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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 April 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 avril 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 April 1, 2019, on the motion for third 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): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: We've been talking about Bill 66 for some time now. I must say that this is legislation that has been put forward by the government that's going to help bring Ontario back on track. After 15 years of Liberal mismanagement and 380,000 regulations, this is the beginning of a process to get Ontario back on track to be the economic engine of Canada. Three hundred thousand manufacturing jobs lost in Ontario over the last 15 years: What are we doing about it? We're going to get Ontario open for business.

What are the key components of this bill? We want to improve credit union financing, allowing credit unions to participate in local financing to help our local communities. We want to allow open tendering on construction projects. This is just the beginning. There's a lot of work to be done for Ontario to reclaim its position as the economic engine of Canada, but Bill 66 is certainly a good start.

With that, I move, pursuant to standing order 48, that this question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Crawford has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOMS ACT, 2019

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 20, 2019, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Will Bouma: As always, it's a great pleasure to rise in the House, and it's great to see everyone here this morning. I would like to let the House know that I will be sharing my time on Bill 48 with the member from Markham-Stouffville.

Before I get into the details, I would just like to review a few things. We've been talking about Bill 48 for a while, but I would just like to remind everyone here and at home watching that this government established the largest consultation in education history. An incredible 72,000 people took part: teachers, students, parents, anyone who had concerns with our educational system.

This is a government that listens and a government that is clearly for the people. I can't stress enough, at a time when students needed a government to stand up for them to ensure a safe classroom environment, that—let's be honest—the former Liberal government failed them.

All of the feedback that we have received actually culminated in an amazing initiative that will see students succeed in the classroom because teachers will be supported and parents will be satisfied with the education their children are finally going to receive in classrooms across every single school in this province. We're listening and we're making sure that we're getting it right, once and for all.

We need to make sure that we're engaging youth and creating the right climate in which they feel safe, and ultimately to realize their dreams. We need to make sure that parents and students across this amazing province of Ontario know that it is the Ministry of Education's and this government's number one priority to ensure that each and every student will have access to meaningful education—an education that will help students reach their future goals and an education that will enable our students to find secure, good-paying jobs into the future. This means that, regardless of where students live or what school they attend, they have access to the best classrooms, the best teachers and resources that make Ontario a world leader in education. Whether that's in Brantford, Burford, Paris,

London, Hamilton, Simcoe, Kenora, Windsor, Kitchener or Ottawa, quality and access to educational supports should be equal.

Mr. Speaker, the world is changing rapidly. If Ontario does not adapt to this new reality, we will be left behind by other jurisdictions and we may never catch up, so we have to take action. We, as a government, have only one choice, one course of action, and that is to move forward and find innovative ways to succeed. And that success begins with our teachers. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our teachers for their commitment, their passion and their dedication to Ontario students. I thank all of them for the work that they do, day in and day out, in the classroom.

I'd like to talk a little bit about math first. Speaker, this government has been committed to working alongside our educators. The Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act would support teachers to become better prepared to teach the fundamentals in math and make it mandatory for aspiring teachers in Ontario to pass a math proficiency test before receiving their licence to teach, aimed in part at addressing years of declining student scores in the subject. We want people who actually enjoy math to be in front of the classroom demonstrating to children that math is an important skill and a fundamental, basic need.

The previous Liberal government just made things worse with an unproven and experimental curriculum known as "discovery math." We can clearly conclude that this curriculum has failed our students. We are putting an end to experiential math and getting back to what works.

EQAO data show that 49% of grade 6 students met the provincial math standards last school year, and that was down from 54% in 2013-14. Among grade 3 students, the EQAO said that 61% met the provincial standard in 2017-18, down from 67% in 2013. Speaker, we can and we must do better for our children in this great province.

I just want to quickly mention that this bill will help to deal with the empty student spaces in Ontario—roughly 55,000 in southwestern Ontario school boards alone and across the province—an issue the previous government had carelessly ignored.

Secondly, I'd like to talk about service animals. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act sets out a legislative framework for the use of guide dogs for individuals with a disability. The Blind Persons' Rights Act sets out a framework for the use of guide dogs for individuals who are blind or who have low vision, but there has not been any legislation in the province that addresses the use of service animals in schools. Previous governments have never provided direction to school boards on the use of service animals, leaving each school board to determine their own policies; and only 39 out of our 72 school boards in the province have done so. That lack of a consistent approach across our school boards has left students without access to important support.

Families of students with special education needs have asked for a more clear and transparent process for requesting that service animals be able to accompany their children to school, no matter where they live. Our government

for the people has been clear that we are committed to supporting parents and students, as well as teachers, in our education system. Every family in this province should feel supported when it comes to their child accessing a meaningful education. That is why we stood up in this House back in October when we first introduced Bill 48.

0910

Under Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, there will finally be fair, open and consistent processes to be followed when families make requests for service animals to accompany their children at school. All publicly funded school boards in Ontario will have a locally developed and publicly available service animal policy in place by September 2019, based on policies and guidelines established by the Ministry of Education. This is good news for families across the province with special needs, and I commend the minister for this initiative.

As I previously stated, Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, is geared towards keeping our children and students safe and ensuring that they are better supported in their learning environment. I'd also like to speak for a minute, Mr. Speaker, on abuse. If passed, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act will guide the discipline committees of the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators in revoking an educator's certificate for committing any act of sexual abuse of a student or a child where the discipline committees of the colleges have found the educator guilty of such acts. It will also allow the government, through regulation, to prescribe other acts of a sexual nature prohibited under the Criminal Code that would result in a mandatory revocation of an educator's certificate. I am fairly certain that many Ontarians already expect that this would be the case. If an individual in a trusted position of authority like a teacher commits an act of sexual abuse, that person should lose their ability to teach in the province of Ontario. But it is not the case right now; and as legislators I believe we have an obligation to fix it. This legislation does just that.

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

I encourage all members of this House to support Bill 48 because we know we have to put our students first. Our students need to know that we are there and that we respect them and all of their needs. Speaker, I honestly think this is the first time in 15 years that a government has decided to make sure that we have a great education system that makes sure that all of our children are ready to compete in this world. We are very excited to make sure that happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member did say he would be sharing his time. I recognize the mark from Markham-Stouffville.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. The member for Brantford–Brant did a wonderful job of articulating some of the very important features that are in this bill. I'll just take a minute or two, if I can, to reiterate some of those before I move on to some of the other aspects that I think are important. Obviously, the member touched on the safety and security of our students.

He touched on the important work that is going to be done with respect to math and helping make sure that our students have a better understanding, a better opportunity to learn math in an environment and in a fashion that was successful for many, many years before we transitioned to something called “discovery math.” It's something that I know many students have had difficulty with, but as a parent, I can say that I also have some difficulty with it, trying to explain to my own kids what it is that they're dealing with.

But I think the more important parts of this—and the member was right; there was a very large consultation: over 72,000 engagements on education, but not just on this bill, obviously; on the wide range of things that the government is doing. And as I've said so often in the House, the government is working in a fashion that understands that it's not easy to change 15 years of Liberal-NDP coalition government in just one fell swoop. We have to do it in an intelligent fashion; we have to do it in a manner that works for parents, that works for students and that works for taxpayers. And I think that's what we're doing; we're doing small pieces at a time, so that we can maximize the change, to the benefit, in this instance, of our students.

Because I have a little extra time, I want to touch a little bit on—and let me just, at the outset, say obviously I will be supporting this bill, but I think there is—and I know the minister would feel the same. The government is always going to be looking at opportunities to make our schools safer. It's what we do. I think all members on both sides of the House would agree that, if something comes up and we can bring a bill forward that makes the school even safer, we will do that. But as a parent—and I have heard from a lot of parents in my community—what is a safe and supportive school changes. It's different from parent to parent and from student to student.

I think back to 2014, when there was a shooting in Ottawa and I was a member of Parliament. A safe and supportive school at that time was a school, a principal and a staff that ensured that my kids were shielded, removed from the school and taken care of. That was exceptional work done by the school board. It was exceptional work done by the teachers and the principal of that school. Fast-forward a little bit: Now it's 2019 and change is coming, and sometimes change can be difficult. But I now look towards what is included in a safe and supportive school.

I've heard from a lot of parents who are frustrated that politics sometimes makes its way into the school system. They're frustrated by it; they're annoyed by it; they're irritated by it. Obviously, it's important to teach our students what politics is—what it is and how we make the decisions. What is a government? What is an opposition? What are the parties that are included in it? I think we

would all agree that that's where it should stop, that our students, especially in our primary or elementary schools, aren't to be used as tools to influence political debate or discussion. I would hope that we would all agree that that's wrong, because for some students, a safe and supportive school environment isn't one where they have to confront teachers or administrators who are showcasing a particular policy that they might not agree with.

I look at my own instance in York region: Teachers are wearing buttons that showcase a political message. For some students and for some kids in that school, the message that is being displayed might not necessarily be one that they feel safe and secure by seeing. It leads to a lot of different questions.

When you are in elementary school and the teacher, the person that you look up to—and I know, in my instance, when my kids are at school, I tell them, “You listen to your teacher when you're there.” When I was growing up, the teacher was the substitute for the parent from 9 o'clock until 3:30. When I went home and said sometimes, “Oh, the teacher did this or that to me,” my parents didn't pick up the phone and say, “Hey, teacher, what are you doing?” They said, “Well, you better modify your behaviour to make sure that you don't get your teacher upset with you.”

Our students look up to the teachers, so when they are confronted with a political message, and when that student addresses a teacher and the teacher can't respond—and the response that they get is, “We're not allowed to talk politics in the school.” Yet the teacher wears a button with a political message, which leads to a number of different questions—questions of: “Why is this being done in my school? Are there arguments? Is there animosity? Is there something that I need to be worried about?” Is that a safe and supportive environment? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker.

I think we can do better. I look and I ask why. I don't necessarily believe that it is the teachers who are making political statements. They are the vessels by which a political statement is being made, but I believe it's the union leadership that makes this happen.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I know members opposite are laughing. The members opposite laugh at this; they think it's funny. I ask the members opposite: Do you have young children at school? If you have a young child in school who suffers from anxiety, and a teacher knows this, is it responsible for that teacher to wear a political button that might attack something that the student feels passionately about? Is it right for them to do that? I say no.

0920

I say no to the union leadership. Don't use our students, through our teachers, to advance a negotiating position, because that's wrong. If you have a strong position, then leave it for the bargaining room. If your position is strong, leave it for the bargaining room, because that is where it belongs. Don't use teachers, don't use students; leave it in the bargaining room—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member from Carleton, you're heckling your own member. Come to order, please.

Mr. Paul Calandra: What is a safe and supportive environment will change.

In the bill, there are some exceptionally good things. The member for Brant talked about service animals; that's good. We talked about changes to math; that's good. We talked about being safe and supportive when it comes to sexual abuse and teachers losing their licences; that's good. I know that many of the members on both sides will agree with that.

But I think as a House we also have to take the next few months at some point to have a very real discussion on what belongs in the classroom. What form of protest can happen in a classroom? Do we want to politicize our schools? Or should they be somewhere where—I know that when I visit a school, I don't go into the school as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party; I go into the school as a member of provincial Parliament. I talk about the good work that is done by members of provincial Parliament on both sides of the House, how important it is for an opposition party in our system. I talk about the importance of all members of Parliament, the work that they do. I talk about the fact that I was a federal member and I was defeated by another member who is doing some really good work in the community, although that person defeated me. I'd like to think that all members do that.

So while members opposite might think it is funny, to some students, it's not funny. When a political message is being displayed to our kids—

Ms. Jill Andrew: Cuts for kids.

Mr. Paul Calandra: And there you have it, colleagues. You heard the insult across the floor. You heard the insult across the floor. "Cuts for kids" is what they say.

Ms. Jill Andrew: That's what the kids tell me. The cuts are hurting them.

Mr. Paul Calandra: But you should fight that battle here. If you believe that, then have the courage to stand in this place and fight that battle. Don't have your kids fight that battle for you. If you believe that, then stand up for what you believe in this place, because you were elected to do that. A 10-year-old was not elected to do it, a 12-year-old was not elected to do it, and a grade 1 student was not elected to do it, and they shouldn't be used as a vessel to try to influence public policy.

While I think that the work that our teachers are doing is great—I could not imagine a better group of teachers than the ones whom I have been blessed to have with my kids—I take issue, because I also believe that teachers should know better. They know the students they're teaching. They know how they feel. They know the issues they would face when they come home, and sometimes common sense has to prevail over a political message.

I am prepared to go anywhere to fight for what I believe in. I am prepared to stand in this House and fight with the members opposite, debate and argue, and if I lose, as I have done before, and get thrown out of office, then so be it. So be it. I accept that. But what I do not accept and will not accept is using children to try and advance a political agenda.

While I support this bill and look forward to voting in favour of it, I believe the time has come for us to have a broader discussion on how we eliminate partisan politics from our schools. That's what we have to do as a very important next step. I look forward to debating any member across who feels differently—who feels that our students should be used as political pawns.

To the parents who have called me, I tell them this: I will fight on your behalf and I will make sure that your kids feel safe—

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the member for Brantford–Brant for his comments, and the always-entertaining member for Markham–Stouffville.

Here's the point I invite my friends to consider: I think you're setting the bar too low in your new appreciation of math. I know I heard the members opposite talking about how horrible the sex ed program was under the Liberals because it consulted online about 4,200 people—0.001%. What I invite the members opposite to consider, if they understand math the same way I do, is that 72,000 online represents 0.005% of Ontario's population. I used to teach university courses, Speaker. I can tell you, that's not a passing grade in consultation. You need to set the bar a little bit higher.

You need to take this bill on the road. I was at the social policy committee. I heard the witnesses who testified to this bill. None of them spoke in favour of it—none of them. If you took this bill on the road, what my friend from Markham–Stouffville would begin to understand is that kids are not being used as pawns in the debate over education. Kids are organizing. I want to say to all the children right now in high schools organizing walkouts across this province on Thursday that the members on this side of the House, we are with you. We support you. Walk out of class, because this is a government that doesn't listen.

This is a government that time-allocates everything, that thinks consulting 0.005% of the province is the best consultation in Ontario's history. Sorry, my friends, take your bills on the road. Show up in Ottawa and ask parents, ask children if online learning for half of a full year of a high school career is adequate. Will they get enriched from that?

