongoing and recent measures of our government to enhance the competitiveness of Ontario's automotive industry.

Under the previous government, we saw an increase in automotive capital fleeing Canada in favour of greener pastures to the south—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, it's not happening now?

Mr. Mike Harris: No, it's not happening now. No, no, we'll make sure that it keeps—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oshawa is just a figment of our imagination.

Mr. Mike Harris: And our government has made a whopping commitment to cut red tape by 25% by 2020.

Auto manufacturers and auto dealers do so much for this province and our economy.

It was a pleasure to attend this year's Canadian International AutoShow.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated February 26, 2019, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH CARE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LES SOINS DE SANTÉ POUR LA POPULATION

Ms. Elliott moved first 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): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1520 to 1525.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the members to please take their seats.

Ms. Elliott has moved that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled An Act concerning the provision of health care, continuing Ontario Health and making consequential and related amendments and repeals, and that it now be read for the first time.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Jones, Sylvia	Roberts, Jeremy
Baber, Roman	Kanapathi, Logan	Romano, Ross
Bailey, Robert	Karahalios, Belinda	Sabawy, Sheref
Barrett, Toby	Khanjin, Andrea	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Kramp, Daryl	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Skelly, Donna
Crawford, Stephen	Martow, Gila	Smith, Dave
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McKenna, Jane	Smith, Todd
Downey, Doug	Miller, Norman	Surma, Kinga
Dunlop, Jill	Mulrone, Caroline	Tangri, Nina
Elliott, Christine	Nicholls, Rick	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fee, Amy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Gill, Parm	Park, Lindsey	Wai, Daisy
Hardeman, Ernie	Phillips, Rod	Walker, Bill
Harris, Mike	Piccini, David	
Hogarth, Christine	Rasheed, Kaleed	

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Rakocevic, Tom
Arthur, Ian	Gretzky, Lisa	Sattler, Peggy
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Hunter, Mitzie	Singh, Sara
Berns-McGown, Rima	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bisson, Gilles	Kernaghan, Terence	Stiles, Marit
Bourgouin, Guy	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Miller, Paul	Vanthof, John
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	West, Jamie
Fife, Catherine	Morrison, Suze	Yarde, Kevin
Fraser, John	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 52; the nays are 32.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care care to give a brief explanation of her bill?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Speaker. I'll be making my statement during statements by ministry.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HEALTH CARE SOINS DE SANTÉ

Hon. Christine Elliott: Speaker, today it is my pleasure to introduce The People's Health Care Act, 2019, which, if passed, would help us build a connected and sustainable public health care system that would ensure patients get the high-quality care they need, now and into the future.

1530

In Ontario, we are fortunate to have an excellent health care system, led by some of the world's most renowned health care providers, yet we can all agree that there is an urgent need to make the health care experience better for everyone. Many patients, families and caregivers feel lost. They don't know how to access the right services, and they wait far too long for those services.

I know that everyone would agree with me when I say it is unacceptable to see patients receiving care in hospital hallways and storage rooms. That is no way to treat our loved ones, and that is no way for any health professional to deliver excellent quality health care.

In addition, health care providers don't always have the tools to connect with each other and often do not know a patient's health care history. We must have a system that is connected and more responsive to patients, and providers' needs. If we expect real improvements that patients will feel, we must better coordinate the public health care system so it is organized around people's needs and focused squarely on better health outcomes.

But we must do more than just listen to patients, families and caregivers. We must design the system with them. Patients truly are experts in their health care. With the introduction of the legislation before us, Speaker, our government is proposing a long-term transformational plan that would enable the creation of local Ontario health teams that connect health care providers and services around the needs of patients, families and caregivers.

Under this patient-centred care model, local teams of health care providers from across care settings would know and understand each patient's needs and provide the appropriate, timely, high-quality, connected care that Ontarians deserve and expect.

We would start improving access to secure digital tools, including online health records and virtual care options for

patients—a 21st-century approach to health care which is long overdue. Patients would have help navigating the system 24/7: one team, one medical record, no gaps.

To achieve this much-needed patient-centred health care system, we must make critical changes behind the scenes. The legislation, if passed, would provide for the integration of multiple provincial agencies into one single agency—Ontario Health. The agency would be a central point of accountability and oversight for the health care system. This would close service gaps and finally connect the health system from top to bottom.

As we begin this work, Ontarians can be assured that they can continue to contact their health care providers as they normally would to get the health care they need. Most importantly, however, patients will experience seamless health care as they transition from one health care setting to another. They can have much higher confidence in our public health care system now and into the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to introduce this bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now turn it over to the official opposition. I will hear from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. It's always an honour to speak in the House and, today, to speak in response to the minister and her introduction of—the short form of this bill is called The People's Health Care Act.

I'd just like to put on the record that there's a reason why we divided on this bill on first reading: because we all know that after 15 years of Liberal administration, we have a hallway health care crisis. We have people in the hallways.

I will agree with a couple of the minister's points. The minister said that we need to better coordinate between the various levels and the various silos within the health care system.

But where we feel this bill could be incredibly dangerous is, and I can read this straight from the explanatory notes of the bill: “The minister is given the power to transfer assets, liabilities, rights, obligations and employees of certain organizations to the agency, a health service provider or an integrated care delivery system. The consequences of such a transfer are provided for. The minister may also dissolve such organizations.”

The LHINs aren't perfect; no one is saying the LHINs are perfect. The LHINs are going to disappear and we're going to have one mega-agency. Speaking as someone who comes from northern Ontario and rural Ontario, whenever we hear “mega-agencies,” we hear “less service.” Whenever we hear “modernization,” we hear “less service.”

I am proud of the people who work in the health care sector in rural Ontario and in all of Ontario, but I would like to put one thing on the record: The people in the First Nations can't afford any less service. We are responsible for the health care of the First Nations. That is in our wheelhouse, and we're not doing a very good job. Now it's incumbent on your government to do a better job. But simply opening the door to more for-profit health care—

the minister will say, “Oh, no, no, no; one card.” We could have a one-payer system, but this opens the door to, behind that one-payer system, much more for-profit health care.

The Tories seem to think that whenever the private sector is involved, things are more efficient. But as someone who has been involved in the private sector for most of my life, the one big difference between the private sector and the public sector is that the private sector, due to the way it's set up, focuses on profit. So each time you put more private sector players into the health care system—and with this bill, it could very well be the management of the health care system—the decision is always going to be: “Do we really make this decision on behalf of the patient or profit?” It's an inherent conflict of interest.

When people say that that can't be, I will give you an example, not within the health care system but certainly within the government's purview, and everyone in northern Ontario will recognize this. It's called privatized winter road maintenance, where the management of the winter road maintenance is up to the private sector. Oh yes, there are rules and regulations, but we all know those private sector management companies always have to make the decision: “Do we focus on profit or do we focus on safety?” Often, they are doing the best job they can, but often the needle edges towards profit. Speaker, do we want the needle in patients' lives and in Ontarians' lives to edge towards profit? This bill opens up that possibility even further.

The Tories believe that the private sector is always better. In essential services, we fundamentally, completely, absolutely disagree. Essential services should be delivered by the public sector for the good of the public. There should never be a decision regarding profit when it comes to people's health care. That's why we fundamentally disagree with the premise of this bill, and that's why we voted against it on first reading and why we will continue to fight it on behalf of the good people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now turn it over to the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to respond to the minister's statement. I do want to begin by thanking the minister again for making that commitment on regulation 552, and the member from Windsor West, but I also didn't have a chance to say thank you to Dr. Darren Cargill, who pushed this through the OMA, and Hospice Palliative Care Ontario.

I had the honour and the privilege of working for four years at the Ministry of Health as the PA. I worked with really great staff at the ministry, and I want to thank them, the people who worked on this solution. It's important that we recognize their work.

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Dan's Law is actually a microcosm of the challenges that I think we face and that this bill faces. That is that there are things that fall between the cracks; there are connections that are not there. What happens at the end of the line is that the people who feel the impacts are patients and their families, and that's really hard to see, right? You

can't see that. When that service isn't there—my mom had a stroke, so I've got to tell you, the only thing that mattered in the two days after her stroke was my mom and that four-by-seven bed. Nothing else matters. That's why people send us here. They send us here and they say, "Take care of my health care." Sometimes they don't know it, but they're saying it when they need it.

So I think the risk here in this bill is the elimination of local decision-making. I think driving decision-making towards a central agency in downtown Toronto—I believe this, and I'll lead into why. I was around 20 years ago, so I've seen what restructuring, centralization and bureaucratization can do. In Ottawa, we had to fight to keep the Montfort Hospital because the decisions were being made here; the local component was out. We fought to keep the CHEO cardiac unit. We had to fight. Communities shouldn't have to do that.

There are local community-based solutions to health care. We have successes. I just believe that we need to build on those, and I am concerned that this bill will not and we will lose those things; we will lose those gains. It's critical that we all get this right.

C'est très important, les réseaux pour les services en français. L'élimination des réseaux, j'en suis très concerné. Je suis très concerné, parce que la communauté franco-ontarienne « across » l'Ontario est différente : les communautés sont différentes et les besoins sont différents. C'est très important de connaître cette différence, et je suis très concerné avec ce changement.

I'm also concerned with the rate of change. I know that the minister said this morning that it's going to take a long time; in health care, three years is a blink. It takes 12 years to build a hospital. It takes four or five years to build a hospice. It took 10 years to measure and get wait times and get them down. I think the pace of change is fast. I think it's a big change.

There are things that are good in terms of people having access to their records and us using data better. That's really important. The concern, though, is that that rate of change will create a situation where people will fall between the cracks, and that's a great concern. That's a really great concern.

So that's the thing, as we go through this bill and we have further debate on it, that I look forward to debating the minister and my colleagues across the way on. We have to get this right. I know we're in a partisan environment here right now, but on this issue, at the end of the day, all of our communities are telling us the same thing: Get it right.

There is a reason that sometimes our change is incremental, and that's because we build on those successes that we have had. And we want to be careful not to do things too quickly and have an unintended result that we don't see right away, like Dan's Law, where someone is in a very vulnerable position and can't get the services that they need.

That's my concern, and I want to thank my colleagues for your time and attention.

VISITOR

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Point of order.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. With your indulgence, I'd like to introduce a friend from my neck of the woods. Councillor Len Janisse from the municipality of Lakeshore is here visiting us today.

PETITIONS

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms. Suze Morrison: I rise today to read a petition that I've received in my office with more than 100 signatures on it, entitled "Petition to Maintain the Provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for Registered Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Workers in Licensed Child Care." It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant supports staff recruitment and retention in licensed child care, increases income security among registered early childhood educators and child care workers, and begins to recognize their contributions to Ontario communities;

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

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

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

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

I fully endorse this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Jacky to deliver to the Clerks.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

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

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I sign this and give it to Hidayah.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Maintain the Provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for Registered Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Workers in Licensed Child Care.” I’d like to thank my constituent Lisa Johnston, who is a registered ECE and the team lead at Early Years Professionals Rise Up TO advocacy group, for sending me these petitions.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant supports staff recruitment and retention in licensed child care, increases income security among registered early childhood educators and child care workers, and begins to recognize their contributions to Ontario communities;

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

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

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

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

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

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a number of petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled “Animal Protection in 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:

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

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

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

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

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

I affix my signature to the other 600 signatures.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant supports staff recruitment and retention in licensed child care, increases income security among registered early childhood educators and child care workers, and begins to recognize their contributions to Ontario communities;

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

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

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

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

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

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further petitions? I recognize the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South.