Respect teachers. Respect students. Respect the organizing that's being done and listen for once, instead of governing by bulldozer. That's what I want this government to do.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga—

Mr. Mike Harris: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I just can't help myself.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): —will come to order. I could have asked you to come to order three or four times during the last two-minute hit, and I didn't, so I'm saving it for now. But the next time I have to speak to you this morning, it will come with a warning. Thank you, sir.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's real pleasure to be able to stand again and speak to this piece of legislation. I've had the opportunity to participate in the leadoff as well as the second reading leadoff, and I really look forward to this coming to a vote soon and passing here in the Legislature.

I have to say, I appreciate the passion that both my colleagues, the member for Brantford–Brant and the member for Markham–Stouffville, brought to the debate this morning. It's a passion that's felt by not just the Minister of Education, but myself, as we look forward to supporting our students in classrooms across Ontario, making sure that they do have those safe and supportive classrooms and are receiving the best possible education for the future as well as today.

Speaker, one of the other things I found really, really puzzling listening to the member opposite was as he spoke about consultation and tried to say that the 1,600 consultation pieces that the Liberals had, as opposed to the 72,000 engagements that we had, somehow justified their curriculum.

I'm a little bit confused, because when the NDP was in the third-party position—and I know that they're official opposition now; I served in official opposition myself for a year and a half, and it's a very important role. But the reality is they didn't ask for consultation on the Green Energy Act. They didn't ask for taking the Fair Hydro Plan out on the road. They didn't ask to make sure they would have the carbon tax. Did they ask for cap-and-trade to get taken out on the road? The reality is, they don't want to talk about their failures that they supported under the Liberal government. All they want to do is turn it around and try a different set of rules for when the PCs are in government as opposed to their buddies, the Liberals, that they supported when the Liberals were in office. We saw that with the party that voted 97% of the time with the Liberal government.

I just want to say that it's unfortunate, that sentiment coming from the members of the opposition. But I support this legislation, Bill 48, and I am very pleased to speak to the debate with my colleagues this morning.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ça me fait plaisir ce matin de me lever pour le projet de loi 48.

Quand on entend le gouvernement Ford mettre les abus sexuels des enfants et les mathématiques dans le même projet de loi, c'est un peu décevant. C'est tellement important de débattre de ces deux projets de loi. Puis il n'y a personne, de ce côté de la Chambre, qui n'est pas contre l'abus sexuel envers les étudiants et les enfants dans les écoles. Je pense que ça ne devrait jamais arriver. Puis si ça se fait, sa licence devrait être retirée et il ne devrait jamais être capable d'enseigner dans une autre classe ou dans une autre école.

On connaît tous, je suis certain—moi, je sais qu'un de mes amis a vécu ça. Puis je peux vous dire que sa vie a été détruite. Aujourd'hui, on veut qu'aucun enfant ne passe à travers ça.

0930

Mais quand on entend de la morale qui vient de l'autre bord du plancher, qu'ils viennent nous faire la morale puis qu'ils disent que les professeurs font du débat politique avec leurs étudiants—écoute, je pense qu'il faut réaliser que la génération d'aujourd'hui est engagée. C'est une génération qui est beaucoup engagée, que ça soit dans la politique ou dans leur futur ou que ça soit pour des changements climatiques ou que ça soit pour l'environnement. Pour eux autres, c'est important. On n'a rien qu'à voir ce qui va se passer le 6 avril qui s'en vient : comment ils sont engagés et prêts à se lever puis à marcher dans les rues pour confronter un gouvernement qui n'écoute pas, qui veut grossir des classes, qui veut enlever le « one-on-one », le un sur un pour les étudiants.

Le gouvernement devrait prendre le temps d'écouter les professeurs et les étudiants. Ils sont dans les rues. Les étudiants sont dans les rues pour dire : « Écoutez nous—ce qu'on veut, pas ce que vous nous proposez. Changez votre projet de loi. Réflétez nos valeurs. » Ce n'est pas ce qu'ils font. Au contraire, ils ne veulent même pas se promener avec leurs projets de loi—pour pas être critiqués. Ce n'est pas un bon gouvernement. On devrait consulter les étudiants plus et les professeurs.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to touch on a couple of things that were said during the speeches and possibly some of the things in the two-minute responses. First off, the member for Brantford–Brant talked about how the number one priority is that our children feel safe in their schools. And that is one of the main goals of this bill: to make sure children do feel safe in school, that they have the opportunity to go and learn without having that anxiety, without having a lot of concerns over what's going to happen when they get to school.

The second thing he talked about that sticks out to me is that 49% of the students in grade 6 met the provincial standard in mathematics. We are falling behind on that. You can spin it any way you want. You can say that it's only 5% less than it was the previous year for testing, and statistically it's not that big of a difference, and throw a whole lot of different things out, but 49% is not a good mark. I would hazard to say that even 80% probably isn't where we should be, because that means that 20% are still falling behind.

Then he also mentioned the AODA legislation and how Ontario needs to be a leader in that. Actually, that is Ontario's legislation. Only 39 of 72 school boards right now have some kind of a policy for service animals. We have an opportunity, through our schools, to change a lot of what our society does and how we reflect on things. I think it's incumbent on us as the government to have our school system leading the way with our students, letting them know, having the students grow up so that our next generation recognizes that everyone has abilities, their different abilities, and promoting them that way. I'm proud to support this bill, Mr. Speaker, because of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return to the member from Brantford–Brant for his two-minute summation on what he just heard.

Mr. Will Bouma: I have to start by saying I am so glad that the member from Markham–Stouffville went after me because his eloquence and his elocution are superb, and I so appreciate the arguments that he brings to the table. And I'd like to thank the other members who spoke to this: the member from Niagara West and the member from Peterborough–Kawartha on our side, and also the members from Ottawa Centre and Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

I can appreciate the comments from the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay and I am glad that he is supportive of what we're changing with the math curriculum, that he is supportive of what we're changing with service animals, and that he is supportive of what we're doing with those teachers found guilty of sexual abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I think the member from Ottawa Centre made very clear exactly the point that the member from Markham–Stouffville was trying to make on using students as political pawns, and in fact even using teachers as political pawns, and being afraid to debate these things here on the floor, and instead using those who are most vulnerable in our system in order to do that.

What actually struck me this morning most of all, Mr. Speaker, was that we started off at 9 o'clock finishing up with Bill 66. I think it's so fascinating that we're talking about Bill 66, where we're going to do things to make Ontario open for business and so that our children have a future, and that on the same day we're talking about Bill 48, where we can promise Ontario that we will be preparing students for those jobs that we will be building.

I won't claim, obviously, that we get everything right, because I'm the first one to say that 90% of what we deal with is the mistakes from previous administrations, but I'm convinced that we are taking a step in the right direction.

I'm looking forward to the passage of Bill 48.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise today to represent the views of the people in London West. I'm here on their behalf, and I will be participating today in the third reading debate on Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act.

I have to say, Speaker, it feels a little bit like this debate is taking place in some kind of parallel universe or alternate reality. We are here discussing this legislation, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, as we know that the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services are off-site making an announcement about the autism program, doing some more damage control over what is probably the most botched policy announcement in the history of this Ontario Legislature. It is taking place just after hundreds of people marched 28 kilometres in Ottawa. I want to recognize my colleagues the member from Ottawa and the member from Sudbury, who were part of that march, who were highlighting the fact that there is a need for a national autism strategy. Because parents of children with autism can't risk another government like this government doing to children with autism what this government has done.

We have a government that has announced a new autism program that's going to make funding dependent on

age rather than needs. The result is that the services that are needed by children with the most—

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha has raised a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: We're discussing Bill 48 today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Yes, we are.

Mr. Dave Smith: Shouldn't the debate be around Bill 48?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I am listening closely and I'm sure the speaker will bring it back in that regard. Thank you for your intervention. With all due respect, we could have had several interventions earlier as well. If you want to do that, I'm sure the other side will play the same game when the member for Kitchener–Conestoga gets up. But thank you for your intervention.

I'll return now to the member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The autism program that this government has rolled out, as I was saying, makes funding dependent on age rather than needs, which means that the children with the most intense needs will have their services taken away if they don't meet the age criteria. We know that the overall amount of funding that's going to be available is completely inadequate to address the reality of the cost of the intensive services that many children with severe autism require.

We have a government that said it was 1,000% behind parents of children with autism and that under this government, no parents would be protesting on the lawn of Queen's Park. And what did we see, Speaker? We have seen wave after wave of protest on the lawn of Queen's Park—communities across this province—as parents are pushing back and telling this government that their strategy for dealing with autism is completely inadequate.

We have a government that brought forward a plan that disadvantages girls, Speaker, because we know that girls are much more likely to be diagnosed later than boys, and that means that they will receive a much lower level of funding than boys; same thing for children with autism in rural and northern communities, who may not get that diagnosis at the early age that would qualify them for the maximum amount of funding. We're debating this legislation in that context.

0940

We're also debating it, Speaker, as we know that in two days 100,000 students at more than 500 schools in this province are going to be walking out of their classrooms. They're going to be saying no to cuts. Those young people understand what it means when you take \$1 billion out of the public education system, when you remove 10,000 adults—teachers, education assistants, guidance counsellors, mental health counsellors. When those professionals are taken out of our schools, out of our classrooms, children suffer. Cuts hurt kids. I want to acknowledge Rayne Fisher-Quann, the inspiring student who has organized this walk-out that's taking place in two days, the largest student walk-out in Canadian history.

We know that OSTA, the Ontario Student Trustees' Association, has made very clear its opposition to some of

the changes that this government has proposed, particularly around making four e-learning courses mandatory for secondary school students to graduate. Students have said this is not what students need. Some students do well in e-learning courses, but many students do not. That's not the appropriate kind of setting for a lot of students to learn. This is going to disadvantage students, particularly those who are at highest risk, and it will also disadvantage students who don't have access to broadband or WiFi in their home communities.

We also know that four days from now, on Saturday, April 6, we're going to see thousands of people again rallying at Queen's Park to push back against the cuts that this government has proposed. They understand that cuts to our public education hurt kids. Cuts do not create safe and supportive classrooms. Cuts do the exact opposite of creating safe and supportive classrooms.

Speaker, the other context that we have to remember in which this debate is taking place is the fact that there's a \$16-billion backlog in school maintenance and repairs across this province. That means schools with boilers that aren't working, schools that have leaky roofs, schools that have crumbling steps to enter the building. This is not a safe and supportive environment for either students or for the education workers who work in these buildings. Yet this legislation that we're looking at today says nothing about the reality that children need qualified professionals in their classrooms to enable them to learn to their fullest capacities. They need school buildings that are in decent shape, that are functioning, so that they can have a healthy learning and teaching environment.

Speaker, in my community in London, the Thames Valley District School Board just had to announce that 100 staff are going to be laid off as a result of this \$1 billion that the government is taking out of public education. There are going to be 100 fewer learning coordinators, teachers on special assignment, custodians, clerical workers and others. What do these learning coordinators and teachers on special assignment do in the Thames Valley District School Board? They are engaged in a number of ways in the school setting. They are working on a provincial math strategy, Speaker. And isn't that interesting, because this bill speaks to math, but it doesn't talk about teachers developing a provincial math strategy. It comes at math from a very different approach, and I'm going to speak about that in a minute.

These learning coordinators and teachers on special assignment are also engaged in supporting Indigenous education in our schools. They are engaged in coaching teachers on how to improve their practice in the classroom. Yet these are the people who are being cut because of this government's decision to remove funding from public education.

Yesterday, we learned that 35 educational assistants are going to be laid off in the Thames Valley District School Board and that educational assistants who want to become certified in applied behaviour analysis—which is a very effective therapy for students with autism—are having to cancel the training that they booked because they've been

told that the school can't afford to let them leave the building because there's no one to cover for them if they go to do their training. We also know, at the same time, that the Thames Valley board is expecting more than 500 students with autism who will be entering the school system as a result of the new Ontario Autism Program.

Speaker, in this context, of all these things that I've talked about, I'm looking at this bill and I'm looking to see what kinds of measures are proposed in this bill to deal with what is actually happening in our public education system. What do I see, Speaker? I see a requirement to revoke the licences of teachers and ECEs who are found guilty of committing sexual acts. This is absolutely essential. We know that this is a long-overdue thing that needs to happen, and it's non-negotiable. This should absolutely have happened. The government could have brought this forward as a stand-alone bill. We could have dealt with this in the summer. We could have dealt with it last summer, when we came back for that emergency session.

It's hard, Speaker, not to be cynical about a government that claims to be concerned about the safety of children, and yet the first thing it did—instead of bringing forward this requirement to revoke the licences of members who are found guilty of committing sexual acts—was attempt to remove the health and physical education curriculum from all students—every single student—in this province. Thank goodness for those secondary school students who pushed back and got the government to change course slightly. But that was a move that not only did not improve the safety of students in our school; it actually put students at risk. It puts students at enormous risk when students aren't taught concepts about consent, about their right for autonomy over their own bodies. That was a very dangerous thing that this government did. Despite that, I appreciate that we will soon have legislation in place to ensure that those licences are revoked.

What else is in this bill? I started out talking about autism. We know that governments of all stripes have had to grapple with the need to develop funding programs and policies to address the needs of children with autism. This bill allows the minister to establish policies and guidelines with respect to service animals in schools and to require boards to comply with those policies.

Speaker, I have to say that, when my son was in elementary school—he started in JK at Northridge elementary school in London—there was a student with autism. He had a service dog who was called London, and that service dog was a celebrity in the school. London, the service dog, did a great job for the student that he was entrusted with, and so I know that service dogs can be vital supports for students with autism. But we can't pretend that a service dog for a child with autism is any replacement for the kind of professional therapy, the kind of intensive therapy, that trained behavioural therapists can provide.

This is a good step. This is a good thing to have in place, but Speaker, given the chaos that has been unleashed by this government with regard to autism supports, this measure falls far, far short of what we actually need to see happen.

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The third piece of this bill that I'm going to highlight is around the mandatory math tests for teachers. Let's not forget, Speaker, that when this bill was first introduced, the government was apparently engaged in a consultation about what needed to happen to help improve math scores in the province, but this government decided that they weren't going to wait for the results of that consultation. No, they were going to go right ahead and introduce this bill and introduce this requirement that every teacher in the province take a mandatory math test in order to graduate from teachers' college.

Speaker, I was a policy researcher before I was elected, and I always like to see the evidence. Show me the evidence that the actions that are being taken by this government will actually have the outcome that the government desires to see. This government has proposed that requiring teachers to take a mandatory math test is going to improve math scores. To me, without the evidence that this has actually been the case in other jurisdictions that maybe have tried this approach, without that evidence, this is magical thinking that somehow requiring graduates of teachers' college to take a math test is going to improve math scores.

The other thing that we have to keep in mind, Speaker, is that there are 125,000 teachers in schools across the province. There are about 5,000 teachers who are projected to retire each year. That means that when those retirements are replaced—if they are replaced, because we know that there are going to be 10,000 jobs cut from our education system. But if those 5,000 teachers are replaced every year with new graduates who have taken a mandatory math test, it's going to take a minimum of 25 years before we have teachers in our schools across the province who have taken this mandatory math test. And that's if you believe that a mandatory math test will do anything to improve students' math scores.

It's ironic, Speaker, that at the same time that this government decided that they were going to require these mandatory math tests, they also eliminated the funding from a program that was allowing teachers to get additional qualifications in math, and many teachers wanted those additional qualifications in math. We all know that a program where you are learning continuously is much better than a one-time exam to test knowledge. Yet this program to allow teachers to gain the additional qualifications in math, the funding for that program was cut by this government, because despite the success of these AQ courses, this government decided that that was not the way they wanted to go.

It's interesting, when you look at some of the history in this province, Speaker. In 2001, under a previous PC government, there was a requirement that teachers were going to be tested on their knowledge, and what happened? Within a couple of years, those tests were abandoned because people recognized that doing these kinds of mandatory testing is not effective. It doesn't work, to actually ensure that the students who are being taught by these teachers who have been tested are going to learn better.

So, Speaker, I have to say that if I was grading this legislation, I am not sure where I would land. I think it would pass, but maybe a D+, because this legislation does very little to address the pressing issues, the priorities, that we need to be talking about in our public education system.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I stand to support Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. We all agree that we need to get rid of discovery math and get back to the basics for our students, and we need to support the students who have the need for safety dogs. And we need to prohibit sexual misconduct with our students.

Even though autism is not part of this bill, I would like to respond to the member from London West. For the past 15 years, funds were cut and services were cut, and we have not provided services to 75% of autistic children. It is because of this that parents are expecting more funds and more support from this government, and that's why the minister saw the need. The minister of MCCSS fought for extra funding of \$100 million immediately when she found that the system was already broke—and broken. When we listened to the needs of the parents, she also—now, just recently—doubled what we have already got to \$600 million, the largest funding in history and among the other provinces in Canada.

We care for our students. That's why this whole House, this whole government, is working very hard for the future of our students. We would ask the opposition to see the need for this bill, which is really focusing on bringing the best quality and bringing the best curriculum to our students. Please all support Bill 48.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege to take my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin and to have the privilege of sitting here with the member for London West. I wish you would have been my teacher, giving out grades like that. My goodness. I wouldn't have spent so many days in detention, maybe.

Speaker, my goodness, what world is this government in? I've spent the last two months—three months now—since this bill has hit the floor trying to engage with our school boards, trying to engage with a lot of our parents; as a matter of fact, students have been trying to engage with my office as well. I have to say, where did you come up with this stuff? Because they don't know either. I'm asking them, "Did you give some direction?" In this, I'm talking to my school boards and parents and teachers. I'm going, "Where did they get it?" It didn't come out of the sky.

Here's how we can best describe it to you. Sometimes, when I'm driving on the highways in northern Ontario, I come across and I see these two eyes in the middle of the road. It's a deer that's sitting there, and he's just looking at me. That's the reaction that I get from school boards across my riding: "They didn't talk to us. They didn't come up. We don't know where the justification for these numbers is."

I want to thank the member for really focusing her discussions on autism, and I look to have the opportunity to

talk about autism when I get to speak on this bill and the impacts that it has on students. I hope I get the opportunity to talk about how informed our students are on their education, on the future of the environment, on jobs, and on the economy. They are the ones who are reaching out to us as politicians. That's what I'm hearing from students when I go into my schools, anyway, and they're asking me questions.

I'd like to stand here and tell them, "You know what? We're all here to do a good job." I choose to believe that we are all trying to move our issues forward. However, what makes us different—and I do relay this to the students in the classrooms—is that our priorities are very different.

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

Mr. Daryl Kramp: It's a rather interesting comment today from across the House. If I just might offer a little bit of a personal reflection: One of the things I was most proud of from all of my years in public service is that I probably spent more time in school classes than maybe any other member of Parliament in Canada. Civics, grade 5, grade 10—I made it a passion to reach out on a consistent basis to our students.

I can tell you, I'm deeply disappointed with some of the comments from across the aisle. As an example, the member for Ottawa Centre, who I have a great deal of respect for—as a matter of fact, I think he's a fine member of Parliament and does some great work here. But to suggest, quite frankly, that the students are to be used and are utilized as pawns on this is deeply, deeply disturbing to me.

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The reason I say this is I have family that are teachers. I spend a lot of time in the schools, and—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He has not said that. You can't just make this stuff up.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Please, if you just give me the courtesy of my comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Fair enough.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: What bothers me is, we all want a better world for our students, regardless of where we are at on either side of the House here.

I had a protest outside my office the other day. Wonderful. Great. People have the right to protest and the privilege to protest. Those are the democratic principles we stand for. But when I saw young people going by giving the finger and being applauded, I thought to myself, "What kind of an example does that set?"

I was fortunate. Every year, I won the student vote—"sad," from the reflection from the opposition—but I never, ever once issued a partisan statement in a class. I only talked about our process, our procedures, our privileges and our possibilities, and I would certainly suggest do not use our students as pawns in this. As the member from Markham said, let's discuss the issues personally and frankly.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I am proud to stand today and add my voice to the government bill, Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act.

I would just like to speak on behalf of the students, the countless students that I have spoken to in my riding, and even nearby my riding, in schools like North Toronto, Northern Secondary and Forest Hill CI. These students are activists, and I am really proud of them because they are the ones coming to me and saying, "Jill, are you going to fight for our classrooms not to balloon out of control? What about our sex ed? What about our physical and health education curriculum? What about our human rights, Jill? What are we doing to protect them? The government's not listening to us. We haven't been consulted."

So when the member from Kitchener—Conestoga, who happens to be the son of a previous Premier who really did a job on the education system—a terrible job because of the funding formula that is still broken, a funding formula that has our kids sitting in schools that are falling apart. Those are the issues that kids are worried about. These kids are activists and, good golly, am I proud of them.

So when the member says talk to real people, not activists—these students are activists and we should be proud of that. They go to school to learn about democracy. They go to school to learn about how to stand up for what they believe in. And they're standing up to this government, and this government is not listening. What you're doing is you're taking away their democracy. You are hurting kids with these cuts. And how dare you talk about us using children as pawns. Some of us are actually teachers over here. Some of us have actually stood in classrooms. I am proud of our kids and I'll keep fighting for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We now return to the member from London West to wrap up what she just heard on the questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the members from Richmond Hill, Algoma-Manitoulin, Hastings-Lennox and Addington, and Toronto—St. Paul's for their comments.

Speaker, as my colleague the member from Toronto—St. Paul's noted, many of us in this building have backgrounds in education. I myself was a school board trustee for 13 years before I was elected. We bring those experiences to the debates that take place in this chamber.

Certainly, as a former school board trustee, I have connected with current school board trustees, and nobody is saying that what we need right now in our public education system are guidelines for service dogs for students with autism and mandatory math tests for teachers. Speaker, I'm not hearing that.

What I'm hearing in Thames Valley is the fact that there are a minimum of 500 students with autism who are going to be entering the school system. Not only will there be no additional supports, but the supports that are already there are being taken away. I talked about the 35 EAs who have been cut, and other EAs who were planning to do ABA training have been told they can't be released because there's nobody to cover for them. So these students with autism will be entering a school system that is completely unprepared to address their needs.

We also know that in Thames Valley there are almost 2,000 students with other kinds of disabilities who are waiting for rehabilitation therapy, for speech and language, for OT, for PT, and they are waiting for sometimes

up to two years. Those are the kinds of issues we should be addressing, not what's in this legislation.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Mr. Speaker, it's an absolute pleasure to be able to rise today. I do apologize to the Chair for earlier, but sometimes, like I said, I just can't help myself.

It is my pleasure, again, to rise today to speak in support of Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, introduced by the very Honourable Minister of Education, the member for Huron-Bruce.

It has also been my pleasure to participate in this debate, especially having the opportunity to listen to my fellow members on both sides who are passionate about education in this province.

Quite simply, this act will ensure the health, safety and well-being of our children while improving their scholastic achievement in classrooms across our great province. Above all, it puts children and parents first by ensuring that students have greater opportunities to excel and teachers have the necessary skills to support them.

But first, I must commend the work of the Minister of Education. This bill and her latest announcement, following our largest ever consultation on education in the history of Ontario, Mr. Speaker, with over 72,000 respondents, shows that our government is listening to students, parents and educators. She has laid down a framework that will modernize the curriculum, modernize classrooms and empower educators to prepare students for the reality of the modern world.

Just to quote our honourable minister for a second, because she really nails what our government's vision is for education, the vision we promised during the campaign, the vision we are implementing now: "We must ensure that all students receive the education and supports they need to support a career path that aligns with their interests and abilities, while building on their capacity to adapt as the world around them changes." Mr. Speaker, I think that is a very important statement.

I'm going to go on to read a further quote: "Whether they live in Toronto, North Bay, Windsor, Vankleek Hill, Kenora, Palgrave, Caledon, Smiths Falls or even Belgrave in Huron county, students require tools that will enable them to pursue an apprenticeship, attend a college or university, or immediately enter the" workforce in their community.

Bill 48 reflects this vision. It proposes common sense and positive solutions for problems in the education system.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Someone raised you right.

Mr. Mike Harris: Someone did raise me right.

So, let's review the components of this act. Schedule 1 amends the Early Childhood Educators Act to require mandatory revocation of an early childhood educator's certificate if the relevant discipline committee finds the member guilty of sexual abuse or child abuse.

I wish we lived in a world where provisions like this weren't necessary, Mr. Speaker, but it is clear that this government must take a zero-tolerance policy to protect children. Therefore, schedules 3 and 4 also make amend-

ments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act and Teaching Profession Act that provide absolute clarity on what is appropriate and inappropriate in the classroom.

Schedule 2 amends the Education Act to give the minister authority to establish policies and guidelines respecting service animals in schools, and requires boards to comply with the policies and guidelines that are set forth. Currently, Mr. Speaker—and this number is staggering—only 39 of 72 school boards across the province have policies in place to address the needs of service dogs in their schools. I'm very surprised, considering the real benefits that service dogs provide to students, especially with autism.

To quote our outstanding parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, the member for Niagara West, "Service dogs have been proven to:

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

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Mr. Speaker, it is not acceptable that some school boards still reject service dogs in the classroom. Families of students with special needs deserve a clear and transparent process for requesting that service animals be able to accompany their children no matter where they live. This rings true for Waterloo region and the rest of the province, Mr. Speaker. I know that my fellow members on both sides of this chamber are well aware of and commend the member for Kitchener South-Hespeler's incredible advocacy for her son's right to have service dogs join him in a Waterloo Catholic District School Board classroom. This amendment will ensure that all families feel supported and that members of the public have an opportunity to give input to shaping local school board policy.

I wish to highlight the other important component of schedule 3. An amendment to the Ontario College of Teachers Act will require applicants to the college to pass a math test. This provision supports teachers to be better prepared to teach the fundamentals of math. Moreover, these changes will provide more confidence to parents that the government is working to ensure that Ontario continues to have one of the best education systems in the world.

As the official opposition sometimes forgets, including when we discuss economic development, our students are now competing at a global level. In today's climate, businesses have the markets of the world at their disposal. Markets have to be innovative in the ways they attract business. How are we going to make this market stand above the rest? It begins with crafting a strong and adaptable employment base.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, math scores were declining under the previous Liberal government. EQAO records show that between 2011 and 2016, the percentage of

primary students—grades 1 through 3—at or above the provincial standard for mathematics decreased from 68% to 63%. Added to this, during that same period, the percentage of junior students—grades 4 to 6—at or above the provincial standard decreased from 58% to 50%. Those numbers represent a one-percentage-point drop over the previous school year for those grades, though the numbers have decreased each year that EQAO assessments have been completed since 2013.

Therefore, we need to raise our teachers and students up to a level playing field with fellow Commonwealth countries like Australia, which conducts a literacy and numeracy test for initial teacher education students, and like the UK, which mandates a professional skills test for prospective teachers to assess core skills.

Moving forward from this bill, our new back-to-basics math curriculum will focus crucially on math fundamentals for all grades and a renewed focus on STEM, skilled trades and financial literacy, Mr. Speaker.

Financial literacy is an absolute essential to student success to build a well-educated, responsible workforce. Therefore I am glad it will be a major component of the grade 10 career course.

This back-to-basics math approach, which will include new online resources, will improve student performance in math, help students solve everyday math problems, and increase students' employability in the jobs of tomorrow.

Moreover, we also recognize the importance of the educator. As such, we will be providing funding for teachers wishing to get additional qualifications in math.

I'm also glad that Dr. Cameron Montgomery, with English- and French-language-school system experience, will be heading up the EQAO as the full-time chair—the first time that the EQAO has had a full-time chair, Mr. Speaker. After 15 years of lack of oversight and accountability, our government inherited a broken and ineffective EQAO. We heard loud and clear from teachers, parents and students that the administration of their testing was ineffective and burdensome and did not equal education standards across the province.

Again, this current bill will ensure the health, safety and well-being of our children while improving their scholastic achievement in classrooms across our great province. More importantly, I have received positive feedback from my constituents, including parents and teachers, who have expressed their concerns about declining core math skills and key supports like service dogs being excluded from students who need them.

As many of you here know, I am the proud father of five children between the ages of three and 12. Having safe, supportive and productive classrooms is important to me and to thousands of other parents across this province. The previous government left us an outdated system that did not prepare our students for the realities of today. Our government has been clear from the beginning that we are listening to parents and consulting with our education partners to modernize and improve Ontario's education system, from kindergarten to grade 12. This legislation reflects this. Moving forward, I will continue to meet and

consult with local school boards, unions and individual teachers in my constituency.