Mr. Dave Smith: That would be Mr. Piccini.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Oh. You're absolutely right—

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm in God's country.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): —but that's all right. That's Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize you, as well, although I may be a little taller than the first person you thought I was.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I attach my signature to this petition. I firmly support it, as the eastern hybrid wolf is actually in my backyard. I will pass it to page Michelle to take to the table.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition to maintain the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for registered early childhood educators and child care workers in licensed child care. I'd like to thank all of my other colleagues who have put these petitions forward today, as well; we have over 11,000 signatures.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant supports staff recruitment and retention in licensed child care, increases income security among registered early childhood educators and child care workers, and begins to recognize their contributions to Ontario communities;

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature to it as well.

WEST LINCOLN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

“Whereas:

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

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

“Whereas:

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

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

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

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

Speaker, this has been signed by over 20,000 of my constituents in Niagara West. I will also add my signature to it, as I fully support it, and I will give it to page Shumyle to bring to the table.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituent Judy Neal. It's entitled “Support Ontario Families with Autism.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition, and I'll hand it to page Alyssa to table it with the Clerk.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Mike Harris: It's my pleasure to bring this petition to the Legislative Assembly today.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I've already affixed my signature to this and I proudly present it to page Tom.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant supports staff recruitment and retention in licensed child care, increases income security among registered early childhood educators and child care workers, and begins to recognize their contributions to Ontario communities;

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

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

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

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

They certainly deserve it. I will affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Michelle.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'm pleased to present this petition to the Legislature. It is entitled "Petition to Maintain the Provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for Registered Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Workers in Licensed Child Care." It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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"Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant supports staff recruitment and retention in licensed child care, increases income security among registered early childhood educators and child care workers, and begins to recognize their contributions to Ontario communities;

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

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

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

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

It's money well spent. I support this petition and will be signing my name in the corner and giving it to page Keya to deliver it to the Clerks.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMPREHENSIVE ONTARIO POLICE SERVICES ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA REFORTE COMPLÈTE DES SERVICES DE POLICE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 25, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act with respect to community safety and policing / Projet de loi 68, Loi portant sur la sécurité communautaire et les services policiers.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good afternoon, Speaker. I'm pleased to engage in today's debate on Bill 68, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act.

Like you, Speaker, I regularly engage with the president and board members of my association, the Durham Regional Police Association. Recently, their president, Colin Goodwin, wrote to me about Bill 68, and he had this to say: He said how grateful he and his membership were for the hard work the government has done to bring Bill 68 forward. He continued on to say that it is a 180-degree change to Bill 175 and its anti-police rhetoric.

To date, I've been on three ride-alongs with members of the Durham Regional Police Service through not only the town of Whitby but other parts of the region of Durham. Every day, what I found is that our police forces do incredible work to keep our families safe, whether it's in Whitby, Ajax, Pickering, or the other five municipalities that comprise the region of Durham. Much of that work is unseen, and often officers place themselves in harm's way. Those officers make life-and-death decisions in an instant, an absolute instant.

While Ontarians rely on police protection, it is now timely to ensure that the government is truly there for them. When the previous government looked at our police

officers, all it saw were potential offenders. Worst of all, the previous government codified that suspicion into law when it introduced Kathleen Wynne's policing legislation, Bill 175. That was a policing bill that was, in fact, anti-police.

Speaker, we listened to our front-line officers like those in the Durham Regional Police Service when they raised concerns about Liberal Bill 175. The bill clearly was out of touch. It disrespected our police officers and ignored the everyday realities of the jobs they do to keep us safe. In those ride-alongs that I've done over a number of years, I've seen ample evidence of that.

When this government was first elected, one of our first orders of business was to take a pause and then fix the system in a way that we continue to ensure oversight, but in a way that is balanced, respectful and fair. With that overview, it is the very reason that our government for the people introduced the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, legislation that is a key component of our promise to make Ontario safer by standing up for victims and—this is important—holding criminals accountable for their crimes.

Speaker, the proposed legislation would streamline the SIU investigation process which would have persisted under Bill 175. Simply put, it would have forced many police officers to submit to unwarranted stress for months or even years during an investigation process. To let this continue is simply unacceptable. In the past, SIU investigations drained resources that could be focused on fighting real criminal activity.

As the Attorney General said earlier in the Legislature this week in announcing the proposed changes, the SIU process is ridiculously opaque. Both the police and the public are left in the dark, and the unavoidable outcome is that trust is constantly eroded.

Members of the Durham Regional Police Service in my riding would be the first to say that in order to do their jobs, it is critically important for them to have the public trust. And effective oversight is essential to the creation of that trust. For example, the proposed legislation creates one window for public complaints, reduces duplication and better focuses the mandate of the Special Investigations Unit. It replaces a slow, old and broken oversight system, one that neither worked well for the police services across our great province nor for the public they serve and protect.

Let me share with the assembly a striking example of how flawed the SIU has been. In the chaos and confusion of the Danforth shooting last July, two Toronto police officers acted decisively and with precision. At great personal risk to themselves, they prevented the Danforth shooter from continuing on his murderous rampage. And their reward? For their bravery and determination, they spent six months under investigation by the SIU. For risking their lives, for doing their jobs, that was their reward.

If the laws are the problem, then those laws require change, and that is exactly what our government is doing.

The legislation also acknowledges the need for a more precise route for filing public complaints and, as a result,

for commencing a possible independent investigation. The Law Enforcement Complaints Agency would fulfill this need. The agency would be a single, independent organization. It would receive and review all policing complaints and demystify and streamline the process. Police disciplinary proceedings would be heard by independent adjudicators, as recommended by Justice Tulloch's Independent Police Oversight Review. This is, again, a streamlined approach, eliminating the need for the Ontario Civilian Police Commission, which would be wound down after an appropriate transition period.

Justice Tulloch pointed out where we could be doing better, and that is why the proposed legislation will mandate human rights, systemic racism, diversity and native culture and rights training for all new police officers and special constables.

The proposed legislation will also maintain First Nation policing provisions to provide First Nations with the ability to opt in to Ontario's policing legislation.

Speaker, we are all especially proud of this new training framework proposed by the government and the positive impact it will have in building stronger relationships with all Ontarians.

Recently, the Ontario Association of Police Services Board said that by mandating board training on roles, responsibilities and critical skills, the new legislation will significantly enhance every police board's ability to make the best possible decisions about local policing policies, strategic plans and, most importantly, budgets. They also said that the new legislation will lead directly to ever-improving policing and community safety.

1610

All Ontarians will benefit from the changes in the new legislation. Fairness and respect, trust and transparency are themes that resonate throughout the legislation—and, Speaker, rightly so. The government is restoring a better balance, so that front-line officers will know and trust that in performing their duties they have the support of those who oversee their actions, and the public will have greater confidence in those who protect them from harm.

At the same time, the government is giving the public the confidence they need that when they call 911, a trained, accountable police officer will appear. Frankly, under the Liberal legislation, that wasn't guaranteed. This government did not want to allow police functions to be outsourced. When calling 911, the caller believes that he or she is facing an imminent threat, and under no circumstances should a private contractor and not a police officer appear at the door.

The proposed legislation stipulates that policing functions that meet two fundamental standards must be provided by members of the police service. First, if the policing function is either law enforcement, emergency response or maintaining the public peace, then the service must be provided by a police officer. Second, if the function requires the exercise of the powers of a peace officer or a police officer, then the service must be provided by a police officer.

While this legislation recognizes that trust and oversight are paramount, it also ensures that the implementation of the new policies will be monitored. And you would expect that, wouldn't you, Speaker: that these policies and the policy framework here in this legislation would be monitored? The Lieutenant Governor in Council will appoint an Inspector General of Policing whose job it will be to monitor and conduct inspections related to compliance with the act and to deal with complaints regarding policing and board members. The inspector general may appoint inspectors and cause inspections to be conducted. He or she will have a wide variety of inspection powers, including the power to require responses to their inquiries.

Speaker, as a brief recap, the proposed legislation is to restore trust and confidence to policing. Let there be no doubt that the people of Ontario must trust the police to keep our communities safe, and aligned with this fundamental principle is the fact that police officers must have confidence that they, in turn, are supported in their roles. We have heard the concerns from police associations—we all have, whether it's in Durham region or another part of Ontario—and from police officers who daily engage in such dangerous work. We've heard from the families of those officers who want them to return home safely. Like my colleagues, we've heard from our constituents whom we have the privilege of representing, not only here in the Legislative Assembly, but when we're in our constituencies. The town of Whitby is no different than so many other communities across the province, and my constituents are demanding change, as they should, demanding improvements to our system of policing.

Since the June election, our government for the people has been working very diligently to earn the confidence of the people, including our police officers. Last summer, we announced our strategy on guns and gang violence. All communities, including the region of Durham, have felt the pain of the epidemic, and none—absolutely none—are immune.

We've invested in new infrastructure technology and we are replacing aging police facilities with new state-of-the-art detachments. We are rebuilding Ontario's public safety network, the backbone of emergency response in the province.

The Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act builds on that foundation. It creates the necessary legislative framework to return policing in the province to where it can operate effectively and efficiently for the people of Ontario.

I just wanted to recap a few areas that I had previously discussed. One has to do with enhanced police oversight. Specifically, police will be the first to say that the public trust is essential for them to do their jobs effectively, and effective oversight is key to creating that trust.

I wanted to turn to another area—and I'm conscious of my time.

In addition to the new policing and oversight legislation, the government is proposing additional amendments to the Coroners Act. These changes will address gaps and inefficiencies in the existing legislation by ensuring that

items seized as part of an investigation are securely stored. By requiring a coroner to offer those items to a member of the police service for safekeeping, it removes the discretion from the coroner. Further, it establishes an investigative screening provision that would provide a coroner the ability to obtain records, including medical records, that would help in a decision on whether or not to conduct a full coroner's investigation. Finally, it clarifies that the chief coroner has the authority to conduct historical death reviews, including the review of findings from closed coroner investigations. In that context, Speaker, it's clear that a retrospective review of deaths over time may prevent further deaths.

The proposed legislation supports mandatory blood testing. Amendments that are proposed to the Mandatory Blood Testing Act provide better support to victims of crime and first responders at risk of contacting the bodily fluids of others. If passed, this amendment will result in faster mandatory blood screening and, in turn, increased penalties for non-compliance.

Our legislation is based on fairness and respect for the profession of policing. Fair and effective police oversight will result in a stronger community safety partnership between the government, the police and the people.

Underpinning this legislation was a broad consultative process, and it's reflected in all aspects of what we have here before us.

I talked about improved training. I talked about improved governance. I talked about an early response to Justice Tulloch's report on several areas.

Our legislation will maintain the policing provisions to provide First Nations with the ability to opt in to Ontario's policing legislation.

Community safety goes beyond policing itself, and so does our proposed legislation. We will continue to mandate municipalities to develop and adopt community safety and well-being plans. To the credit of the council in the region of Durham and the leadership of their regional chair, John Henry, that's exactly what they've been doing for several years. It reflects a broad level of input across the eight municipalities in the region of Durham, and includes the multicultural sectors represented across the great region of Durham.

Speaker, I'm leading to the conclusion of my remarks today. I'd like to take the opportunity, though, to say how proud I am of the Attorney General of Ontario and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for working so diligently to reset the bar to establish those fundamentals that will restore trust and transparency to policing in the province of Ontario. Once again, our government is restoring fairness and respect for police, enhancing oversight and improving governance and transparency. Taken together, it will result in fair and effective police oversight and a stronger community safety partnership. I think, at the end of the day, we'll all be the beneficiaries.

1620

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to give some commentary to the member from Whitby on his 20 minutes on Bill 68.

Yesterday, I said that when governments put words like "comprehensive" or "fully costed" into the names and the titles of the bills, it often leads us to questions. But now I see that they put "comprehensive" as the full name of the bill because now they have the acronym "COPS." This is the COPS bill—Bill 68.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We never said that.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, you never said it, but this is the conclusion that I have come to.

It seems to me already that the government rhetoric game is very strong. What I would suggest is: That is not very helpful. The New Democrats for many years now have been strong advocates for supporting police in communities. We don't take kindly to the assumption that we are not firmly in place for progressive policing practices. In fact, five years ago, I brought forward my first private member's bill, which had to do with missing persons legislation, which would give police officers tools as they investigated missing people. This came to me through Maureen Trask, whose son, Daniel, went missing in Temagami. What police officers found is that they didn't have the tools to fully do an investigation when there was no criminal activity at play. I would respectfully suggest that this would be very helpful in the cases of murdered and missing Indigenous women, of human trafficking, and of seniors who are suffering from dementia.

Of course, this motion passed five years ago. It was in Bill 175. It has been delayed because of the government going through this process and this exercise with Bill 68.

We also worked on naloxone and ensuring that officers were protected, and we fought for post-traumatic stress disorder supports for police officers as well.

If we want to get a balanced approach, then the debate also will have to be balanced.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: I want to thank the member for his comments. He has already highlighted the hard work of both the Attorney General and the minister of public safety.

I do note that in some earlier discussions, the NDP members for Brampton North, I believe, and London West have highlighted some of the aspects of the bill that they approve of.

Ultimately, it's very hard for us to truly understand what it is that our police officers and security services—the issues that they face. For many of us, yes, while we go on ride-alongs, we don't really see how difficult the job that they have to do is. For a few members of this House, we had the unfortunate ability to see just how difficult a job it was. In October—I was a federal member of Parliament—a gunman stormed through the House of Commons and started shooting up the centre block of Parliament. A number of members of Parliament, myself and the member sitting next to me, were behind closed doors, hearing gunfire all over the place, not knowing what was to

happen. It was only later that we discovered that it was the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Parliamentary Protective Service that walked towards the gunman. They tried to disarm the gunman. Outside of the NDP caucus door, there was a protective service agent. Inches away from his head was a bullet that had been shot by the terrorist.

It's only by seeing, really, and experiencing what they do—because often, they don't tell you what it is that they experience. But when you're in the middle of it and you see what they do, you come to appreciate just how hard and difficult their job is.

As the member for Whitby highlighted, the heroes of the Toronto Danforth shooting and the heroes across this province who do this type of work every single day deserve our acknowledgement, yes, but more so than that, they deserve our protection. They deserve consistency in how we deal with them and they deserve our respect. That is what is so good about this bill. I applaud both ministers for bringing that balance forward and, again, I take the opportunity just to thank our protective services for the extraordinary work that they do.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: The member opposite, in his remarks, spoke to the Justice Tulloch report and the need to do better by our communities. Speaker, I'm actually wondering if the member opposite has read the Justice Tulloch report, because in it, Justice Tulloch speaks to the need to end the discriminatory practice of carding in our communities.

I know that all of us in this House want the same thing for our communities. We share a vision of communities that are safe for everyone, and where people know their children are going to come home safe at night. I don't think there's anyone here in this building who would argue with that. But in our shared vision to reach that point, we need to have strong relationships between communities and police that are based on trust. That trust is something that we need to continue to foster, and that trust can't be fostered when we have a practice that has been allowed to continue: the discriminatory practice of random stops—street checks—which we have data to show is disproportionately practised in racialized communities, particularly in my community, in my home, in Regent Park. This has been a practice that we've seen break down the relationship between community and policing.

In Regent Park, we are so, so fortunate to have had the opportunity to have our community police officer program which has been initiated. Our community officers are becoming a pillar in our community, and they do fantastic work. They work with our youth, and they do an upstream violence prevention program. They help make sure that our youth who are struggling are staying on a good path, because they are in our community every single day. It's that foundational relationship of trust that we are fostering in Regent Park that I think is so beautiful.

That is more of what we need to see, not more carding, which this bill does not address.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to touch on one aspect of the bill in particular, and that's the changes that we're making to the SIU.

I want to talk about something that actually happened in my community. Four years ago, there was a murder. The gentleman was stabbed, and his girlfriend was stabbed as well. His girlfriend was stabbed in the neck. The police were there almost instantaneously because she called 911 when the attacker came in. A friend of mine, one of the police officers, had to put two of his fingers into her neck to stop her from bleeding out. That resulted in an SIU investigation.

Obviously, the police officer saved this woman's life. But I don't want our police officers to have to go into a situation and think, "Should I try to save this person? Because there may be an SIU investigation, and they may find that I did something inappropriately, or didn't do something as well as I should have." I would like to think that our officers have the opportunity, then, to react to the situation, to do what is needed to be done to save those people and not have to worry: "Am I doing something that the SIU is going to find is wrong?"

I'm going to finish my two minutes with a comment here, or a statement: "I did want to just make a reference to something that happened in London, which certainly highlights the importance of completing these SIU investigations in a timely way. Three London police officers were involved in the shooting death of Londoner Samuel Maloney in December 2016. It took almost 15 months for the SIU to release a report in March 2018, clearing the officers in connection with that shooting. The report found that the officers had fired in response to the actions of the deceased. Speaker, we understand that it can provoke a lot of anxiety for the officers who are involved in an SIU investigation. Delivering a report in a much more timely way, I think, is respectful of the needs of those officers."

That was spoken by Peggy Sattler of the NDP. I would ask the NDP to please take her words—

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: There were three main themes that I spoke of in my remarks, and certain aspects of them, and I appreciate the perspectives that were offered from all of my colleagues in response to my remarks.

One in particular spoke about the government attempting to restore fairness and respect for police, enhancing oversight and improving governance, training and transparency. It also speaks in that context about the importance of a stronger community safety partnership.

1630

Underpinning this legislation is a strong community safety partnership across all sectors of our province. It was undertaken in developing the legislation, and the process continues. I think what it's going to result in is an approach within municipalities—and this is important, because they're a key partner in the delivery and the effect of this legislation.

Community safety goes beyond policing itself, and so does our proposed legislation. I know everyone in the Legislative Assembly understands that. We're going to continue to mandate municipalities to develop and adopt community safety and well-being plans. In the end, we'll arrive at that fairness and respect for police.

Enhancing oversight and improving governance, training and transparency: That's what we all want. That's what we will all work together for.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It is always an honour to rise here in Ontario's Legislature. My inaugural speech: How does one distill a lifetime of hopes and actions, thank and acknowledge loved ones, and share their vision for the future in a 10-minute speech spoken before their colleagues? One could easier describe love itself.

What I submit to you today is a pale approximation, written at this point in time, written by a guy who just had two of his greatest dreams come true last year. He won an election on his third try, making him the provincial representative—

Applause.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you—of his lifelong home, and only a month later welcomed his first child, a beautiful son named Aleksandar, into this world.

Interjection: Congratulations.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you.

I thank my wife, Aleksandra, who had a lot to do with the first dream and pretty much everything to do with the second. She is my love, my rock, my partner, and I'm so lucky to be with her. I also thank my son for helping me discover the all-encompassing love of one's own child.

I thank the people of my home riding of Humber River—Black Creek and the countless friends and volunteers of my campaign team. I'm so sorry that many dear people have passed away, so they couldn't share these incredible moments with me—people like my father, Vujica Rakocevic; my uncle Gerard Kellett; my godfather, Cedo Asanin; and our close family friend Vojo Djurickovic.

I've watched many colleagues deliver their own inaugural speeches, and I've never ceased to be amazed at how the inhabitants of a seat in the Ontario Legislature arrived here through their own unique personal stories. I often wonder how it is that individuals who, for the most part, all seek the same basic aspirations for humanity can end up on two sides of a great room that determines the present and future of this province.

We are the sum of our experiences, and here are just some of mine. I'm the only child of the late Vujica Rakocevic, an immigrant who came to Canada in the 1960s from present-day Montenegro, of the former Yugoslavia, and my mother, born Aileen Kellett, who was raised by her grandparents in rural Quebec following the death of her mother at a very young age. They met, fell in love, got married, and lived and worked in many places across our great country, from Quebec to British Columbia and eventually here in Ontario, first living in Mattawa and

then Southampton before finally settling here in suburban Toronto, where I was born.

My father developed a respiratory illness due to his field of work, and his overall health diminished year after year. He was no longer able to work before I finished elementary school, and as such, my mother became the sole income earner of our family.

My mother gave me her gift of unconditional love—a love so deep, so selfless that no child could ever ask for more. She taught me empathy and compassion. She showed me that a woman could take a sick husband and young child on her shoulders and wade through life's struggles without a hint of complaint. Her only regret was that she wished she could provide more—as though anything more could ever be given.

My father lost his own father to an unknown fate in World War II and lived a tough life before eventually arriving here. He taught me discipline. He taught me, above all, that we are only as good as our word, our honour, and that respect was something we had to earn with every action we take in this life. He pushed me to be better, smarter, stronger. He was sick, but he lived with great dignity. I watched the candle of his life dim, until it extinguished when I was 22, when the surgery that was supposed to improve his life failed.

I owe my parents everything, and I dedicate my every success to them.

How did I end up in politics? In university, I studied biology and chemistry and received a master's of science. Later, I attained a bachelor of education. You'll note that none of this was political science. Well, perhaps the first piece began as activism in my teenage years. A developer wanted to intensify a plot of land where families picnicked and gathered, a place I enjoyed almost every day of my young life. My father encouraged me to take a petition to every door in my building and beyond, and when former councillor Maria Augimeri held a meeting for the community, I handed it to her there and was given a chance to give a short speech my father helped me write. She was the first politician I met, and her executive assistant, Rick Morelli, welcomed and encouraged me greatly. The community won that battle, and the development was stopped, something almost unheard of these days. So my first experience with politics was one of hope, one of success. That event played a big part in the development of my psyche, but the accumulation of many small events and the subsequent reflections they provoke can leave great ripples in the pond of one's life.