I fully support Bill 48 through its third reading. Let's get this passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That takes all of our time this morning. When we resume, we'll be doing questions and comments.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): At this point, this session will stand in recess until question period at 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'd like to welcome Patricia Chartier and Fred Berenbaum from Beaches—East York, and Kenneth Yurchuk from Etobicoke. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce a long-time friend of mine and a steadfast advocate in the autism community, Matthew Dever, and his daughter Emily-Grace. It's so great to have you here from our nation's capital.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It is my pleasure to introduce some people from the Canadian Franchise Association. I have in the galleries Kevin O'Donnell, Stephen Schober, David Collier, Victor Hinojosa, Clark Harrop, Joel Friedman, Pawan Johar and Andrew Arminen. Thank you so much for being here today, and welcome.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I, as well, have the Canadian Franchise Association. I think we had to split up the amount of people—John Kellett, Peter Noronha, David Druker, Steve Moorman, Michelle Burton, Brian Bazely, Joel DeGroat and Sridhar Rao.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Patricia Chartier and Kenneth Yurchuk, the only two patients who got to do deputations at the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Thank you so much for your courage. Much appreciated.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: I'd like to welcome my intern, Linda Bui, back to the chamber. Welcome, Linda.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome to the Legislature once again Michau van Speyk, who is from the Ontario Autism Coalition. Welcome to Queen's Park, Michau.

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to give a very warm welcome to Queen's Park today to Rob Pope, a constituent of mine from Campbellford, a Rotary member; and Eloisa de Castro Costa, all the way from Brazil, a Rotary exchange student in Northumberland—Peterborough South. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Doug Downey: Also with the Canadian Franchise Association are Peter Drutz, Ruthie Burd, Stefania Sigurdson Forbes, Manojh Subenthiran, David Tsai and Sherry McNeil.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member for Hamilton Mountain has a point of order.

Miss Monique Taylor: I seek unanimous consent to allow members to wear neurodiversity pins in support of adults for autism on world autism day.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow the members to wear a pin in recognition of world autism day. Agreed? Agreed.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha on a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: I seek unanimous permission to wear the Oshawa Generals' vintage jersey in recognition of Oshawa being better than the Peterborough Petes this year.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to wear the hockey sweater this morning. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Durham.

Ms. Lindsey Park: In solidarity—I think the member has the vintage jersey—I'll wear the current colours in my seat, if I can get unanimous consent from the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Durham is seeking unanimous consent of the House to wear a hockey sweater as well. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Ross Romano: This morning I wanted to welcome members of the Invasive Species Centre from my riding of Sault Ste. Marie to the Ontario Legislature. They are here today for their advocacy day and their reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230. I encourage everyone to come out tonight for some northern hospitality and meet Tracey, Lori and the rest of the group from the ISC.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Do we have any more introductions of guests?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

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

Hon. John Yakabuski: Speaker, on behalf of everyone in the Legislature, and certainly my caucus colleagues: I know we don't make references to a member's absence, but we know that Jimmy McDonell has been off on surgery, and it is just great to see him back here this morning.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Yes, indeed. Welcome back.

The member for Scarborough–Guildwood on a point of order.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I would just like to welcome some guests who are here today from the Canadian Franchise Association: Geeta Gandhi, Stephen Schober, Gary Prenevost and David Collier, who I have met with this morning. I'd like to welcome them today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Today the government's mega-health bill is being discussed at committee. This should be an opportunity for

everyday people to express their views on the government's scheme, but while 1,594 people asked to appear at committee, the government will only allow 30 people to speak—less than 2% of the people who signed up.

One woman who has come to express her view is Patricia. She has come to Queen's Park today because she opposes the government's decision to collapse Cancer Care Ontario and pull the rug out from under thousands of cancer patients and their families across the province.

There are many, many more voices that must be heard before the government plows ahead. Will the Premier agree to hear those voices?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the leader of the official opposition for her question.

Certainly, there is an opportunity for people to present, but as the leader will also know, this is a situation where, in every case when we are in committees on bills, not everyone is going to have the opportunity to appear to make a presentation. However, they do have the opportunity to make written presentations—anyone who wishes to do so, of that number that the leader of the official opposition has mentioned. I can assure her that we will take every submission into consideration, whether it's verbal or written.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to read to the House some of what Patricia, a cancer survivor from Toronto, said before committee:

"I don't want to live in an Ontario in which the needs of cancer and transplant medicine are lumped in with every other aspect of health care and forced to compete for the attention of a small, appointed centralized board. That makes no sense."

"In fact, it feels to me like a crime against the people of our province."

Will the Premier listen to Patricia and others like her, stop ramming this bill through, and instead listen to the patients and experts who have come forward in droves with very, very serious concerns?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Certainly, it is important to listen to Patricia's concerns. We are listening to people across the province.

But what we are doing is strengthening our public health system and making sure that it responds to the needs of patients, families and caregivers.

While I understand that Patricia is concerned about Cancer Care Ontario, she need not be, because those services are going to continue. The leadership is under one administration now, but the work that is being done will continue. The excellent-quality cancer care services that Cancer Care Ontario has provided in the past will certainly be continuing into the future.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Patricia isn't the only patient hoping to be heard today. Kenneth from Etobicoke is fighting a long and difficult battle with cancer. Kenneth says that Cancer Care Ontario has been there for him every step of the way. Kenneth is extremely concerned about

Cancer Care Ontario being folded by this government into their super-agency—not just for himself, but for his children and his grandchildren.

What does the government have to say to Kenneth and his family from Etobicoke today?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Again, it is important to listen to the concerns of anyone who wants to appear before committee, and we are listening to what they have to say.

However, I could say to the leader of the official opposition and to Kenneth and his family that the excellent care that he has been receiving will continue, as will cancer care for anyone else in Ontario who needs it.

Cancer Care Ontario is a great organization. It provides great services, but also can serve as a template for other issues, other areas of chronic disease management where we don't necessarily have a great system and great infrastructure.

1040

We look forward to working with Cancer Care Ontario, learning lessons from them about what an excellent chronic disease management strategy should look like so that we can expand that so that people with other issues can receive help, and Kenneth can certainly continue to receive the services that he needs from Cancer Care Ontario, now and into the future.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier, but I have to say to the health minister that giving 2% of the people who want to have a voice heard at committee is not fair for the people of Ontario. It is the wrong thing for this government to do.

Yesterday, in response to the opioid crisis—an unprecedented public health emergency—the Premier said that he was cutting funding to six overdose prevention sites because “not in my backyard.”

The Premier has heard from health professionals, nurses and experts warning him that people could die as a result of this decision. How does he justify his priority?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: She misquoted “not in my backyard.” I was referring to one of the media who was asking me.

We're putting together a great system. I had an opportunity to speak to the Cabbagetown community, who said that their MPP wasn't returning their calls. The federal MP wasn't returning their calls. They couldn't believe I returned their calls. They were telling me that they have four safe injection sites, all within a kilometre.

We believe in having a wraparound facility to make sure that we help people with addictions. There's no one more passionate about trying to help people than myself, Mr. Speaker. I find it—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: I found it so disturbing yesterday when the Leader of the Opposition wanted to get personal and bring my family into discussions.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, that was disgusting.

Hon. Doug Ford: That was pretty disgusting. Rob, my brother, had an issue in front of the whole world. He dealt with it. I just found it disgusting that you brought family members into the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order. Order. Government side, come to order.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have to say that I think the entire world felt a lot of deep sympathy with Mr. Ford and his family as he went through that crisis, and that's what I was referring to. But what I do need to say is that that same kind of compassion and empathy needs to be thought about right now, with all of those other families who are also facing the same kind of crisis as the Fords happened to have to face so publicly not so long ago.

This opioid crisis is claiming lives every single day, and health experts say that this government's decision will result in increased deaths. In fact, those were the exact words of Toronto's Chief Medical Officer of Health: “You will see more deaths.”

Is the Premier ignoring these warnings, or does he simply not care about them?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: First of all, through you, Mr. Speaker: I'd like the leader of the official opposition to know we take the opioid crisis very seriously. We know this is a major public health emergency. That's why we took the time to do the consultations, to make sure that the decisions that we're making and the criteria that we were developing for the consumption and treatment service sites were legitimate and were based on data and evidence.

I would again remind the leader of the official opposition that we still have—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You cannot demonstrate from the galleries. You will have to leave.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

You have to leave.

Interruption.

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

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care was in the midst of an answer. I would ask her to conclude.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you. We are certainly aware that this is a major crisis, a public health emergency. That is why it was important to consider and visit—I visited a number of the consumption and treatment sites to understand myself and to listen to staff and to listen to some of the people who were using the sites and to speak with people with lived experience. I had a long conversation with them.

The decisions that were made were based on proximity, to make sure that we didn't have too many in one area, that they were geographically dispersed, that they were able to provide the wraparound services to save lives, of course—of course, that's a first priority—but also to make sure that they could provide the rehab services that people need when they are able to make that decision—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The opioid crisis did not happen overnight, and I don't think anybody can choose where somebody might overdose. It won't go away just because the Premier pretends it's not happening. Overdose prevention sites will save lives. But instead of listening to doctors, nurses, health experts, mayors, councillors, local elected officials and families who risk losing loved ones to overdose, the Premier is trying to limit the response even as the crisis continues to grow.

When will the Premier realize that if he wants to save lives, we can't turn our backs on people and say "not in my backyard"?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Speaker, again through you to the leader of the official opposition, what she is suggesting is absolutely not the case. It is not an issue of "not in my backyard." It is where it is appropriate and where the greatest need is. I would remind the leader of the official opposition that there are six sites open in Toronto, with another site under consideration, working with the city of Toronto, because we know that it helps many people and it needs to continue to do so, but there are other issues that need to be resolved.

There have also been three new sites that have been opened: one in Thunder Bay, one in St. Catharines and one in Parkdale. We recognize that there are needs across a variety of communities, and we want to make sure that we can continue to serve those communities. That's what we're doing. We want to make sure that, as we are developing the consumption and treatment service sites, I think it's really important for everyone to remember that this is part of a much bigger picture of mental health and addictions that we are trying to provide support—

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

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier, but I would say to the Minister of Health that it's appropriate to save lives wherever they need to be saved, Speaker—wherever they need to be saved.

As the Premier knows, today is world autism day. It's a day when countries around the world strengthen our commitment to the full inclusion and participation of people with autism. This year, the Ford government has become a focal point for activists and parents for all the wrong reasons. Now the government is finally admitting that their scheme to take funding away from children with autism was just plain wrong.

Will the Premier commit today that funding to fully meet the needs of Ontario children will be included in the upcoming budget?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: We have a great team working on the autism file. We're doubling the funding. It's going to be in excess of \$600 million. We're consulting with parents. We're consulting with therapists. We're consulting with organizations that work

with children with autism, and we're passionate about it. I can't even begin to tell you, Mr. Speaker, how many people I've talked to, till all hours of the night, telling them that help is on its way.

1050

We're going to make sure that we're listening. I think the announcement was incredible today. We're taking a three- or four-pronged approach to this, getting education and health involved, along with our all-star minister sitting right over there, an incredible person, the Minister of Social Services, who's been going through this for months trying to make sure that we get this right. And we won't stop until we get this right.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Parents have watched as this government has done everything they could to impose their cruel autism funding scheme on parents; I'd say that's not so great. They threatened experts who refused to endorse it; I'd say that's not so great. They told parents they were moving up the wait-list even as they froze it; I don't think that was great. They told everybody hoping for better not to have false hope; that wasn't great either.

Today, we can celebrate the fact that those parents never gave up, notwithstanding the way that this government dragged them through hell and back. The government is asking parents to trust them yet again. But this government, and especially this minister, who I also think is not that great, have done little to earn their trust.

Will the Premier commit today to fully funding, in the April 11 budget, a new program that is it actually based on children's needs, not their age and not artificial caps?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: As somebody who has worked on this file for the 13 years that I have been in this assembly, this is always an emotional issue and one that can be easily politicized.

The announcement that I, myself, the Minister of Health as well as the Minister of Education made today was to lower the temperature, to include people across Ontario to take part in our largest consultation on autism in the history of the province so that we can best assess how we can build a needs-based approach that looks at the wraparound services. What we announced, and what the Premier was talking about, is that on May 1 we are going to have an online consultation that we would ask parents and all Ontarians to be a part of. The second thing is that we're going to be creating a panel across this province with experts, clinicians, parents and those with autism. The third thing is—and this is one of the most important things for every member of this assembly—that we are asking all MPPs, regardless of political affiliation, in the official opposition, in the independent caucuses as well as the government caucus, to participate in round tables. We believe we all have a role to play—

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

Interjections.

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

Members, please take your seats. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, come to order. The member for Orléans, come to order.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Next question.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Premier. For 20 years, drivers across Ontario have been required to take time out of their busy lives to get an emissions test for their vehicles. While the program was effective in 1999, when it first was introduced, for many years it's been called outdated and ineffective. Yesterday, I was pleased to welcome the Premier, the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Infrastructure to the Thorncrest dealership in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore to announce the official end to the Drive Clean program.

When our government was elected, we were given a mandate to make life more affordable and to reduce the burden to taxpayers. Can the Premier tell this House how ending this program will make life easier for Ontarians?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the great member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore. We had a great, great announcement yesterday with the three ministers. I can tell you, we've done some really great things. But it seems, when we go out there and we talk to the common folk, nothing is more important than getting rid of Drive Clean. Drive Clean was just a cash grab, a \$40-million cash grab, that dug into everyone's pockets. Again, people can't stand it when the government sticks their hands in their pockets unnecessarily. We finally got rid of Drive Clean. It's done; it's gone. We're putting more money into people's pockets. The time it took to go into the Drive Clean and the hours you'd have to wait—it was totally unnecessary.

We're moving forward. We're making sure that we're listening to the taxpayers, listening to businesses. Everyone's happy about this Drive Clean—that it's finally gone.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I have heard from my constituents that they are thrilled they won't have to waste their time and money on this outdated service.

As our government continues our efforts to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario, it has been made clear that the federal government would rather move forward on their carbon tax plan. The federal government claims families will be better off, and they will be reimbursed for this tax. They have legislated this tax with many questions that still remain unanswered. For example, the impact of this tax: What impact will it have on businesses and institutions, and how will this impact the day-to-day lives of the people living on fixed incomes and those with families?

It has become very clear that this incentive plan was hastily put together and left provinces with more questions than answers. Can the Premier tell this House what impact

we know this carbon tax will have on the good people of Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday was a great day for the people of Ontario when it came to Drive Clean. It was an absolutely terrible and sad day for the people of Canada. People of Canada saw prices driven up by 4.5 cents at the gas pumps—actually, it's five cents with the HST—not to mention, diesel is going up.

My friend Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that people are frustrated right across this country with this carbon tax. It's amazing when the Prime Minister says, "We're going to help you. This carbon tax is going to help you." Well, he's sadly mistaken. It's hurting the people of Canada. It makes us uncompetitive around the world when we have this tax.

And by the way, it does nothing for the environment at all. All it does is hurt businesses; it hurts families. Everything is going up in the grocery store. No matter if you're taking little Johnny to the hockey game or if you're going to work, everything is going to cost more.