One such event happened around the very same time. I walked into my bank, as a teenager, and was directed by a teller I knew to use the brand new banking machines placed in the lobby. I knew him because he would take his children to the daycare my friend's mother held in an apartment of our very own building. I told him I didn't want to use the machine, but he was adamant that I try. He told me it was faster and far more convenient than dealing with a teller. I told him that I'd rather deal with a human being than a machine, and besides, if enough people started using those machines, he might lose his job

tomorrow. He sighed, slouched a little and said, "Perhaps you're right, but if I don't encourage you to use the machine today, I will lose my job today." So I used the machine. It was faster. And he lost his job a few months later. Some years after that, the branch closed. They call it efficiency.

It's funny how some words have become sacrosanct, untouchable, ends unto themselves, a mantra. It's funny how phrases can validate the destruction of lives, places, environments—phrases such as "business is business." I remember that my teacher in grade 6 taught us the Latin phrase "caveat emptor," meaning, "Let the buyer beware." For some reason, this stayed with me. Much later, I pondered whether he told us this as part of the subtle indoctrination we learn from a young age that excuses, even celebrates, human selfishness. Or was this a warning? But by that time, I never saw him again.

Years later, in university, when I took microeconomics as an elective, I attempted my first problem set. A simple question was asked: All things being equal, what is the effect on the cost of a product when the demand increases? "Well," I reasoned, "if the demand goes up, the seller's profits are assured, so they'd lower the costs to make everyone happy." Can you imagine that? I flipped to the back of the textbook and just stared at the answer: The price would go up, since the seller can get away with charging more. That simple question was the easiest one I faced in university but also turned out to be the most profound, for it explained the human condition here in our society, and it broke my heart. But I digress.

If there was a person in this life who gave me a chance in politics, a person in that realm to believe in me, it was Anthony Perruzza. I met him in 2000 and campaigned my heart out for him during his race for council. I got to know him, and somehow thought that the election was in the bag. He was honest, down-to-earth, hard-working and knowledgeable. How could he lose?

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I remember on one crescent a guy told Anthony he would vote for him if he could change the local bus route to pass by his house, yet he lived on a crescent. Anthony told him that it would likely never happen. As he walked away, I told him, "Not that I'm complaining, but you lost his vote." He stopped, he turned to me and he asked, "Do you know what's more important to me than winning this election?" "No," I answered. "Sleeping at night with a clear conscience." He lost that election.

During that election, I met a number of like-minded suburban progressives, and it was through their new friendship, as well as reflections such as those I described above, that led me to join the NDP. As for Anthony, he stayed true to himself and never gave up. I helped him in his subsequent campaigns until he eventually won in 2006. He asked me to join him at city hall, where it was a privilege to work with him for years, serving the community I love.

My own decision to run came after helping in many different campaigns for progressive candidates in many different places. I was moved to pick up the banner within

my own riding to fight to represent the place I loved most. I knew that if it ever happened, it might take years, so we continued to build on the team and momentum of those before me. Throughout all this has been my good friend Matias de Dovitiis, one of the best and hardest-working organizers I have ever known.

I'm delivering this speech with the perspective of some months after taking my seat here at Queen's Park. Already, I have begun accumulating memories and thoughts about this very place and my role in it. It is inspiring to see the more veteran MPPs here rise and, at times, speak so comfortably and knowledgeably on the various topics. It is truly an honour to be here. Even though my name is on the desk before me—it's right there—it somehow still hasn't fully hit me yet.

The protocols and traditions here seem endless and certainly interesting, if at times strange. For instance, we must refer to each other by the names of our ridings, but if the Speaker says your name, you're thrown out by the Sergeant.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The Sergeant-at-Arms.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: The Sergeant-at-Arms.

If you walk the path between the mace and the Speaker, you are likely to get tackled by a Clerk.

But joking aside, as a member of the opposition, I'm deeply concerned with the path this government is taking us on. While they claim their agenda is driven by prudence, I believe it to be an agenda of pure ideology. One of the most frustrating debates for me thus far was Bill 5, which aimed to cut Toronto city council in half. It really hit home, because I worked at city hall and I knew it well, unlike most of the government's members. But that didn't stop those very same members from labelling my home city as dysfunctional for weeks on end. It was disingenuous and it was hurtful.

They said nothing got done there, but at each monthly city council meeting sometimes up to 200 items would be debated and passed within a matter of a few days. Amendments were routinely drafted and passed on the floor of council. Here at Queen's Park, we can spend weeks debating a single item, bills can die at elections or even within committees, and legislation can pass but never get enacted. At city hall, any outcome was possible for any vote, meaning there was true collaboration between members, and often between members of differing philosophies. Under a majority government here, the decision-making solely resides on the whims of the Premier's inner circle, and those same veteran members on the other side know the frustration of feeling powerless here even when disagreeing so vehemently what is being proposed. Yet still we see games with time allocation and an inability to support amendments and certain PMBs because heaven forbid the opposition wins at anything.

Overall, I believe this drives the cynicism that people have of politics. But this narrative plays into the hands of the right, for they seek to reduce the number of democratically elected individuals, reduce regulations, reduce protections, reduce everything until who is left in charge? Well, we know who that is. That's okay, right? They seem

to control things here anyway. But hey, "business is business," and "let the buyer beware." If you disagree with that—well, yada, yada, yada.

But there is a system that exists out there where compassion, responsibility and, at times, sacrifice beat profit, where demand lowers price and where people understand that we are all connected and that one truly cannot be happy when so many others are empty; a place where we truly love and respect one another, where we wish each other well; a place where we stop treating the planet as our sewer and where we recognize that all other life here does not simply exist for our amusement but has its own right to exist. I don't know if I'll see that within my own lifetime, but I'll die trying to make it happen. Thank you.

That concludes my inaugural speech, but I would like to share a few words on the topic of policing and on the policing bill that's before us.

I have members of my family and dear friends who are in fact police. I have always had deep, deep love and respect for our first responders, for throughout my life, with my father being ill, more than one time there was an officer, a fireman or a paramedic in our home. They are doing the best job they can. We must empower them, but one of the things that doesn't help them do their job is when rhetoric in this chamber—and it has happened on the side of the government—pits people against police.

I live in a community, one of this country's most diverse, where people are born feeling as though they committed a great crime just for being born, because they may not look like a lot of other people. They don't feel safe; they've told me this. The 31 Division is the police division that's in my home community of Jane and Finch.

I remember that this past summer, I spoke to a friend, an officer in that same division, and we talked about what the effects are of rhetoric on the feelings of community and police. I asked him, "Do you think your job is easier when certain communities and certain individuals feel that they're at threat by the people we employ to protect them? Do they feel that it's making their job safer? Do they feel that these same people are willing to come to them to talk about the real challenges they're facing in their communities, when they feel, in some cases, under attack?" Well, we agreed that the answer is no.

I want to hear more about education on de-escalation, on investments into mental health, into better training, into better community policing.

That doesn't come from me alone. Having worked with Councillor Perruzza in the past, and working at city hall for years, I worked on initiatives with police and with community members to try to make police and community talk, to have straight-up conversations where the community can feel safe with their first responders and police.

When things happen by governments or people in power—because we have an incredible responsibility, based on the words that come out of our mouths. When things are said in this chamber—and it has happened earlier, even in this very same session of the Legislature—people in my own community feel up in arms. It's almost like you're getting to a better place, and then you turn on

the news, and if you look a certain way or if you come from a certain place, you feel like society itself has just checked out on you, has given up hope the moment you were born, has seen you as a threat, has seen you as suspicious for the act of walking into a store, coming home from a tough shift at work at night, and you could be stopped and questioned, for your existence. These practices really undermine the faith of many members of my community in the people we employ to protect them.

I want to see this government address that and speak to that issue. It is what my community wants to hear, and they deserve it, because nobody deserves to feel that they should be ashamed of who they are, just because of where they come from. That is sometimes how they're made to feel by this system.

I ask this government, moving forward, to please consider the rhetoric that they use, and not to inflame and offend and make people that are people no different than anyone else feel under threat. Because they deserve better, and we all know that.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I would like to start off by, first of all, congratulating my honourable colleague across. I have to admit, in the short time that I have been here, Speaker, the inaugural speeches, the maiden speeches, have become my favourite, only because we get to know more about our colleagues, our backgrounds, where we come from. It's one of those great moments that we share in this House. I thank him for sharing that and congratulate him on the victory.

I know that he talked about veteran MPPs in this House and how eloquent and articulate they are etc. I have to tell him, I have heard him speak on multiple occasions, and you're very good yourself. So once again, congratulations.

He was doing really well, Mr. Speaker. When he started his maiden speech, it was great. I was really enjoying it. And then he went right out to talk about the bill. I was really looking forward to hearing more and more about this, because that's what maiden speeches, inaugural speeches, are.

But nonetheless, Speaker, I'd like to just point out a few facts. This is something we made very clear during the campaign: Ensuring the security of the people is our government's most fundamental responsibility. In the last election, the last government, the Liberal government, passed the most anti-police legislation in Canadian history, and it was a disaster. We knew that. The police told us that. The people told us that. It was very clear during the election, and that's why we made a promise to them that if we got elected, we were going to turn things around.

That's why we introduced the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act. It's a key part of our promise to make Ontario safer, stand up for victims and hold criminals to account. I congratulate the minister on her work, her PA and all our team for the work that we're doing, because we are going to continue serving the people as best we can.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the member from Humber River–Black Creek, I just say, “Bravo,” as we say en français.

Listen, the member did two things. He gave what I thought was a very touching and very good inaugural speech in regard to how we got here. I want to echo what the member across the way just said, that we learn a lot about each other as members through those types of speeches and the history that brought people to this place. It's good to know that the member is steeped in good history and respects those that came before him who gave him the opportunity to stand here today, from his family to his community and to others. I think we all feel the same. We hear that and we know he speaks truth to power on that particular issue.

He also got into the bill. I thought his approach was interesting because it's the first time we've heard somebody go where he went, which is that the tone that we use in this place sometimes is ultra-partisan and utilizes rhetoric. That can happen on both sides of the House, to be fair. But in this particular debate, it's an “either you is with them or you is against them” kind of set-up that the government is trying to position when it comes to this particular bill.

The member points out what I've heard other members from the NDP caucus say, which is that we have all over the years had family members who are in the police services. My brother was with the RCMP. He was actually in charge of HR for all of Canada, so he had something to do with policing. We all have family members and friends who have served. When we utilize rhetoric in the way that the government does and try to position policing just as one static thing, we're not realizing that policing is a very complicated business. What police officers want, especially those cops on the beat, is the support to be able to do their jobs, and that means to do some of the things that this member talked about. Sometimes the rhetoric that the government is using gets in the way of that.

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

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I too would certainly like to add my congratulations to the member from Humber River–Black Creek on his maiden speech in the House here today.

Let me assure the member, maybe from a little different perspective. I've been privileged to have served in multiple levels of government, as he certainly would be aware—municipal, provincial and federal—but I've also been, I suppose, both damned and congratulated to be able to serve both in opposition and in government, both in minority and majority, in both positions. As such, it does give you a little bit of a perspective on what is acceptable and what is not.