LICENCE PLATES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Last week, when the news broke, it seemed so unbelievable that even the Premier's own media staff couldn't believe it was true. They were tweeting it out. But now it's been confirmed that the Premier's response to the thousands of auto jobs that have been lost in Windsor and Oshawa is to put his ever-original "Open for Business" campaign slogan on Ontario licence plates.

Can the Premier tell us how much this vanity project will cost the taxpayers of Ontario, and whether he has any evidence that businesses are making investment decisions based on licence plate inscriptions?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member for Essex: I can tell you that people across this province want change. They voted for change, and they're getting change.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: When I spoke to the CEO—

Interjections.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I can't hear the answer, Speaker.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, when I had an opportunity to speak to the president of Chrysler, what he actually told me was that it was 15 years of high taxes, high hydro rates and endless regulations. That is what hurts the economy. That's what hurts the car companies.

And I can tell you on the other note, when we went to Toyota, they were happy about getting rid of regulations, getting rid of the cap-and-trade, making sure we're lowering hydro rates. They've actually invested in the new RAV4. They're expanding.

So, throughout the automotive industry, we are doing well. We're doing well. We're going to support the people in Windsor—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, this is probably one of those ideas that sounds good when you're reclining in the backseat of your personal pleasure wagon on the leather couch, but to people facing the loss of good-paying union jobs in Windsor, it sounds like a tone-deaf Premier and a government without a plan.

How can the Premier tell a working mom who just lost her job that their plan to save jobs is a cheesy catchphrase on a licence plate? Is that really the best your government could do, Premier?

Interjections.

1100

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

To the Premier, to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I just want to remind the House and the people of Ontario that changing the licence plates doesn't cost a penny to the taxpayers. They are still producing the plates. It's going to be the same cost.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker: There are over 200,000 jobs out there available. I spoke to the mayor of Windsor. He feels confident that he's going to support the people on the third shift over at Chrysler who were laid off. He feels confident that they are going to get jobs. I told him we're at their disposal. Anything they need, we will be standing beside him.

But right now, Mr. Speaker, the economy is on fire in Ontario. It's on fire. We have more jobs than we have people to fill them, and everywhere we go when we talk to business owners, they say, "Keep going. Thank you for the tax cuts. Thank you for lowering hydro rates. Thank you for getting rid of the cap-and-trade. We need more people."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to say, there are a lot of comments coming from the opposition when the government ministers are answering their questions. I need quiet. We all need quiet in here.

Start the clock. Next question.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. Speaker, as of yesterday, the federal carbon tax has officially taken effect. Our northern communities cringe at the thought of their gas prices rising any further than they already have. The Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines has been very passionate about the heightened cost of gas in these areas, and has been dedicated to finding an answer for the people he represents. With the rollout of the Trudeau carbon tax, these areas are now going to face even higher prices.

Can the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines tell this House how our northern communities will be impacted by this carbon tax.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Cambridge for this question and her hard work in her community. Mr. Speaker, it's not just about Kenora–Rainy River. It's about Kiiwetinoong. It's about Thunder Bay, and it's about requests from people from those regions who called out to me and said, "Stand up against these gas prices." That's why I called and wrote the Competition Bureau. Immediately following, Mr. Speaker, he agreed to launch a full investigation.

Let me rattle off a few prices, outside of potential unfair pricing: \$1.35 in Kenora today; \$1.40 in Thunder Bay; \$1.40 in Ear Falls; \$1.329 in Wawa; \$1.30 in Timmins; \$1.26 in Sudbury; and \$1.29 in Cochrane. Can you imagine filling a full-size Dodge Ram pickup truck in Timmins today, Mr. Speaker? This is not responsible. This is not right. We can be responsible with our environment and not gouge the pockets of northern Ontario to—

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

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: It's clear that the minister feels strongly about the gas price increase in northern communities. Everyone across the province had hoped it would be an April Fool's Day joke, but we were quite disappointed when we awoke to see gas prices had skyrocketed overnight.

The people of Ontario were clear when they elected our government. They voted for change, they voted for jobs, and they voted for affordability. Our government has been working tirelessly to keep our promise to the people of Ontario to make life more affordable.

After bringing an end to the job-killing, regressive cap-and-trade carbon tax, the people of Ontario are once again met with uncertainty of how the Trudeau carbon tax will impact them. Can the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines tell this House what the true cost of this carbon tax will be on the people of Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I'll take a few more moments just to expound on the situation in northern Ontario. This isn't just about how much it's going to cost us more at the pumps. It gets colder up in northern Ontario. The heat is on a little longer at the beginning and ending of each season. They are forecasting costs in the range of \$100 to natural gas bills for families and small businesses. Can you imagine that kind of increase, Mr. Speaker? We're hearing from seniors. We're hearing from small businesses. We're hearing from mining and forestry operators about the consequential costs.

As the Premier said, make no mistake about it: This isn't just the price of gas, natural gas and propane, Mr. Speaker. Companies that distribute products and services all across northern Ontario are going to incur higher costs. That's going to put a high cost on everything, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to stand for it. The problem is, the NDP is in cahoots with the federal Liberals. They're doubling down and the member from Ottawa Centre wants the highest carbon tax in the world. That's why the rest of—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Get the mustard out. The baloney is flying.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has to come to order.

Start the clock. Next question?

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Last week, auto workers at the Fiat Chrysler Windsor assembly plant were told that 1,500 direct jobs are on the chopping block come September. Those workers produce the award-winning Pacifica and Pacifica Hybrid. After strong advocacy from my federal NDP colleagues, the federal government has included the Pacifica Hybrid in their rebate program. The Premier can easily do the same here in Ontario. Industry experts warned last year that scrapping the EV rebate would hurt sales. It happened in BC. They brought the program back and, as a result, they brought sales back up again.

Will the Premier actually do something helpful and bring back the rebate and encourage Ontarians to purchase greener, made-in-Ontario vehicles?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Todd Smith: We're actually doing better than that. We brought in the first phase of our auto plan. We're so committed to the auto sector that that is the first strategic plan that we brought in, Mr. Speaker.

We've taken great steps to remove red tape, working alongside of FCA, Fiat Chrysler, and all of the other auto manufacturers that are located in Ontario. I can tell you that when I meet with FCA, when I meet with Ford and General Motors and Toyota and Honda, what they tell me, what they tell the Premier when they meet with the Premier, is that putting a carbon tax on their business when no other major auto-making jurisdiction in North America has a carbon tax makes it extremely uncompetitive for them to do business in Ontario. So what does the federal government do? They bring in a carbon tax yesterday that makes it more uncompetitive for those automakers in Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Back to the Premier, Speaker: Thanks for all that word salad, Minister. You didn't really say what you're doing to help these workers.

The Premier knows there are many things that he could do to support not only the 1,500 workers at Windsor assembly, but also the estimated 9,000 workers in my community who could lose their jobs. When GM Oshawa announced it was closing its doors, the Premier gave up in a flash. And now with Windsor assembly, he's missing in action again.

We know that one of the easiest ways to support the workers in Windsor is to incentivize Ontarians to buy award-winning, made-in-Windsor vehicles by bringing back the EV rebate. He could finally create a provincial auto strategy and he could work with FCA, Unifor and the workers to secure a new product for WAP to build on their full flex line.

The government claims to be fighting for auto jobs. Are they acting on options like these, including an auto strategy?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite, who clearly hasn't been paying attention over the last couple of months here at Queen's Park, because the new government of Ontario has been doing exactly what the automakers want and need, and that is bringing in an auto plan that's going to make it more competitive for them to do business in Ontario. We launched Driving Prosperity back on February 14 at an auto facility up in Vaughan–Woodbridge. It was a great day. We received glowing marks from everyone in the auto sector, including those downstream in the supply chain, to make Ontario a more competitive jurisdiction; to make sure that we're investing in the talent that they need and the innovation that they need, Mr. Speaker.

All of what the automakers have heard in our plan is exactly what they've been asking for for 15 years and exactly what the Liberal government was ignoring for 15 years. What we're going to do is ensure that Ontario is a competitive jurisdiction, not the highest-priced carbon tax jurisdiction in the world, like the NDP want.

1110

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. Government has a responsibility to be honest with people about how their tax dollars are being spent. It's bad enough that the Premier is wasting millions on his politically motivated lawsuit against the federal government; now we are learning that the government is planning to spend millions more on a partisan ad campaign against the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell the people of Ontario how much of their money he is spending on his political campaign to sabotage climate solutions at a time when we are experiencing a climate emergency?

Hon. Doug Ford: To the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. Government advertising, as you know, is used to tell the people about their rights and responsibilities, as well as government programs and services. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to review advertising to ensure that it's delivered in the most efficient and effective way and that it delivers for the people of Ontario.

Let me talk a little bit, since you raised it, about the carbon tax. As I understand the federal carbon tax program, the idea is to take a little bit of money out of this pocket, process it through government, and then put back the same amount in this pocket. Well, let me tell you, one thing I've learned in government is that maybe the government takes a little processing fee, a little administration fee, and that not the same amount ends up in this pocket, but something a little less, and then they have to reach into another pocket.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister reminding us that the Premier is against making

polluters pay. But I thought the Premier was for saving taxpayer dollars, as well.

No one gave the Premier a mandate to spend our money on his political advertising campaign.

Just last year, the honourable member from Dufferin-Caledon introduced a private member's bill to restore the Auditor General's oversight of government advertising—a great private member's bill.

Will the Premier pause his anti-climate ad campaign against the federal government until legislation is in place to restore the Auditor General's oversight over government advertising?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you again for the follow-up.

It has been brought to my attention that the federal government is mailing postcards to households and has an extensive online advertising campaign promoting their carbon tax plan.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I also understand—

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Can you settle down my side, Mr. Speaker?

I understand that under the previous Liberal government there was a huge jump in advertising spending right before the election. I'll let the House determine what might have been the reason.

What I will say is that the government is exploring all options for review under all forms of government advertising.

I will tell you this, as well: We've introduced the Audit and Accountability Committee. We're not going to let the Auditor General's report languish in someone's drawer. We're going to actually act on the Auditor General's recommendations and provide value for money for the taxpayers of Ontario.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Under the Liberals, the number of regulations in Ontario ballooned to 380,000—more than any other province, more than double the second-most regulated province, British Columbia.

Employers in my riding have been struggling to cope with the burden of government regulation, including members of the Canadian Franchise Association who have joined us here today. Our government promised to make Ontario open for business, open for jobs. Regulatory reform is an important part of keeping that promise.

Can the minister outline for the House the importance of cutting red tape and restoring Ontario's economic competitiveness?

Hon. Todd Smith: I sympathize with the member and his Peterborough Petes.

I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park the members of the franchise association who are here today. They're our job

creators. They're our small and medium-sized businesses right across Ontario, and we're trying to make life easier for them so they can continue to create good jobs. Some 725,000 people work directly employed by the franchise association of Ontario. We're doing what we can do to make sure that we protect those jobs and we create more opportunities in Ontario.

Our province spent 15 years falling behind, but now we have a Premier and we have a government that understands business, that understands how we need to be more competitive and the importance of creating an environment where businesses want to invest and create jobs. We're going to continue to work for the people of Ontario and make sure we're open for—

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the minister for his answer. I know employers and their staff in my riding are glad that our government is making Ontario a better place to invest, grow a business and ultimately create more jobs.

The previous Liberal government introduced policy after policy that harmed entrepreneurs and job creators—a job-killing carbon tax, burdensome regulations, their hydro mess and increased taxes—making it harder to get ahead and forcing us to fall behind. Thousands of jobs left Ontario because of Liberal mismanagement. Our government is committed to bringing jobs back.

Can the minister please inform the House what steps he and our government are taking to reduce red tape and bring good-paying jobs back to Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the member for Peterborough-Kawartha for the great question. I can tell you that our government has been hard at work since we were elected on June 7 of last year, after 15 long years of Liberal waste, mismanagement, scandal and over 300,000 manufacturing jobs leaving Ontario.

We're bringing in policies that are going to make it more competitive to do business here in Ontario: the Making Ontario Open for Business Act, Bill 47, and a little bit later on this morning we're going to be voting on Bill 66, the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act. I hope that the members opposite will support this bill—30 different pieces of legislation across 12 different ministries that are going to ensure that Ontario is a more competitive jurisdiction. We're going to reduce the cost to business owners by \$400 million as a result of these initiatives that we're taking to reduce red tape by 25%.

We're doing everything we can to make sure there are great jobs in Peterborough, Bay of Quinte and every region of Ontario.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Earlier today, the minister announced that she would be consulting on further changes to her disastrous and poorly planned changes to supports for children with autism. The minister, who once said that she wouldn't offer any false

hope for changes, is now once again making promises and insisting that she will listen to families.

Why should families believe the minister now?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to start off by saying that the system we inherited was broken and broke. I was able to go to the Treasury Board, and the President of the Treasury Board and finance minister injected an additional and emergency \$102 million so we could keep the existing program afloat. In addition to that, we announced that we had a \$321-million program to clear the wait-list of 23,000 children.

In the last couple of weeks, we made a decision, thanks to our Premier, Doug Ford, that we would have additional flexibility, and we announced that we would have enhancements of an additional \$300 million. This is going to be an over-\$600-million program just within the Minister of Community, Children and Social Services.

Today we announced that we are going to provide some wraparound supports with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health, and that will be part of a consultation process.

Speaker, I'll get into more details in the supplemental about what our government is doing in terms of consultations, but I can tell you and I can assure you that this is going to be the best Ontario Autism Program this province has ever seen.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Miss Monique Taylor: I think it's really unfortunate that the minister didn't start with the best program from the beginning, instead of pushing through with a program that had nothing to do with families. We have a minister who's backtracking because she didn't consult with families to start with.

1120

Parents remember the Premier's words from the campaign, "I promise you, you won't have to be protesting on the front lawn of Queen's Park like you have with the Liberal Premier." Parents have learned their lesson when it comes to this government. Quite frankly, I'm not sure parents are trusting in this minister. If the government is serious about this commitment, will they back it up in the April 11 budget with a concrete funding commitment to meet the needs of all children?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I just announced that this ministry is working with four other ministries, as well as the Premier. We worked with the Treasury Board president and the finance minister to keep the existing program solvent. We're working with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health in order to provide wraparound supports.

The Premier then provided us with an extra \$300 million more so that we could expand the program, and that's what I'm really excited about today. We've announced that we're going to consult with an online survey that starts on May 1 at ontario.ca/autism. We are going to do tele-town halls right across the province, which I hope members opposite will be part of.

I have offered to work with all members of this assembly, not just Progressive Conservatives, but also with New

Democrats and the independent members of this assembly, so that we can make sure we get a full consultation that happens right across the province. We have indicated that we are going to create a panel of experts so we can best assess how we can spend the money. But this member can either continue to yell at me or she can work with me—her choice.

PHARMACARE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Minister, yesterday, April 1, OHIP+ and universal drug coverage for people under 24 essentially ended. The government is no longer—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, the government is no longer the payer of first resort, and the minister knows that not all insurance plans are the same and that there are gaps, that there are differences between what a drug company will pay and what the drug costs. What happens now is, as payer of first resort insurers always covered that gap. The Ontario government does not right now, which leaves a gap for families that are insured but no gap for families that aren't insured. That's not equitable. Can the minister please explain to me how they're going to address that?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member opposite that OHIP+ has not been stopped. It's just that the regime that was developed under the Liberals' previous government has been stopped because it's not providing the service and value to taxpayers that they expect. Having the insurer be the payer of first resort just makes sense. However, it's also important to remember that young people under 24 will receive the services they need if they don't have insurance. That's what we need to make sure is covered, that people who don't have coverage will get coverage. That is what we're dealing with.

With respect to any gaps, if there is a difference between what the insurer will pay and what the actual cost is, any family that's having difficulty in paying that difference absolutely has the option of applying to the Trillium network to receive that assistance in funding. There is help available. That is how they can deal with it.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much to the minister for the answer. I have a great deal of respect, but universality for children under 24 has ended. There's a gap. Trillium will not address the gap because it's not designed to do that, and that's what I was asking.

Of greater concern, there's a budget coming up in a week. Now that the Ontario government is no longer payer of first resort for people under 24, is the government going to make the same decision for seniors over 65? Are you going to make it so that insurers are going to be the first payer for people over 65? Is that the intention of the government? That's number one, the first question.

The second question is: August 1 of this year, Minister—through you, Speaker—the deductible and co-pay were to be eliminated as of the 2018 budget. Is it your intention to continue with that?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The question under discussion being that of OHIP+, again I would say to the member opposite—through you, Mr. Speaker—that the idea of universality has not ended. Young people are receiving coverage for their drugs where they did not before. But if they have an insurer, or if their parents have an insurer, they should be paying first. That just makes sense. However, if there is a differential, there is an option for people to get the help that they need. I recognize that some medications are very expensive and that some may be difficult for families to pay for. But again, the Trillium outlet is still there for people who need help. They will assess those applications, and they will assist with payment if it's necessary.

FOODLAND ONTARIO

Mr. Parm Gill: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Over the past 40 years, Foodland Ontario has made our communities stronger and healthier by educating Ontarians on how to recognize, prepare and enjoy locally grown foods.

Each year, thousands of Ontario retailers enter the Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards, which run from mid-April to November. These awards serve as the province's produce industry's top competition for excellence, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to hear that the minister recently put consumers back into the picture and has included them in the participation of this amazing program.

Could the minister please tell the House how the Consumers' Choice award will benefit Ontario's agri-food business, including farmers and retailers?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Milton for that excellent question.

Mr. Speaker, firstly, I want to congratulate all of the retailers that will be awarded this year and thank them for their hard work and their dedication in serving our communities.

Through inviting consumers to partake in the Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards program, we're looking at raising awareness of local food and supporting local grocery stores. Back after more than 30 years, consumers will now be able to vote for a new Consumers' Choice award—an award which will be given to the best retail display of Ontario's fresh produce.

These grocery stores are fixtures in the community. They not only keep our communities healthy; they create jobs and pour money back into the towns and cities they serve. Increasing the presence of local food in our homes, schools and public institutions is a top priority for this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank the minister for his answer, and I appreciate all of his hard work in advocating

on behalf of the agriculture community, including Ontario's produce retailers.

Not only does the creativity and variety of each year's submissions leave the judges impressed, but the sheer volume of contenders from across the province only goes to show how active our grocery stores are in promoting local foods. In 2018 alone, over 4,250 entries were submitted, along with 6,000 photos of captivating displays, showcasing fresh, homegrown Ontario produce.

Could the minister please share with the House the changes our government has made to the Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards program?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for the question.

It's no secret that the previous government never turned down an opportunity to wine and dine themselves on the taxpayers' dollars. As disclosed in the public accounts, last year the previous government spent \$50,000 in taxpayer money to host these retail award events in the luxury Liberty Grand complex in Toronto. In order to attend these lavish lunches, a select group of people had to travel in from out of town, through Toronto, while taxpayers paid the cost.

Our government is taking a different approach: Instead of travelling to us, we will be visiting our hard-working Foodland retailers. I'm pleased to say that this summer, my parliamentary assistant and I will be visiting stores across the province to congratulate the winning retailers. We will see the stores, their products and displays and thank the staff who build the displays. I look forward to meeting with them and seeing first-hand the great work they do for the people of Ontario to present us with the best and safest food in the world.

1130

TAXATION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question this morning is for the Minister of Finance. Good morning, Minister.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Good morning.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Today, the Financial Accountability Officer released a scathing report that shows Ontarians will see fewer benefits from the LIFT tax credit than they would have if the government didn't freeze the minimum wage. The 300,000 Ontarians who would have benefited from a higher minimum wage will see no benefits at all under the government's scheme that puts workers last. Those who do get something will be more than \$400 worse off than they would have been if they could have just earned a \$15-an-hour wage.

Does the minister continue to stand by a plan that leaves hundreds of thousands of Ontarians worse off?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Let's start with the facts. The Financial Accountability Officer confirmed that our government's LIFT Credit will put \$2 billion back in the pockets of low-income earners over the next five years. We will never apologize for bringing relief to families who need it most. The FAO recognized that over one million people will receive tax relief thanks to our government's LIFT Credit.

He also previously recognized the damage of increasing the minimum wage too quickly. I'll quote what the FAO said: "that Ontario's proposed minimum wage increase will result in a loss of approximately 50,000 jobs ... with job losses concentrated among teens and young adults."

We took a balanced approach. By pausing the increase in minimum wage, our government has given businesses time to adjust to avoid further losses while still providing relief to low-income earners.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Back to the minister: Well, the facts are in, and they're supported by the FAO. Ontarians are left worse off because of the government's scheme to rip away a living wage from workers. To add insult to injury, the minister is pretending that his tax credit will make families whole again, after his decision to freeze the minimum wage. But the Financial Accountability Officer makes it painfully clear today that families will not be made whole.

Why is the minister defending a plan that will leave minimum wage earners over \$400 poorer?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: First of all, Speaker, they have a job under this government—132,000 jobs created. The LIFT Credit provides \$850 in tax relief to over one million people.

Now, the FAO also recognizes the targeted benefit of our LIFT program. Here's his quote: "The LIFT Credit provides a greater portion of its overall ... benefits (97 per cent) to individuals with below-median incomes compared to the minimum wage increase...." In other words, our government's LIFT Credit provides more targeted support to those who need it the most. Now, it's unfortunate that the NDP member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas thinks we're "talking about people who earn so little that they in fact don't need a tax break."

Rather than punishing businesses and causing further job losses, our government is providing relief to low-income workers while ensuring they actually have a job. Our government will always stand up for those who need it most. We'll never apologize for letting the people of Ontario keep more of their hard-earned money—

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

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, and Indigenous Affairs. All of the members of this House are well aware of the challenges faced in northern Ontario. The previous government constantly put up new barriers to prevent resource developers and entrepreneurs from creating new economic opportunities. This made investment in the north extremely difficult and prevented businesses from creating good jobs. Our government was elected to cut red tape and break down barriers to build a

strong northern economy, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Can the minister tell us more about how our government is making strategic investments in northern Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for his question and his great representation, not just for Parry Sound–Muskoka but across northern Ontario.

We had an opportunity to celebrate Lake of the Woods Brewing Co., a fast-growing company that employs a lot of people in downtown Kenora and is expanding into Manitoba and Minnesota. Their delicious beer is making its way to LCBO and Brewers Retail outlets across this province. We invested \$1 million to take them from a craft brewer to a mid-market player, a legitimate beverage company. This is going to employ 19 new people.

Now, we've solved that problem. We've created an opportunity for them. The next challenge, of course, is the job-killing carbon tax. As he ships that delicious beer to all of these jurisdictions, especially across northern Ontario, he's going to incur significantly increased costs. What is the NDP Ontario caucus going to do about it, Mr. Speaker? We don't know their position. It sounds like it's on—

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

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the minister for that response, although he's making me thirsty.

It's clear that our government is making northern Ontario open for business. Craft beer is a rapidly expanding industry in Ontario and it's exciting that our government is making targeted investments in a growth sector. The craft beer industry contributes approximately \$1 billion towards Ontario's economy. That's a fantastic contribution to our province, and one worth investing in. Most importantly, our government is delivering on our promise to create good jobs.

I know that's not all our government is doing to support Kenora, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell the members of this House about how our government is supporting jobs in the Kenora area?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Well, Mr. Speaker, on a more serious note, Kenora, of course, was hit with a tragic fire right in the middle of the downtown. It resulted in a loss of life. It tapped front-line workers, and we do a shout-out for them. Half the town could have literally burned down. A heritage place was lost, Mr. Speaker, so they needed a hand up and they were pleased, at this Lake of the Woods Brewing Co. announcement, to also support another local business, Sweet, Lake of the Woods, specializing in high-end chocolates and delicious Americano coffee to serve our tourist demand in the summer and all of us year-round; \$150,000 to increase their manufacturing capacity, a couple of full-time jobs, a couple of part-time jobs and more than a dozen seasonal jobs when everybody from around the world comes to visit that beautiful Lake of the Woods destination.

Mr. Speaker, this is giving small-town businesses a hand up. We're very pleased to support them. It was a

great day. We had a chocolate and beer pairing, and we all had a great day.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. Through a freedom-of-information request, our office learned that the government is considering cutting Elder Abuse Ontario's funding by 15%. Elder Abuse Ontario trains thousands of front-line workers across the province in how to identify and prevent elder abuse. They run a seniors safety hotline for older adults who are victims of abuse or at risk of being abused.

This government campaigned on a platform pledge to commit resources to domestic abuse, including elder abuse. Speaker, a 15% reduction in Elder Abuse Ontario's budget will have a devastating impact on this organization and its crucial work for our seniors. I know this minister understands how important this issue is. Will you talk to your colleague the Minister of Finance, will you talk to your colleague the Premier of Ontario, to make sure this crucial organization's budget stays the same as it is right today—no 15% cut?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'd like to thank the member of the opposition for raising an important question.

First of all, I really question whether the question has any foundation. I have never heard from my ministry they were going to cut 15% in the budget. Our Minister of Finance will make an announcement in the budget on the 11th and we'll make sure that we work very hard for seniors in Ontario.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has a point of order.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to welcome today—I see Chelsea Thompson up there with her daughter Seelie. She's the mother of page Greyson, who is here from my riding. Welcome to Queen's Park.

DEFERRED VOTES

RESTORING ONTARIO'S COMPETITIVENESS ACT, 2019

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

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for third 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): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On March 25, 2019, Ms. Scott moved third reading of Bill 66, An Act to restore Ontario's competitiveness by amending or repealing certain Acts. Mr. Crawford has moved that the question now be put.

All those in favour of Mr. Crawford's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hogarth, Christine	Phillips, Rod
Baber, Roman	Jones, Sylvia	Piccini, David
Babikian, Aris	Kanapathi, Logan	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bailey, Robert	Karahalios, Belinda	Rickford, Greg
Barrett, Toby	Ke, Vincent	Roberts, Jeremy
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Khanjin, Andrea	Romano, Ross
Bouma, Will	Kramp, Daryl	Sabawy, Sheref
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova, Natalia	Sandhu, Amarjeet
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Skelly, Donna
Crawford, Stephen	Martow, Gila	Smith, Dave
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Downey, Doug	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norman	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fee, Amy	Nicholls, Rick	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Park, Lindsey	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Parsa, Michael	Yurek, Jeff
Harris, Mike	Pettapiece, Randy	

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Hassan, Faisal	Schreiner, Mike
Berns-McGown, Rima	Hatfield, Percy	Shaw, Sandy
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Simard, Amanda
Bourguin, Guy	Hunter, Mitzie	Singh, Gurrratan
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutila	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Kernaghan, Terence	Stiles, Marit
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
Fraser, John	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gélinas, France	Morrison, Suze	
Glover, Chris	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 68; the nays are 40.

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

Ms. Scott has moved third reading of Bill 66, An Act to restore Ontario's competitiveness by amending or repealing certain Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard 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 1149 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Scott has moved third reading of Bill 66, An Act to restore Ontario's competitiveness by amending or repealing certain Acts. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hogarth, Christine	Phillips, Rod
Baber, Roman	Jones, Sylvia	Piccini, David
Babikian, Aris	Kanapathi, Logan	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bailey, Robert	Karahalios, Belinda	Rickford, Greg
Barrett, Toby	Ke, Vincent	Roberts, Jeremy
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Khanjin, Andrea	Romano, Ross
Bouma, Will	Kramp, Daryl	Sabawy, Sheref
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova, Natalia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorrie	Martin, Robin	Skelly, Donna
Crawford, Stephen	Martow, Gila	Smith, Dave
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Downey, Doug	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norman	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fee, Amy	Nicholls, Rick	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Park, Lindsey	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Parsa, Michael	Yurek, Jeff
Harris, Mike	Pettapiece, Randy	

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Hassan, Faisal	Schreiner, Mike
Berns-McGown, Rima	Hatfield, Percy	Shaw, Sandy
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Simard, Amanda
Bourgouin, Guy	Hunter, Mitzie	Singh, Gurrajan
Burch, Jeff	Karpache, Bhutila	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Kernaghan, Terence	Stiles, Marit
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
Fraser, John	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gélinas, France	Morrison, Suze	
Glover, Chris	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 68; the nays are 40.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Since today is Tuesday, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I would like to recognize Mr. David Black from the Canadian Franchise Association,

Kevin O'Donnell from BDO, Clark Harrop from McDonald's Restaurants, David Druker from UPS, Joel Friedman from Franchise and Real Estate Development, and Michelle Burton from Qozen Yoga and Well-being Studio. I had a fantastic meeting with them today.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I would like to welcome Matthew Lund and Erik Schomann to Queen's Park today. They are in the members' gallery. They're hoping to be candidates in the federal election, so they want to see how we do things provincially. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AUTISTICS 4 AUTISTICS

Miss Monique Taylor: Today is world autism awareness and acceptance day. This year, I had the privilege of speaking with many autistic adults from an organization called Autistics 4 Autistics Ontario. A4A has shared with me the importance of really listening to the voices of autistic adults. In their view, provincial decision-making has excluded autistic people so far. When it comes to policy decisions, they say, "Nothing about us without us." You know what? They're right. We need to do a better job of including their voices.