There is no doubt that over the course of a political discourse we have some challenging moments where sometimes passions get inflamed and we have differences of opinion that, quite frankly, we feel very, very strongly

about. But the fact that we're here and we have that right and that obligation and that privilege to offer our opinion, that speaks well.

I also served in another capacity. I served as the president of GOPAC, which is the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption, helping other countries around the world understand what it is to appreciate and feel confident that we're trying to do the right thing, trying to lead by mentorship. When I do that shop-and-compare, as Winston Churchill once said about our democracy and the fact that it's fragile, but relative to the rest of the world, how well we stand, I would hope that he will feel confident that despite our occasional differences, we can find a way to move forward. I certainly look forward to working with him in a collegial and respectful manner. Thank you, sir.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member from Humber River–Black Creek. I've been around this building a few years, and I must confess that's probably one of the better maiden speeches I've ever heard. So congratulations, again, for a heartfelt presentation.

I too share with the member from Timmins my concern about the dialogue in the House in reference to blaming one party for being anti-policing as opposed to another. Frankly, Speaker, that is a load of malarkey. I have members of my family who have been police officers and first responders. We all have people that we know who are first responders. I think everybody in this Legislature respects the first responders.

I, personally, respect all the first responders in Hamilton, especially our Hamilton regional police. They've got a very difficult and challenging job. Any recommendations that are brought forward here that are positive and constructive certainly should be utilized and listened to. Everybody in this House can make contributions towards the betterment of policing in our province.

When these types of bills get to committee, they should be open-minded to hear from other parties constructive recommendations that can be brought forward. I look forward to working with the government in these types of situations because it's for the betterment of everyone, it's for the betterment of Ontario, it's for the protection of our public. I think we all are on the same page when it comes to those types of things.

Hopefully, we can get away from the accusations of someone in this House being anti-police, because that is a load of garbage.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Humber River–Black Creek for his final comments.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the members from Aurora-Oak Ridges moraine, Hastings–Lennox and Addington, Timmins, and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I represent a riding that used to be called York West. When it moved to the longer name and got the hyphen, I thought we kind of had it tough, but since coming here I've met members who have very, very long riding names.

I really appreciate the kind words that I've heard in response to my inaugural speech. I too have always, like I said earlier, enjoyed having the chance to learn more about everyone within this chamber—not just here, but on the occasions that we sometimes see each other outside in more non-partisan settings.

I also want to make one mention, a word of advice and caution, I guess: When you're doing your inaugural speech and you start talking about really emotional things, I think you want to spread it out. If I did mine over—because you start building toward something, and sometimes it's a bit of a battle.

1700

I do want to once again state that I absolutely love my community and I'm so proud to be able to represent it here.

If I had written this same speech years and years ago, in my twenties, it would have been a different one. It probably would have had a lot of fist-pumping and who knows what else. But I'm at a time in my life when I believe that I have tempered my hubris—or I hope I have.

Truly, I'm one who respects people who speak more of others than of themselves, which is probably why, as I began trying to write this over many days—I've got multiple little Word documents on different computers that start with this inaugural speech. They're about a paragraph long, and every single time I tried again, it was a different one. But ultimately, I found my way through.

It was an honour to be able to share my story with all of you today.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: It is a pleasure to speak today in support of Bill 68, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, 2019. This piece of legislation is key to our government's commitment to make Ontario a safer place to live, to work and to raise a family. That means standing up for victims and holding criminals to account for their actions. It also means effective policing, which is the point of our discussion today.

The Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act takes a number of steps to instill better confidence in our police, reversing one of the most egregious pieces of policing legislation put in place by the previous government. Under the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, 2019, our government is seeking to create a new oversight structure, intended to provide our hard-working and dedicated police officers with a fairer disciplinary process and strengthen public confidence in our police force through more transparency and new training requirements.

In 2018, just months before the last election, the previous Liberal government passed Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, this was an anti-police bill. In fact, many have said that this was the most anti-police legislation in Canadian history. The integrity of our men and women in blue was not protected under this bill.

If passed, Bill 68 will ensure that our policing community has the support and the confidence of the public and the government for years to come. This act would undo the harm caused by Bill 175, specifically by repealing and

replacing the Police Services Act, 2018, and the Ontario Special Investigations Unit Act, 2018. Bill 68 will also repeal the Ontario Policing Discipline Tribunal Act, 2018, and the Policing Oversight Act, 2018. Finally, it will also amend the Coroners Act and Mandatory Blood Testing Act. As the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has stated before, by making these changes, our government is clearing the path to develop better and stronger policing legislation and oversight that works for our officers as well as the public they serve.

Last year, I had a chance to meet with Hamilton representatives of the Police Association of Ontario during their advocacy day here at Queen's Park. If there was one thing that they emphasized more than any others, it was that our government show that we really do mean it when we say that we support our police officers, by making changes to the Safer Ontario Act. They hoped to see changes that reflect the vital work police officers do and the nature of their professionalism, rather than negative perceptions of what they do.

We are all grateful to our police officers for the work they do every single day keeping our streets and our communities safe, and we are all more than happy to express this opinion when we meet with these officers. Having said that, these words are empty if governments implement policies that hinder the force and make them feel like they're being targeted for simply doing their jobs.

The Hamilton officers I met brought forward some of their concerns with parts of Bill 175, which they and the Police Association of Ontario felt had not taken into consideration the perspective of experts in policing policy. These included:

- making it easier for police services to terminate disabled or injured members;
- having a disciplinary system without any due process for officers;
- mandatory privatization of certain police services to for-profit companies; and
- an oversight system that is not accountable to either the public or the police.

I also heard from PAO members that the Safer Ontario Act made policing more expensive, less responsive to the communities they serve, and out of date for the 21st century.

It is clear that the policies of the previous Liberal government left our police services hanging out to dry.

Our government led a thorough review of the Safer Ontario Act and has identified problems that need to be addressed. If passed, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act will restore fairness and respect for our police, enhance oversight and improve governance, training and transparency.

Mr. Speaker, one of the main bones of contention in police oversight is the overreach of the Special Investigations Unit. Bill 175 gave the SIU the authority to virtually investigate any death where a police officer may have been present but not responsible for the fatality. For example, if an officer is not successful at preventing someone from committing suicide, they are automatically subject to an

SIU investigation. Until the fall, the same applied if an officer administered naloxone to someone experiencing a drug overdose.

Our government's legislation is intended to enhance police oversight and make changes to the SIU so that it can be more effective as a large part of this.

If you speak to any police officer, you will hear that in order for them to be effective in their jobs, public trust in police is of utmost importance. Having an effective oversight process is key to establishing trust between officers and their communities. The current oversight system is old. It's broken. It's slow. It currently does not work for either the police or the public. The previous government, through their legislation, didn't even pay lip service to the principle of fairness and due process for our officers.

Bill 68 will address concerns about SIU investigations taking too long by reducing duplication and better focusing the mandate of the SIU. Fair and effective police oversight will result in a stronger community safety partnership between the government, the police and the public. If passed, Bill 68 would establish the Special Investigations Unit as a fully independent provincial agency administered by the Attorney General.

As always, Mr. Speaker, there are cases where thorough investigations are needed, especially when it comes to police officer misconduct. Last May, Hamilton police detective inspector Craig Ruthowsky was sentenced to 12 and a half years in prison for a whole slew of charges relating to his misconduct as an officer, including bribery, breach of trust and multiple drug trafficking offences. Ruthowsky had been suspended by the Hamilton Police Service back in 2012, but he was only able to be suspended with pay, as mandated by the Police Services Act. In fact, Detective Inspector Ruthowsky actually made the sunshine list three times while on suspension. He earned \$104,000 in 2017, \$107,000 in 2015 and \$109,000 in 2012, while he was suspended.

Of course, this isn't the only time the issue of police conduct has come up in various ways in recent years in Hamilton. Police officers are human. It's unfortunate, but misconduct does happen. What's important to ensuring public confidence, however, is what happens when it does.

Media stories around another officer, David Doel, who earned more than half a million dollars over four years while suspended with 14 charges of misconduct, were prominent during 2014. Doel ended up retiring before the investigation into him concluded, evading justice.

This prompted former Hamilton police chief Glenn De Caire to call for change. De Caire wrote a white paper in 2014 that called for the province to give police chiefs the discretionary ability to suspend officers without pay for serious infractions.

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Back to the Ruthowsky case: I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that while I was a reporter and while I was on city council in Hamilton, I heard from many residents who were outraged that an officer that was convicted of corruption charges was being paid hundreds of thousands of

dollars while on suspension. Under the current Police Services Act, the Hamilton Police Service was only able to stop his pay and begin the officer's firing process after he was sentenced.

The Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act gives chiefs the discretion they need. This act will allow police chiefs to suspend an officer without pay as an interim measure, under certain circumstances and subject to an appeal to an independent adjudication. This includes when an officer is charged with a serious offence and is being investigated.

The Liberal system of police oversight did not work for the police and it certainly did not work for the public. In short, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act will prevent the half-million-dollar sums of taxpayer money being paid out in the two Hamilton cases that I cited: the Doel case in 2014 and the Ruthowsky case in 2018.

Mr. Speaker, how public complaints are handled is another important part of instilling public confidence in our fine women and men in uniform. Currently, public complaints against officers are handled by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director. If Bill 68 is passed, the OIPRD would become independent, and it would be renamed the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency. As recommended by Justice Tulloch, this would help the public better understand the functions of the agency.

One of the issues with the Liberals' Bill 175 was that if you called 911, it wasn't always guaranteed that a police officer would show up at your front door, because certain police services were forced to be privatized. If passed, Bill 68 will guarantee that when Ontarians call 911, they can count on a police officer to show up. The legislation defines that policing functions are law enforcement, emergency response or maintaining public peace, and these functions require the exercise of the powers of a peace officer or a police officer. This puts an end to the Liberal government's policy of outsourcing services to non-police entities.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier that this act will make amendments to a couple of acts. Bill 68 will make improvements to the Coroners Act, granting coroners powers to get earlier access to records when determining whether there is a reason to believe an investigation into a person's death is necessary. In addition, coroners will be required to either offer seized items to the police for safekeeping or keep those items safe themselves if the police do not accept them. Coroners will also be required to return items to those they were seized from upon the conclusion of an investigation or inquest.

The Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act also makes amendments to the Mandatory Blood Testing Act to better support and provide peace of mind to victims of crime, first responders and others at risk of coming in contact with foreign bodily substances of other people.

There are certain aspects of Bill 175 that we are keeping intact. The Missing Persons Act, 2018, and the Forensic Laboratories Act, 2018, will come into effect without change. Provisions from the community safety and well-

being plan with respect to mandating municipalities to publish and adopt these plans already came into effect this year on January 1.

First Nations policing provisions are also remaining unchanged. Our government is committed to providing First Nations with options to require a First Nation police service board or a First Nation OPP board to oversee the delivery of policing in their community.