A4A members are also the reason I'm wearing this infinity symbol pin today. They taught me that this symbol is one of the preferred symbols of autism rights and neurodiversity movements. The basic premise of the neurodiversity movement is that neurological differences are like any other human difference. This movement does not see autism as a disease to be cured; instead, it's just one of the ways that humans are wired. And so our job is to accommodate and to support people on the spectrum. There is a lot of wisdom in this approach.

On world autism acceptance day, I want to recognize the self-advocates for their work, thank them for their work, and thank them for their courageous stand in making sure that they're speaking out, and acknowledge that there is still work to do to ensure that people on the spectrum are supported.

BAYVIEW YARDS

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: On Saturday, March 30, I had the pleasure of accompanying the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, as well as the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, alongside my caucus colleague MPP Roberts, as we toured the Bayview Yards. I want to thank Michael Tremblay, president and CEO of Invest Ottawa and Bayview Yards, for organizing a fantastic tour of their facilities.

Bayview Yards is the ultimate one-stop-shop and mash-up of technical, business and market capabilities, resources and expertise that helps technology entrepreneurs and companies launch, grow and thrive. I particularly enjoyed riding in the driverless vehicle with Ministers MacLeod and Smith, and MPP Roberts.

Afterwards, I had the pleasure of attending a round table on immigration, both from the economic and from the refugee and social side of things, with both Minister MacLeod and Minister Smith. It was a fantastic round table; it was incredibly informative. It was a pleasure to be there to listen to members from the community.

I want to thank the ministers for including me in their tour. It was fantastic, and it was just great to see them there.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, organizations like these are critical in helping to ensure that entrepreneurs get the support they need to help grow their businesses and create more jobs for Ontario workers.

Our government for the people will continue to work with workers and business owners in order to make Ontario open for business.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Today is World Autism Awareness Day. Here in Ontario, we are watching the effects of the government's disastrous autism plan, which went into effect yesterday. After weeks of declaring that their plan was going to proceed unchanged on April 1, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services backed down and made some after all—not enough, however, to prevent the plan from wreaking havoc with the lives of affected families, and not enough to prevent job losses.

One of my constituents in Beaches—East York has reached out to me in desperation. She's a board-certified behaviour analyst in Toronto, and her husband works in the same field. He has already lost his job as a result of the OAP changes, one that he had held for over a decade, and she has reason to believe that hers may be in danger as well. In a matter of months, this couple has gone from a secure, stable future with good jobs that they both loved, and that allowed them to start planning for a family, to not knowing whether either of them will have an income a month from now.

The minister's plan has devastated families like my constituents' across the province: families with kids with autism who can't get the therapy they need, and families of therapists who suddenly don't have the good jobs they loved and counted on.

We need an evidence-based, needs-based autism plan, with no caps or age restrictions, and we need a government that consults with stakeholders before it acts, and not after it has wreaked havoc on people's lives.

POLICE

Mr. David Piccini: Ensuring the safety and security of people is one of government's most fundamental responsibilities. In our community, I would like to thank all of the incredible first responders for the work they do on a daily basis.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight a very important round table we had with public safety and

correctional services minister Sylvia Jones a week ago to discuss the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act. I would like to thank Cobourg police chief Kai Liu, Port Hope police chief Bryant Wood, OPP detachment commander Brian O'Halloran and former commander Lisa Darling for joining us around the table alongside other members of the service, including their respective associations, other front-line officers, special constables and auxiliary members.

Before the last election, the previous government passed one of the most anti-police pieces of legislation in Canadian history. Our government made a commitment to restoring our relationship with police officers and the important work they do on a day-to-day basis. New measures include enhanced oversight, increased fairness measures and due process for officers, better governance, training and transparency.

Mr. Speaker, having done ride-alongs with the men and women of our front-line police services, I can tell you they serve with distinction, they're effective communicators and they are integral members of our community. I would like to give them a sincere thank you for the work they do on a day-to-day basis to keep our communities safe.

TRAITEMENT DE L'AUTISME

M. Guy Bourguin: Ça me fait plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui. C'est la Journée mondiale de la sensibilisation à l'autisme. Les changements au programme ontarien de l'autisme auront des conséquences néfastes pour les familles francophones du nord de l'Ontario, une région où le nombre de francophones est plus élevé qu'ailleurs en province.

J'ai parlé avec les parents francophones, que leurs enfants n'ont pas accès à des services en français. Par exemple, M^{me} Chantal Chartrand et sa fille Valérie de Capreol près de Sudbury : Valérie est une jolie petite fille qui a été diagnostiquée avec le trouble du spectre de l'autisme d'un degré sévère. De plus, elle a des troubles développementaux et des délais de communication, de compréhension et de capacités motrices. Valérie a besoin d'intervention intensive, de 25 à 40 heures de thérapie par semaine, à un coût de 50 000 \$ à 110 000 \$ par année. La famille Chartrand a un revenu fixe. Ce n'est pas une option de payer des frais supplémentaires pour des thérapies privées. D'ailleurs, il y a une longue liste d'attente dans le Nord, spécialement pour les services de thérapie en français. M^{me} Chartrand est désespérée.

Le nord de l'Ontario a une voix ignorée, avec des enfants qui souffrent et qui méritent plus d'aide de leur gouvernement. Une solution sensée est d'investir davantage et d'établir un programme basé sur des données scientifiques.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Billy Pang: A few weeks ago, I joined our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable Ms. Christine Elliott, for a meeting with local health care

service providers in York region. We met with LOFT Community Services, complex care and seniors, community health services, Southlake Regional Health Centre, family and community medicine, and many more to discuss the state of our health care system and also the critical role that these local service providers play within the greater health care system. We have listened to health service providers and we have heard that the current health care system serves the bureaucracy more than it does the patients.

Our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has recently announced that there will be changes made to our system which will eliminate inefficiencies that disadvantage the patient. One of the ways in which this goal is said to be achieved is by shifting funding and decision-making to local Ontario health teams. This will allow for more seamless transitions when the patient is transferred to different facilities and specialists. A properly functioning health care system works for, not against, the patient.

1510

SPINAL MUSCULAR ATROPHY

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Today I rise to speak about Ontarians suffering with spinal muscular atrophy. This government which claims “for the people” can truly make a difference in the lives of those living with SMA. Ontarians living with SMA have dreams. They have aspirations—aspirations just like the rest of us here. However, their bodies are becoming weaker over time. SMA patients lose their motor skills and lung functions, although all along they know that their bodies are failing every day, without getting proper treatment.

Jared Wayland is a young man who lives in my riding of St. Catharines. Jared knows all too well the physical and psychological effects spinal muscular atrophy has. Jared played many sports, just like other young men of his age. Now, diagnosed with SMA, he cannot physically move like he used to. SMA has confined Jared to a wheelchair.

Speaker, Biogen’s drug Spinraza, which is used in other provinces, is the only hope for patients with SMA. This miracle drug stops the disease from progressing. Spinraza can be the difference between life and death. No one should have to choose between the two. All life-saving medications should be readily available for Ontarians when they need them. Thus, I implore this government and the minister to research, to look into what steps are needed to fund Spinraza for SMA patients who need and want to utilize it.

WHITCHURCH STOUFFVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to talk about an event that happened last week in my riding. I know many of the members have similar events. It was the Whitchurch Stouffville Chamber of Commerce small business awards. We all talk about

how important small businesses—our small, medium and large job creators—are to us.

I just want to highlight a couple of the recipients of the awards. The small business award went to the Trentadue Torres real estate team. This is a very dynamic team. We have great realtors in my riding, but the work that this team has done to reach out to the community is second to none.

The large business award went to Finlayson Hospitality Partners. Todd and Marcia Finlayson, who are the owners of not only the McDonald’s in my riding, but a number of McDonald’s across York region, have donated over \$100,000 to our local Ronald McDonald homes at our hospital.

Also, the special award went to O’Neill Funeral Home. O’Neill Funeral Home is one of those places that has been in Stouffville for as long as anybody can remember. When you look at all the historical pictures of the founding of the town, O’Neill was there. But what we learned was that O’Neill furniture store—what makes them unique was that, well, they’re not a furniture store anymore; they’re a funeral home. But they started off as a furniture store. Originally, they did both. You could buy furniture, and if calamity happened, you could get a casket and they would bury you.

Just a special thank you to all of those small businesses who have done a great job and employ a lot of great people in the community, and especially to the chamber of commerce, which does such great work.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I’m honoured to rise today in remembrance of a faith leader whose impact and legacy will live on forever. Fourteen years ago today, St. Pope John Paul II left this earth to go to the house of the Father. That is why April 2 is recognized and celebrated in Ontario and Canada as Pope John Paul II Day.

October 16, 1978, was a day that many Poles around the world, including my grandmother, remember vividly. That white smoke coming out of the Vatican chimney signaled that the Archbishop of Kraków, Karol Wojtyła, was elected as Pope and leader of the Roman Catholic Church. He was the second-longest-serving pope in modern history, leading the Catholic Church for 27 years. He is also recognized for his role in ushering in the end of communism in Poland. He was one of the world’s most travelled leaders in history, having visited 129 countries. His love for people, and especially youth, transcended religious and racial boundaries, earning him the title of the “People’s Pope.”

As a Canadian of Polish descent, I am honoured to have the opportunity to commemorate an individual who made such a profound impact on the world. He was Poland’s gift to the world.

One of St. John Paul II’s most notable contributions to the Catholic faith was the addition of five new mysteries of the rosary. Mr. Speaker, to commemorate the 14th anniversary of his passing, I would like to recite the Hail

Mary and ask my fellow members to join me if they wish to do so.

Hail Mary, full of grace.
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed are thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

call Ontario home. This bill will give them some kind of healing and closure for their experience in their homeland.

This is not to blame any certain republic or country or anyone, just to remember the suffering of these survivors and their descendants who are here, and also to send a message to future generations in Ontario and in our schools that this is an important issue that we need to address and that they learn about it because it can happen anywhere. They have to be prepared to prevent—

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

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 April 2, 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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Before I read my bill, I would like to welcome George Manios from the Canadian Hellenic Congress to the House.

GENOCIDE AWARENESS, EDUCATION, CONDEMNATION AND PREVENTION MONTH ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION AUX GÉNOCIDES ET DE LA CONDAMNATION ET DE LA PRÉVENTION DES GÉNOCIDES

Mr. Babikian moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 94, An Act to proclaim April as Genocide Awareness, Education, Condemnation and Prevention Month / Projet de loi 94, Loi proclamant le mois d'avril Mois de la sensibilisation aux génocides et de la condamnation et de la prévention des génocides.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would like to invite the member to briefly explain his bill, if he cares to.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Ontario is a diverse society where we have so many different ethnic and religious minorities residing in our province, and many of these residents are survivors of genocides, crimes against humanity and massacres which took place in their homeland. Now they

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE SENSIBILISATION À L'AUTISME

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I am pleased to rise today to mark world autism awareness and acceptance day. Every year on April 2 we, together with partners around the world, promote greater social understanding of autism and positive perceptions about the remarkable people living with the disorder. It's a day that seeks to inspire compassion, inclusion and hope across the globe, and it's a day to celebrate the unique talents and skills of people with autism.

Autism is a life-long neurodevelopmental disorder that affects the way a person communicates and relates to the people and the world around them. One in 66 children in Canada is diagnosed with this.

As Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, I've met with many people with autism, their families, as well as the dedicated people who work with them. They inspired the changes we have made going forward and they have inspired our consultations that I announced today so that we can make those changes even better.

1520

My parliamentary assistant, Amy Fee, under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, has been working very hard to continue to help shape our plan through our consultations and, of course, Amy's lived experience.

Just today, I was pleased, alongside our Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, as well as the Minister of Education, to outline the ways in which our consultations will identify an approach that is responsive to the needs of children in Ontario with autism for the first time ever.

These consultations will take a three-pronged approach. On May 1, we'll launch an online survey for all Ontarians, and are specifically looking to hear from all parents supporting a child with autism.

We will also launch a series of telephone town halls, where parents of children with autism can share their advice.

Finally, MPPs will have the opportunity to host round tables in their communities to collect feedback and hear first-hand from parents.

As importantly, we want to continue to hear not just from government MPPs; we invite members of the official opposition and independent MPPs in the Ontario Legislative Assembly to be part of this solution with our government. We will also appoint a panel of experts, clinicians and parents who will review the feedback received and help chart a path forward.

Speaker, this is really important to note: Our consultations have not stopped since we first took office on June 7. We continued to meet this week and last—and for weeks to come—in my office, as government MPPs continue to hear from parents and constituents.

We certainly would encourage the opposition to be constructive in these consultations and participate with us, and that is my invitation to them.

But here is what we know: Demand for diagnostic assessments continues to grow. There are more than 2,400 children today currently waiting for an assessment through Ontario's five diagnostic hubs. The average wait time for those children to get a diagnosis is 31 weeks. That's why our government doubled the funding to those diagnostic hubs over the next two years, to help more children receive an autism diagnosis sooner and to help connect families to local services in their communities.

Over the next 18 months, there will be four times as many children receiving support from their annual childhood budget that provides funding directly to parents, to choose the services that are in the best interests of their child.

We trust that providers will continue to provide quality support and care to meet the needs of the influx of children and youth seeking autism services and support. We believe that in the next 18 months, we will see an additional 23,000 children receiving childhood budgets who were previously denied support by their Ontario government.

Ontario's government for the people is empowering parents by moving to a direct funding model through our changes to the Ontario Autism Program. But let me be clear: There is no cut to funding in the Ontario Autism Program. In fact, Ontario is expected to spend over \$600 million in the Ontario Autism Program, which is the largest spend of any kind by any government in North America, and that's just within the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, notwithstanding the additional supports in place in the Ministry of Health and in the Ministry of Education.

I'm very grateful to the entire Progressive Conservative team for allowing me the additional flexibility to double what the previous Liberal government spent this time last year. That is a remarkable amount of progress, and I would like to personally thank our Premier, Doug Ford, our Treasury Board president, Peter Bethlenfalvy, and our finance minister, Vic Fedeli.