On December 31 last year, Justice Michael Tulloch issued a 300-page report on carding and street checks. Our government appreciates the work Justice Tulloch has done on this matter and is taking the time needed to properly review and assess his recommendations, most of which can be implemented through regulatory changes.

Mr. Speaker, our police officers deserve our gratitude and respect, not suspension and scorn, as evident from the Liberals' Safer Ontario Act last year. That is why our government is providing our men and women in blue the tools, the resources and the support they need to do their jobs. Bill 175 didn't even pay lip service to the principle of fairness or due process for officers. Not only was this unfair; it was disrespectful to the police officers who risk their lives to keep us safe. That's why we are taking the steps needed to ensure there can once again be a positive relationship between the police and the public.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's always excellent to have an opportunity to speak to issues of policing and community safety. As I'm sure many of you in this House know, it's an issue that's particularly close to my heart. I've spoken about this a number of times and particularly in my inaugural speech.

In my community of Regent Park, we struggle with issues of community violence. I personally have witnessed gun violence in my community. My husband and I witnessed a drive-by shooting in the summer of 2017 in Regent Park and performed CPR on a man who passed away later that night in hospital. I'm telling the story again because I think it's important for the members on the opposite bench to know that when we're looking at the causes of violence in our community, it's the upstream causes of violence that lie in poverty and access to education, access to good jobs for youth in our communities, employment opportunities.

Really, poverty is the key here. I don't think this government is necessarily taking into consideration the impacts of poverty as the upstream, root cause of violence in communities. I don't think this bill really explores—and I don't think the mandate of this government is properly exploring—how we need investments in mental health and addiction supports, in health care, youth employment. If you really want a comprehensive suite of legislation and policy and regulations that addresses safety in our communities, you'd be investing in mental health agencies, you'd be supporting survivors of sexual assault and the people who provide services to them, and you'd be addressing poverty in our communities. Quite frankly, I don't see you doing that.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's a pleasure to stand and respond to the comments this afternoon on Bill 68 from the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook—an excellent riding, I might add, as I had the privilege of representing a portion of it in the past Parliament.

It's also a real privilege to be able to speak to a piece of legislation that provides such an excellent level of gratitude, respect and a progressive approach towards policing here in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, I think it's important to also recognize that although the members opposite have some concerns that they've brought forward with regard to this legislation, they have also had positive things to say. I think of the NDP's community safety critic, the member for Brampton North, who said that he is sure the associations and others in the policing community will see a lot that they like here, and that police have every right to clear rules governing the work they do. I couldn't agree more with the member opposite in this regard. I'm glad to see that he has seen the importance of this legislation.

Frankly, under the former Liberal government, we saw that Bill 175, one of the worst pieces of legislation that came out of the last Parliament, was an act that did not even pay lip service to the gratitude and respect that our first responders, and specifically our men and women who serve in the police, deserve. Our government is finally taking the action that is needed to make those changes.

I'm so grateful to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook, and I'm pleased to be able to add my voice to the debate.

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

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Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for her comments.

She mentioned strengthening confidence and enhancing transparency, which is something we can agree with on both sides of the floor. However, on this side we do ask: Why does this legislation keep SIU records private?

She also spoke to the expense of policing and how the Liberal government made it more expensive—not a surprise there. We know that they made everything more expensive and they spent hand over fist. But I also am concerned when I hear comments like that because that leads to a discussion of privatization and how police should be measured in terms of what they cost. Quite frankly, when it comes to our safety you get what you pay for, and I'm frightened that this legislation does not close the door on privatization entirely.

It has also been mentioned by the members opposite that they're not going to touch “core services.” If that is the case, what about all the services around those core services? I'm concerned about the number of jobs that will be lost and further privatized if this legislation is not pinned down entirely.

I recently had the opportunity to stand with the London police during their 24-hour stand against homelessness. I

stood with Deputy Chief Daryl Longworth and Deputy Chief Steve Williams. Through this campaign, they have tried to raise awareness about people who are experiencing homelessness, who are experiencing difficulties with mental health, addiction and so many other issues that the police are tasked to deal with. It was something that they see every day on the front lines.

The motto of the London police is “Deeds Not Words.” They're a proactive, fantastic force. Really, it has been quite a disturbing time in London because we've seen the local health integration network cut funding to Mission Services—cutting 21 beds for homeless people. And do you know what happens? Unfortunately, the police have to pick up what is left.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: I'd like to thank the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for her comments here today. I know she's a very strong advocate for her community, and I'm really proud to be part of this government with her.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that is paramount. We need to make sure that we're giving our first responders and police officers the tools they need to be able to do their job.

I've had the opportunity to have a ride-along with my local police service, Waterloo Regional Police Service. I spent a whole shift with them, from 5 in the afternoon till 3 in the morning, so I could get a full sense of what was actually going on in my community. One of the things that kept coming up when I had a chance to speak to different officers, when we were either back at the detachment or during the ubiquitous coffee break, was that these police officers were sometimes afraid when they would walk into a situation that they would be persecuted for trying to help somebody who needed help. So I am really glad that our bill is tackling that.

It's extremely important that we're making sure that we give the necessary tools to our police officers to be able to help them do their job in the best way possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'd like to thank the members from Toronto Centre and London North Centre and my colleagues from Niagara West and Kitchener–Conestoga for providing your response to the comments that I shared with the Legislature this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I truly am proud to be standing here speaking to and supporting Bill 68.

As I've said in the chamber on many occasions, my background in journalism goes back many, many years. As a reporter, I had an opportunity to spend a great deal of time with the men and women who put their lives on the line every single day to keep our communities safe, whether it was covering stories of crimes—often murders—or covering trials where these men and women are forced to testify in court to ensure that criminals stay off our streets. I had a chance to speak with them, and one of the things that they shared with me is that they need support from government. They need to know that we

have their back, and I really do believe that what we are doing here today—Bill 68—shows that as a government we do have their back. We want to give them the tools that they need, the support that they require, so that they can go to their jobs on a daily basis knowing that somebody has their back, that they're not just putting their life at risk and not worrying whether somebody is going to be attacking them. They are targets on the street, Mr. Speaker; they do not need to be targeted by their own government. I believe that Bill 68 is the beginning of a new era when our men and women who work tirelessly to ensure that our communities are safe recognize that the government supports them and will be there for them.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate on behalf of the people in Waterloo on Bill 68.

I've been listening to the debate all afternoon, and once again I do have to marvel at the different ways that we see legislation, from a New Democrat perspective and then through the lens of how PC members see this piece of legislation. I will say, though, that there are some commonalities, which sometimes I find encouraging in this place, instead of focusing on everything that is so different.

I do need to state that the language that the government has been using on Bill 68 is of importance because language matters in this place. The rhetoric around how devastating and how disastrous and how anti-police Bill 175 was really rings hollow in this instance, because Bill 68 is not so very different than the original Bill 175. In fact, I was just reading an editorial from last week when it first came out. This is from the Star editorial board from Wednesday, February 20, and this is just one example of this government tweaking Bill 175 but pausing it from the fall, really, and holding it there. It says:

"Under the Liberal legislation the SIU would have been required to wrap up investigations in 120 days or less, and report every 60 days thereafter if there were any delays.

"On this point, all the PCs did was to tweak ... the Liberal legislation to require that the watchdog report every 30 days after their deadline."

It's these small things which I would say could have been done through a regulatory change instead of squashing the old legislation and rebranding this piece of legislation and giving it a nice little fancy acronym like COPS.

So this is the reality that we are in. Clearly, this legislation heavily relies on the previous Liberal government's Bill 175. It addresses the role of the special investigations unit. It addresses somewhat suspension without pay and public complaints about police. I think the positioning that the government has taken is that we on this side are not supportive of our front-line police officers. We are. We see the issue of policing very much in a holistic way, where we focus on the upstream and the downstream and try to focus on how conflict happens in our community. We need to be honest about the communities that we serve in, because racism is real in Waterloo region. I'm proud that

our police chief actually talks openly about it, and I'm proud to know him. His name is Bryan Larkin, and he was the chief of the chiefs of police last session.

We will never address the core issues of conflict between our police forces and our communities unless we address the real issues that are in our communities. I said this yesterday in the two-minute hit and I said this to the association when I had the chance to speak to them at their AGM: All of the systemic issues that we face in our communities, be it a lack of affordable housing, lack of education, nutrition, education, addiction—all of those problems, if there's no intervention, end up in the back seat of a police cruiser. So what we say to our police forces across this province—and our leader, Andrea Horwath, has been very clear on this—is that we actually are in this with you. We want your jobs to be safer. We want you to have the tools to do your jobs. But we also need to acknowledge that the societal issues that we all know are some of the root causes of crime in the province of Ontario need to be addressed. That is the theme and that is the lens that we see a piece of legislation like Bill 68 through.

1730

I will say, I remember that in the previous Liberal government, I came to the floor of this Legislature because our officers in Waterloo region certainly felt that they were at risk for administering naloxone. We needed to make sure that they had the kits. Imagine, just a year ago, I was before this Legislature asking the minister then, the then Liberal minister, for resources for police officers to save people's lives and also to be protected and to feel like they were protected throughout that process.

Naloxone and overdoses: Waterloo region, like many places in this province, is facing a crisis of confidence in the fact that people are dying. In Waterloo region, the stats are quite something. Rob Crossan, who is the deputy chief of paramedic services of the region of Waterloo, recently told Global News that there were 200 opioid-related overdose calls in 2015, there were 400 in 2016 and there were 804 calls in 2017. Thus, to date, so far we're at 843 overdoses. Waterloo region police announced that officers had responded to 75 calls for opioid overdoses just in the month of January—just in one month, Mr. Speaker—and that 10 of those calls were fatal. Constable Ashley Dietrich said, "We recognize that this is a public health crisis and that it's obviously not going away."

If you really want to talk about supporting police officers, then we have to talk about addiction support, and we have to talk about safe injection sites and resources and street nurses and training in our communities to make sure that there is a single point where officers know that they can safely administer naloxone, that they have those resources in their communities. I can't believe that we're still having these conversations. This would be a good way of supporting police officers. So we firmly support the progressive and holistic approach to addiction and to preventing these overdoses.

The big misnomer on fentanyl and opioids is that these are people who live on the margins. They're sometimes the people who live right next door. In particular, in

Waterloo region in the school boards, we are facing a health crisis. I want to get that on the record.

I also want to get on the record that the missing persons legislation, which was in Bill 175 and which has been delayed because you had to put your own rebrand on this piece of legislation, is an issue that is very close to my heart because Maureen Trask, who is a constituent of mine, came to me in 2014. She was fighting the then Liberal government of the day because we were the only province in the country that did not have missing persons legislation. Just for those who don't know, missing persons legislation enables a police officer, an investigator, to access information like cellphones and banking records so that they can actually pinpoint the last time somebody went missing.

Right now in the province of Ontario, there are 350 people missing. Over a dozen are missing in Waterloo region. This province needs missing persons legislation. That it has been further delayed for this marketing exercise is a little bit frustrating for me because I know that police officers need the tools to find these people.

Also, human trafficking in Waterloo region is one of those issues where people do go missing—young girls, the girl next door. The Minister of Labour knows this well because it was her bill. The girl next door goes missing but no criminal activity can be confirmed, so an investigation can't move forward.

If you want to deal with human trafficking in the province of Ontario, then let's give our police officers and our police forces the tools that they need. These are the supportive measures that we have focused on. The former member from Parkdale-High Park was one of the strongest advocates around ensuring that our front-line officers, our paramedics, our firefighters had the treatment and the support and the resources to deal with post-traumatic stress disorder.

There are reactive ways that we have been supportive. There are ongoing ways that we have tried to address what our police forces need, and then there is, of course, the early intervention piece, which I feel very strongly about.

I do want to say that we are very supportive and are on the record as being supportive of Justice Michael Tulloch, who clearly raised some concerns about the existing oversight system. We share some of those concerns. It doesn't mean that we don't want to continue the conversation on this; it just means that the way that this government in particular has moved forward has not been helpful.

For example, we absolutely support the measures that were taken to remove the requirement for an SIU investigation when police officers administer naloxone. This is just one of those examples, and I've gone through that. But ultimately, it seems like the government wants to pit and use this word "trust." Because without trust, you can have all the training that you want for the police forces, but you will never build those relationships with marginalized communities.

I think that when the government of the day says that the proposed legislation is supposed to restore the public's faith in the police because the Liberal bill, Bill 175, was

the most anti-police legislation in the history of the country—when you use language like that and then you bring in a bill that you've just tweaked, you ultimately are a little bit part of the problem. I think some of the more progressive members on the PC side would recognize that. The reality is that this government has strongly used the copy-paste mechanism and kept most of the previous legislation, while tweaking some sections that will keep the public from trusting the police. In reality, you've doubled down on this.

I just want to say that the big question that I've heard from the community—and I have to say, quite honestly, we believe that this is a really important issue, Mr. Speaker. But in my community, the chaos that this government has created on the health care file, on the autism file, the whole business with Bill 66 and schedule 10—I mean, I did thank them for creating a whole new generation of activists. I think that that has been very helpful. But I have to say, there has been so much coming at us and coming at our communities that Bill 68 for the most part has not been on their radar. The addiction issue around distributing and administering naloxone has been, because this is not something that's happening in the dark alleyways; this is happening right in our communities and our neighbourhoods, and police are facing it each and every day.

I guess the question is, if the Liberals created the most anti-police legislation, why did the Conservatives draw so heavily from it? That is the big question. If people were really paying attention and they were really peeling back the layers, I think that that would be a question that this government would have a hard time answering. Certainly, the minister and the Attorney General, when she rolled this out, didn't have a very good response to that question. If it was so bad, why did you just tweak it and create some regulatory changes? A lot of politics, obviously, are at play here.

Take, for example, the probes by the special investigations unit, which are required every time a police officer fires their gun at a person. Under the Liberal legislation, the SIU would have been required to wrap up investigations in 120 days or less and report every 60 days. On this point, as I said, the PCs just tweaked that piece of the legislation.

In her speech, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services even seemed to blame the Liberals for the fact that the SIU probe into the death of Danforth shooter Faisal Hussain—this is a tragedy that I know the community is still reeling from—who unfortunately killed two people and injured 13 people last July, dragged on for six months. If you want these investigations to move forward in a streamlined manner, then resource them. Putting a hard cap on them isn't necessarily going to actually make it go any faster.

Indeed, the only thing that the PC government may have achieved with this new legislation and the language surrounding its introduction is to undermine public trust in police. That is the problem when legislation is rolled out in this manner. We've actually heard that there was a lack

of consultation. There was a lot of time that was taken, but the consultation piece—just like it has become a pattern for this government—was not thorough. It was not open; it was not transparent. This also leaves us with some serious questions.

1740

The *Globe and Mail* published an op-ed particularly about this bill, and it pointed out a few interesting details on how this legislation is really being proposed to win political points with the police services, but it's not actually working to foster the relationship between police and the public. As I've said, the minister has said that Liberal Bill 175 was a disaster, and it actively undermined policing efforts. Now we have literally almost the same bill, with the exception of a couple of pieces.

There is one significant departure, of course, and that is the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency. The issue that was addressed in this legislation has to do with complaints that are brought forward about the police. These are very contentious; they have always been, and perhaps they always will be. But currently, there is the Office of the Independent Police Review Director, or the OIPRD. The Conservative bill renames this body as the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency. This new body would perform very similar functions, though, to the OIPRD, which is of note.

There is one significant departure, though: The Law Enforcement Complaints Agency would have the ability to refer a complaint back to the police service. We know that that had been identified as a major concern by Justice Tulloch. He had pointed out that the vast majority of complaints that were brought to the OIPRD were referred back to the police services for investigation. He had cautioned that this is an erosion, an action which erodes public confidence in the complaints process. This remains a problem, Mr. Speaker.

If you're talking about trust, and you're talking about building positive relationships with the community—because we all know; almost everyone in this House has used the language around community policing—then you have to put some measures into place which reinforce the concept that there is a mutual level of respect and trust between community and police.

Justice Tulloch went on to say that he found a deep mistrust of the public complaints process, and noted that referring complaints back to police services was seen as a major impediment to good-faith and impartial investigation.

So to maintain this public complaints body but to allow it to refer back to the police services is not helpful to building public trust. I think I've made that point now several times.

I do want to say that the issue of privatization came up at length during the original bill. I want to be really clear and on the record here that Bill 68 still leaves that door open for privatization. We're obviously making our way through the legislation and reaching out to stakeholders, but the concern around contracting out certain police services is a huge issue. The language is "core services."

Once that happens, once that door is opened, there's no going back. We know this from the health care system. We know it from road maintenance. Once the door to privatization is opened, it is never closed again. Nobody can bring it back.

Bruce Chapman once commented, in an op-ed around the privatization of police services: "I want to be unequivocal: Allowing for the privatization of some police duties won't save taxpayer money, improve public safety or protect human rights."

In fact, there's a great amount of support for keeping public police services as a public service, as an essential service, and we feel that way as well.

The last point I want to get on the record is around suspension without pay. The consultation process on this piece was lacking, with some very important stakeholders—I want to say that North Bay police chief Shawn Devine, who has been on the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police for seven years, believes that the province should have consulted with the chiefs before making these changes. Consultation matters. If anybody should know that, it's this government in the last seven months. I know that there was a lot of input from police associations but very little involvement from the chiefs of police, who, to be fair, actually have to administer the legislation.

I think that when Devine says that it's disappointing that nothing has changed relating to suspending officers without pay, this is pretty close to us in Waterloo region. There was a police officer who was off on paid leave for three years. He was tweeting and emailing from various southern locations and essentially sort of taunting his fellow officers and the administration of Waterloo Regional Police, which I thought was—well, actually, most people would feel that it's disrespectful not only to your fellow officers but to the administration. But the fact of the matter is, that investigation shouldn't have taken three years.

Let's have a streamlined process. It's in the best interests of everyone to have a streamlined process. It's fair to police officers, and it's fair to the whole system, if we are ultimately talking about trust, which I think we are.

What I'd like to say is that our position on this legislation—we are still in the process of debating it. We're still trying to figure out how far you have tweaked certain components of it. But we are definitely invested, as New Democrats, in ensuring that communities are safe, that police officers who serve those communities are safe, and we need a balanced approach as we move forward.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I congratulate the member on her words. She summed up her speech with what the bill is all about: It's about respecting taxpayers and it's about respecting police officers. It's about streamlining our processes and ultimately coming forward with a process that is fair to communities and that is fair to the officers who serve us.

I appreciate the limited support that we are getting from the members of the opposition, and I look forward to the bill passing.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for her comments on this important topic. I think she brought a very balanced view to this debate, and it was nice to hear that in this chamber. I'm glad that the members opposite recognize that—or one of the members opposite.

But I want to draw attention to a statement made by the member from Niagara West, where he called this one of the worst pieces of Liberal legislation that was ever passed. We could go on at length on the legislative epic fails that the Liberal Party brought into this Legislature, into this House, but I think that every time the government says those words—that each piece of Liberal legislation was the worst one that has ever been brought forward—it does diminish the work that this House does. We can disagree with the content that they had. We can disagree on why we feel they did what they did. But I think that referring to it as the worst piece—there are many terrible pieces, but when you only tweak something, small regulatory changes, as the member pointed out, do not constitute revamping the worst piece of Liberal legislation ever to be brought to the floor of this Legislature.

I'm very grateful for the comments on both sides of this House. I hope that we continue to have reasoned and intelligent debate on this and all the other subjects that we have to debate in this House.

I'll just finish again by thanking the members for the contributions that they have made. I'm always amazed at what I learn whenever I listen to debate here in the chamber.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the time. I appreciate it.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I was really encouraged when the member from Waterloo stood up, at very beginning of her speech, and said that there's a lot that they can be supportive of. Then I was very disappointed that there was nothing that came out of her mouth that was actually supportive.

I would hope that the NDP will support this and will work with us as it goes through committee and will vote in favour of it, because we do need to support our police officers.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It's interesting: Based on the description of the bill that is before us, it seems like we agree, but in the substance of what actually is being debated, we are often on diametrically opposed parts.

We do want enhanced community safety, but I guess I have a number of questions that I'd love answers from this government about. The concept of SIU, for instance: I heard a member speak earlier about a specific incident where an officer was saving someone's life, and they wouldn't want to be worried, taking that type of an action, whether they would be reprimanded. It's almost to suggest that if these changes to the SIU don't happen, we're

actually making it more unsafe for people in dealing with first responders.

1750

But I ask you to ponder the flip side of that. In cases where an officer might use force or go—I won't get into the details, but I'm sure you can all envision the counter of that situation. I've heard over many, many years, especially in my community, the issue of the SIU raised and questions around who polices the police. I hope that this government will consider that when moving forward with this.

I talked about the rhetoric. I mean, things get introduced here and then we hear things like “1,000%” or “This was the worst legislation ever” or “This was the best thing ever.” We keep using that sort of rhetoric each time something new is introduced. So, in the interest of consistency, I hope the government picks what actually was the worst thing ever that this last government did and let's just all stick by it, instead of every single new piece of legislation being the best or worst.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Waterloo for her final comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you for recognizing my riding, Waterloo. It's a great place. And thank you for all the comments.

I do want to say to the member for Peterborough, I—

Mr. Dave Smith: Kawartha.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Peterborough–Kawartha. If you didn't hear me saying something supportive, then you weren't listening, because I've been fighting for missing persons legislation since 2014 and it has been stuck. It was stuck on June 30 when this government stalled it and stopped it. I think it's somewhat cruel to someone like Maureen Trask, who has been fighting for this legislation for so many years now in honour of her son Daniel Trask, who died in Temagami.

To your point, this was what the Liberals did with this piece of legislation, anyway. They squeezed us on it. It was weak on the oversight piece and it was weak on the street-check piece. That is fundamentally going to be a problem for us, but we're still navigating our way through this legislation.

I'll just leave you with this quote from Justice Tulloch:

“Modern policing, after all, is founded on public trust. That trust is tested when the police cause a civilian's death or serious injury, or behave in a manner that is seen to fall below the professional standards expected of them.

“For the public to have confidence that the police will be held accountable, the investigation and resolution of such matters often requires the involvement of an outside investigative body.”

This is from his report. He was charged with looking at policing in the province of Ontario. He has made some recommendations, and this government has not taken those recommendations to heart.

I would like to say thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to be part of the Bill 68 debate, and I

look forward to moving forward and continuing the debate.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I would like to start off by taking this opportunity to thank the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Attorney General of Ontario for introducing this very important bill. If passed, this act would create the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, the Special Investigations Unit Act, 2019, and it would repeal the problematic Police Services Act, 2018, and the Ontario Special Investigations Unit Act, 2018. This bill will also repeal the Policing Oversight Act and the Ontario Policing Discipline Tribunal Act, 2018.

I would like to take this opportunity to first express my gratitude to law enforcement officers, especially the hard-working men and women in the Ottawa region, for the important work that they do, day in and day out, to keep our communities safe, and to reaffirm our government's unwavering commitment to protect the health and well-being of our province's first responders. I am proud to stand here today and support this important piece of legislation.

Ontario has some of the finest and most distinguished police officers anywhere in the world. Day in and day out, our brave police officers do incredible work, oftentimes putting their own lives on the line to keep our families and our communities safe. No matter what, our police are always working hard to make sure that we are taken care of. Often, this work is preventive and takes place behind the scenes. Other times, it requires them to make life-or-death decisions in the blink of an eye. Whatever the case, our police officers always have our backs, and they deserve to have a government that has their backs in return. I'm proud to be part of a government that supports our men and women in blue.

On October 22, 2014, there were a number of shootings that occurred on Parliament Hill. At the Canadian National War Memorial, Corporal Nathan Cirillo, a Canadian soldier on ceremonial sentry duty, was fatally shot. After wrestling with a constable at the entrance to Centre Block, where members of Parliament were attending caucus, the shooter ran inside, where he was fatally stopped by armed officers.

While, to us, acts like this seem like heroism, to police they are the accepted reality of doing their job. For these reasons, among many others, police officers deserve our utmost respect and gratitude, not our scorn or suspicion. That is why, Mr. Speaker, this government is providing police with the tools, support and resources they need to do their jobs.

As you have heard time and time again in this House, the previous government's disastrous Bill 175 was one of the most anti-police pieces of legislation in Canadian history. It did not even pay lip service to the principle of fairness or due process for police officers. Instead, it was disrespectful to the men and women who put their lives on the line just to keep our communities safe. It treated police officers as if they were guilty until proven innocent.

On the campaign trail, we promised to fix Ontario's police legislation. That is what the people voted for, and that is what this legislation delivers. Promises made, promises kept.

While the previous government's Bill 175 treated police with suspicion and made it difficult for them to do their jobs, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act will treat police with fairness and respect. It will enhance oversight and improve transparency, training and governance. It will ensure that the police, the government and the people of Ontario remain partners in creating a more secure province, and it will provide the framework for police officers to carry out their mandate to the best of their abilities, to serve and protect our society.

These issues that are addressed by this legislation were identified by police services boards, police officers, police chiefs, municipal leaders, community activists, police unions and, most importantly, the people of Ontario.

A robust oversight system is essential in establishing public trust in officers, and without public trust, police officers are not able to do their job efficiently. Only the most extreme anti-police activists would argue against a relationship of trust between police and the public. However, this trust will not be built with the snap of a finger. It will require positive habits, positive patterns and changing the systems in which we operate. That is why our government is committed to institutional change by enhancing police oversight.

Unfortunately, the existing system, which would have made it even worse under the previous government's legislation, is completely broken and has weakened the public's trust in police. Seemingly based on the notion that police are always wrong, it was confusing, unaccountable and plagued by delays. It didn't work for the police, and it certainly does not work for the public.

Our proposed bill restores trust in police oversight by stripping away the bureaucratic layers that were weighing down the oversight process, and will present a system that both our hard-working police officers and the people of Ontario can easily understand and access.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to apologize to the member, but unfortunately, the time for debate this afternoon has ended. But you will have an opportunity, when this bill is debated again, to lead off again. So thank you so much for that.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

AUTISM TREATMENT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Davenport has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of

Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister—or, in this case, the parliamentary assistant to the minister—may reply for up to five minutes.

1800

I now recognize the member for Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I am very pleased to have this opportunity to again put the question to the Minister of Education that I raised this morning. I'm here tonight because families of children with autism spectrum disorder are deeply concerned about changes that the government is forcing on them with its overhaul of the Ontario Autism Program. I don't have to tell the members opposite that; I know they've heard over and over and over again the many examples that my colleagues and I have raised.

While the issue has been the subject of much debate in this House, there is one important aspect of this change that has been missing from the conversation, and that is the impact of these changes on the education of children with ASD in our publicly funded education system. I've heard from many parents and educators who are deeply worried that kids will be abruptly shifted off of their current therapies as early as April 1, and that the proper accommodations in the school system will not be ready to ensure their safety, dignity and learning at school.

That's why I gave the Minister of Education the opportunity to share today with the House her plan for supporting students with ASD in the classroom. My question was: What specific plans have been made to ensure that children with autism spectrum disorder will have the supports they need at school when their funding expires in just four weeks? It was not satisfactorily answered, and that's very concerning, not just to me, but to the parents, the educators and the school administrators who are looking for clarity.

I also want to mention that the minister's response, for some reason, spoke only about the piece of Bill 48 that's coming forward around what she called "companion dogs"—I believe she meant service animals—which is something we are generally supportive of, although there have certainly been many concerns raised in the committee on this issue. But at the end of the day, that is not what we're talking about. That's not going to be adequate to support these students in the classroom, and we know that, and to pretend that that is in any way an adequate support or an adequate response to what this government is pulling is simply outrageous.

I want to express for a moment the urgency of this matter. As we've said many times before, Ontario has a world-class education system. Teachers, EAs and education workers work tirelessly, day in and day out, to support our students with special needs. But the reality is that our education system has suffered from chronic underfunding under the Liberal government, under this current government, again and again. We have classrooms that are overcrowded, meaning less one-on-one time between teachers and students. We have an enormous capital repair backlog, which I've mentioned many times in this room. School boards have told us that they are regularly

overspending on special education because the provincial funding is just not enough to cover the need. That means that every time the government cuts something back, like the \$25 million that was cut this fall, it takes away badly needed dollars from special education supports, from counsellors, from mental health workers. And when it comes to children with ASD, we know that regular therapy is an essential part of their development.

I had an emergency public meeting in my community a week ago tonight. A grandmother—her name is Eva—who has a child with ASD told us how therapy had helped her grandson so immensely, but now she's worried about what he'll do without these services, and she's worried that his school might not be equipped to support his needs. She's a previous educator, actually. She said, "I have experienced first-hand the lack of resources and support within our school system for teaching students with various complex needs. By depriving children with autism of sufficient funds to pursue proper therapy, the government will be creating an influx of children who are not equipped to participate in the classrooms. The rumoured proposal"—which is a good reminder here—"of removing class size caps will only magnify this issue. All students will suffer from the lack of support within the school system, and from the divided attention of overwhelmed teachers and schools. Adding more stress to an already strained education system.... We need a plan that will meet every student's individual needs, or every student suffers."

It's very simple: The school boards across this province have not heard one single word from the Ministry of Education or the Minister of Education about this matter since these changes were announced. Everyone is worried. Everybody is wondering how they're going to stretch already limited resources even thinner. I think it's fair to say that this is adding an additional stress to the families who are suffering already the devastating cuts to autism funding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you, and I look forward to the member opposite's response.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, the member from Niagara West, has up to five minutes.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to address the House about what the Ministry of Education is doing to support students with special needs and their families with the respect they deserve.

I'm here this evening to also talk about some of the work we have already done. We want to assure our colleagues that our government's top priority will always be to ensure that every student in Ontario has access to a meaningful education in a safe and supportive school environment.

The ministry supports school boards by funding special education services. School boards support students with autism in their neighbourhood schools through individual school-based programs and services as per the individual education plans. Applied behaviour analysis—ABA—instructional methods are provided through school boards to support students with autism where appropriate.

In 2018-19, \$4.2 million was invested to support 18 school boards to continue the second year of a pilot to improve school-based supports for students with autism spectrum disorder. This pilot explores how we can improve supports in schools for students with autism. Pilot school boards were given the flexibility to determine where to implement the dedicated space component based on where space was already available and their local context. School boards were also provided with funding to retrofit the space as needed and purchase supplies, such as desks, chairs and bookshelves for that space. The pilot also included targeted educational assistant training and funding to hire a board-certified behavioural analyst.

Our government extended the project last year to allow more time for evaluation of the results. We're committed to working with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, school boards and families to ensure that Ontario classrooms are safe and supportive, and to support transitions for children and youth with autism who may be affected by changes to the Ontario Autism Program beyond the 2019-20 school year.

The Ministry of Education works closely with our education partners to make sure that school boards have the resources they need and that they are consistent across the province.

One of the very first things our government did at the start of its mandate was to look at inconsistencies from board to board in all areas of program delivery, including special education. We know that our educators, our students, our teachers and educational assistants do their very best in school every single day, and the Ministry of Education is leaving no stone unturned to make sure they have what they need to continue the exceptional work they're doing.

The Special Education Grant is projected to be approximately \$3 billion in 2018-19, which supports students with special education needs, including students with autism. This funding includes:

—\$50.8 million in new funding for the 2018-19 school year through the new multidisciplinary supports amount, which will allow school boards to establish multidisciplinary teams and to increase their capacity to support students with special education needs, including students with autism;

—special incidence portion funding, which provides funding to school boards for staff support to ensure the health and safety both of students who have extraordinarily high needs related to their disabilities and/or exceptionalities and of others at school;

—the special equipment amount allocation, which provides funding to school boards to assist with the costs of equipment essential to support those with special education needs in cases where the need for specific equipment is recommended by a qualified professional.

Also, Speaker, this past fall, our government proposed a legislative amendment, Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. If passed, this legislation will help keep our students safer in classrooms and support more fair and consistent processes for families when making requests for service animals to accompany their children at school. Currently, there is no legislation in Ontario that explicitly addresses the use of service animals in school. Instead, it is up to individual school boards to develop their own process for managing service animal requests. This proposed amendment would allow the minister to direct school boards on developing service animal policies to ensure families of students with special needs experience a fair and transparent process when requesting that their children be able to bring a service animal to school.

Our government will continue to look at ways to provide further supports for students with ASD, as well as the staff that support them. The Ministry of Education is committed to ensuring successful outcomes for all students. Our government believes every student should have access to the supports they need to succeed in school, and that includes students with ASD.

Speaker, our goal is to bring back confidence in the government and ensure that students with special education needs have every right to be successful.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank both members, the member from Davenport and the member from Niagara West, for their input into this issue.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1811.

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Karahalios, Belinda (PC)	Cambridge	
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Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
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MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
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Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
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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	
Simard, Amanda (IND)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
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Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
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