The new Ontario program is the best possible program we can deliver, and it is the only program in the history of this province that will support every single child with

autism in our province. We will do that by extending choice for families, so that they can purchase behavioural therapy, technological aids, respite services and caregiver support. We've enhanced that by listening to parents and saying that if you want speech and language services or occupational therapy and physiotherapy, we will support that too.

We heard from parents who expressed their concern for income testing. We listened, and we eliminated it. Parents were right when they said that each child with autism has different needs. That's why I'll be taking their input for the next several months, to best assess how we can support those with more complex needs.

Our motivation has been, and it always will be, to ensure that all children with autism receive a level of support from their Ontario government. I've never been comfortable, nor has anyone in this government, with the fact that only 25% of children with autism seeking services in the province of Ontario were receiving support. As I've said many times in this House, I could not, in good conscience, ever continue with a plan that denied three out of four children support from their Ontario government, as the previous government had done.

We understand that parents of children currently receiving behavioural services have expressed their personal anxiety about the services being cut off. That's why I made the decision, along with our government, to extend behavioural plans for children who are currently in service for an additional six months so that we can ensure there's an orderly transition to the new program and that we can continue to consult and build a responsible and strong needs-based approach to the services that they need.

It's remarkable that people with autism can achieve support right here in the province of Ontario. Our government is working hard to provide that support so every child can reach their full potential.

I want to particularly thank, right now, the numerous dedicated service providers and front-line workers who work diligently every day to make the lives of those with autism better. I would like to say thank you right now to Autism Ontario, which has secured a contract with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to be the chief navigator for moms and dads as we move into this new program. They will also be working with us on our online surveys so that we can ensure that we have the best possible data that comes out of that so we can make the best possible evidence-based decisions. To those individuals dedicating their time and their energy, I say a big thank you, knowing that your efforts are making a difference in improving the lives of children with autism.

Of course, I want to applaud and thank the parents and caregivers of the amazing children, youth and adults with autism. Their job is not an easy one, and I thank them for continuously being passionate advocates for their children.

I look forward to continuing to work together, to discuss together, to consult together, and to build a strong Ontario Autism Program together.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses? I recognize the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Today is World Autism Awareness Day, or, as many autistic adults prefer, world autism acceptance day. Today and all of this month, we will recognize the important contribution of people on the autism spectrum in our communities. People with autism have always been a proud part of Canada's and Ontario's history, and they will be a part of our future. Currently, one in 66 children is diagnosed with autism. In Ontario today, there are approximately 135,000 people on the autism spectrum.

This government has an obligation to support people with autism, from diagnosis into adulthood and, quite frankly, throughout their entire life span, and they have to ensure that they have access to services that they need. In my capacity as child and youth services critic, I have been able to focus a great deal on ensuring that children on the autism spectrum receive the supports that they need as they grow up.

Every child on the spectrum should have access to services that can help them develop and lead healthy lives. New Democrats have been pushing for increased and comprehensive access to services in this House for several years. Children on the autism spectrum deserve needs-based services and supports, and that doesn't mean just ABA therapy, though I know it is helpful for many. Children should be able to access a wide range of services that meet those specific needs. That includes mental health supports that can get to the root causes of behaviours or anxieties. It also includes speech-language pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, services that should be available to all children with disabilities. We must make sure that children with autism in this province are given the same opportunities to succeed, and we must support them.

Under this government, we've seen an erosion of support for children. We've seen an autism program that is catastrophic for families. The new autism program has caused stress and anxiety for parents, many of whom still don't know what the new program entails because this government has not provided that important information.

1530

The new plan has caused layoffs all across the province. Northern and rural areas are hit especially hard by this. Service providers are having a hard time adjusting to the new funding level, as they were only given two months to completely change how they operate.

Since the plan was introduced, we've seen the most awful aspects of it, such as income testing, slowly be eliminated. But this was not easy—it took an amazing amount of determination and passion from autism families, who took to the streets demanding to be heard.

My colleagues and I have spoken with many autistic adults, as well. Of course, they provide a rich perspective, based on their lived experience. Their advice on how to support children and adults on the spectrum should be heeded. What I've heard from adults is that autism doesn't end once you age out of programs designed for children; autism doesn't end at 18. That's why this province needs

to think more broadly about how services for autistic people are based.

Adults on the spectrum also need support that is tailored to their needs. In concrete terms, this could mean support finding educational and training opportunities. It could also include help finding and maintaining employment and housing. The province could also help by creating broader public understanding of neuro-diversity and the contributions that autistic adults make in our communities.

Autistic adults have told me that they need inclusion, accommodation and acceptance. They have told me that we need to recognize that our society was built for neuro-typical people, and that there is work to be done to make it accessible for others.

Autistic adults I've met with also have stressed the importance of listening to autistic voices when designing autism policies, whether they are policies for children or adults. I wholeheartedly agree with this view. How can we design policies for a specific group of people without including them in the conversation? It doesn't make sense from a policy perspective or an ethical one. We need to do better in making sure their voices are heard.

Every child and every adult on the spectrum deserves support to meet their true potential. This should be our ultimate goal here at Queen's Park. World autism awareness and acceptance day reminds us of how far we are from realizing that goal and how much work there still is to do.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm very proud to be here today, on behalf of my Liberal colleagues, to recognize World Autism Awareness Day.

As we heard, approximately one in 66 children and youth are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder in Canada, and this number continues to grow. Our team will continue to support children and families living with autism spectrum disorder.

I'd like to start by thanking the families, the advocates, the service providers, the front-line workers and researchers who work so hard every day to make the lives of those living with autism a little easier, and for your strong commitment to children and the autism community. Specifically, I'd like to recognize Laura Kirby-McIntosh, Louis Busch, Mike Moffatt, Nancy Walton and Janet McLaughlin, advocates and experts who came here to Queen's Park to ensure that their voices are listened to and heard.

On a personal note, I'd like to thank two Ottawa-Orléans members: Rhonda Allaby-Glass and Kerry Monaghan. Thank you for your advocacy.

Speaker, when we were in government, we made some mistakes on this file; there's no doubt about it. But when parents and advocates came to protest and told us that the changes we made were wrong, we listened. We brought parents and experts into the decision-making process, and we created the Ontario Autism Program, something we're proud of.

While this government is finally telling families that they made a mistake, they are only now starting consultations on the devastating changes they made to the Ontario Autism Program that so many rely on dearly.

Every person with autism is unique. There's no one-size-fits-all fix for children with complex needs. They may share some common characteristics, but they don't have the same wants, abilities, strengths, lifestyles or goals. What they all need is to be understood and to be accepted for who they are.

With the new Ontario autism plan coming into effect yesterday, April 1, families are desperate, anxious and worried about the details that they haven't yet received. Yesterday, Mike Moffatt, who is a self-described exhausted but happy dad of two wonderful children with autism, released another article on Medium. I would like to share some of his questions to the government, and particularly to the minister.

His questions were:

"How will his file transfer over from the old wait-list to the new one?

"Who do his parents contact to find out the child's spot on the current waiting list?

"What services will this child be able to access? ...

"Will there even be any services to access in his area, given layoffs and no program to ensure support in rural/remote/northern areas" and, I would say, pour les francophones?

"Why can't we get any answers?"

I think it's important to note, Mr. Speaker, that this program has already started. I'm hoping that the minister and this government finally recognize the meaning of today and the meaning of what they're doing to Ontario's families with autism. I've asked many times and I ask again: I really feel strongly that the minister should apologize for the anxiety that she has created for those families.

I know today she reached out to all of us—to independents, and I say I'm a Liberal caucus member with pride, and to the official opposition—about creating round tables in our communities. I'm proud to say to the minister that in Orléans, we will have two round tables—which I have never shied away from, but I had great help thanks to Rhonda—which we will be hosting on May 6 at 7 p.m. and on May 16, en français, à 7 h : two round tables for our Orléans community to share their thoughts on what this current government is proposing and how we can finally, finally provide the services that we need to our children.

PETITIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pride to hand in another large stack of petitions that really come in from across the province. It reads:

"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 fully agree with this. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Elizabeth to bring to the Clerk.

LANDFILL

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank Bryan Smith from Oxford People Against the Landfill, or OPAL, and the several hundred citizens of Woodstock, Ingersoll, Thamesford and other southwestern Ontario communities who signed a petition calling on the province for the right of communities to approve projects. It reads:

"Whereas municipal governments in Ontario do not have the right to approve landfill projects in their communities, but have authority for making decisions on all other types of development including nuclear power and nuclear waste facilities as well as casinos; and

"Whereas this outdated policy allows private landfill operators to consult with local residents and municipal councils, but essentially to ignore them; and

"Whereas the government has proposed through legislation ... to grant municipalities additional authority and autonomy to make decisions for their communities; and

"Whereas the recent report from Ontario's Environmental Commissioner has found that Ontario has a garbage problem, particularly from industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) waste generated within the city of Toronto, where diversion rates are as low as 15%; and unless significant efforts are made in Toronto and area to increase recycling and diversion rates, a new home for this Toronto garbage will need to be found, as their landfill space is filling up quickly; and

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"Whereas rural municipalities across Ontario are quietly being identified and targeted as potential landfill sites for future Toronto garbage by private landfill operators; and

"Whereas other communities should not be forced to take Toronto waste, as landfills can contaminate local watersheds, diminish air quality, dramatically increase heavy truck traffic on community roads and reduce the quality of life for local residents;

"Therefore, we call upon the government of Ontario and all political parties to formally grant municipalities the authority to approve landfill projects in or adjacent to their communities."

I support this petition, affix my name, and will give it to page Katherine to take to the table.

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND FORESTRY

Mr. Will Bouma: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) should work with and for” all “the people of Ontario;

“Whereas clear and manageable timelines need to be provided by MNRF for all requests from Ontarians in order to provide certainty, clarity and reasonable expectations;

“Whereas MNRF should be a partner in helping the people to open up Ontario for business;

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

“That the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry reform the current service standards of MNRF to work with and for the people of Ontario.”

I wholeheartedly endorse this petition, and will affix my name to it and give it to page Ben.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I’d like to thank my constituents in Parkdale–High Park for this petition titled “Don’t Increase Class Sizes in Our Public Schools.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the vast majority of parents, students, and educators support smaller class sizes and the current model of full-day kindergarten and want the best education possible for the students of Ontario; and

“Whereas larger class sizes negatively impacts the quality of education; reduces access to teaching resources and significantly diminishes teacher-student interactions; and

“Whereas the impact of larger class sizes will be particularly detrimental to students who need additional support; and

“Whereas Ontario has an internationally recognized public education system that requires careful attention and the investment to ensure all of our students can succeed;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to reducing class sizes, maintain the current model of full-day kindergarten, and make the necessary investments in public education to build the schools our students deserve.”

I couldn’t agree more with this petition, and I will affix my signature to it.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It’s a pleasure for me to present this petition today on behalf of the Alliance Against the Ontario Autism Program.

“Autism Doesn’t End at Ford.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the PC government of Ontario recently announced plans to overhaul the Ontario Autism Program, implementing a two-tiered age- and income-based funding model, and effectively removing funding for any significant duration of comprehensive applied behavioural analysis (ABA) from all children living with the autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and....

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

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

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

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

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

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

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Will Bouma: This petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the SPA pools together all revenues from hunting and fishing licensing fees, fines and royalties;

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

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

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

I completely endorse this petition and will affix my signature thereon and give it to page Sanjayan.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I have a stack of petitions here from the Alliance Against the Ontario Autism Program.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the PC government of Ontario recently announced plans to overhaul the Ontario Autism Program, implementing a two-tiered age- and income-based funding model, and effectively removing funding for any significant duration of comprehensive applied behavioural analysis (ABA) from all children living with the autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

“Whereas in 2003 and again in 2016, previous age caps on comprehensive therapy were removed by former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty and former Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne because the age cap was recognized to be unfair and discriminatory; and

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

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

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

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

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

I completely agree with this petition and will be affixing my name to it and passing it to page Niko to take to the Clerk.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is the petition “Stop the Subway Sell-Off.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

“Reject legislation that allows for the breakup and sell-off of any aspect of the TTC to the province of Ontario, and reject the privatization or contracting out of ... the TTC; and

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

I support this petition. I will be affixing my name to it and giving it to page Katherine.

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MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: This petition is titled “Children and Youth Deserve Timely Mental Health and Addiction Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford has announced a \$335-million per year funding cut to mental health care and services;

“Whereas an estimated 12,000 children are waiting up to 18 months for mental health care, and there are 63% more children in the ER for mental health issues than there were in 2006;

“Whereas a cut to already threadbare mental health funding will mean longer waits for care and fewer services—which can result in mental health conditions being exacerbated, and more people living with mental illness spiralling into crisis;

“Whereas front-line care workers and first responders are doing the best they can, but coping with a shortage of resources;

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

“To reverse” the “\$330-million per year funding cut to Ontario’s mental health services, and pass MPP Karpoche’s proposed bill, the Right to Timely Mental Health and Addiction Care for Children and Youth Act, 2019.”

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

TUITION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It’s a great pleasure for me to rise today to present a petition entitled “Support our Students: Stop Cuts to OSAP!”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario has the highest tuition rates in Canada, lowest per-student funding from the province and highest student debt, and the government’s changes will only make the situation worse;

“Whereas removing the interest-free six-month grace period means students will end up paying more, and are pressured to pay their loans even before finding a job or starting a career;

“Whereas the Conservatives’ decision to cancel grants and force students to take loans instead is another barrier to college and university;

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

“Direct the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to reverse the recently announced OSAP cuts, protect the existing tuition grants and reinstate the six-month interest-free grace period after graduation.”

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

STUDENT LOANS

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: This petition is titled “Eliminate interest from Ontario student loans.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government”—sorry, the Conservative government; both governments—“should not be profiting from student loans in Ontario;

“Whereas Ontario is the most expensive province in which to access post-secondary education;

“Whereas the average debt load for university students after four years is \$28,000 and the average debt load for anyone with post-graduate experience is \$35,000;

“Whereas the Ontario government made more than \$25 million in profit from interest on student loans last year alone;

“Whereas seemingly insurmountable student debt delays important life milestones for young people, placing a burden on both graduates with debt and on the provincial economy as a whole;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately eliminate interest from student loans.”

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FIXING THE HYDRO MESS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 POUR RÉPARER LE GÂCHIS DANS LE SECTEUR DE L’ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 28, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to amend various statutes related to energy / Projet de loi 87, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l’énergie.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This afternoon I’m very happy to be doing the NDP’s leadoff debate on the government’s Fixing the Hydro Mess bill—a bill that continues the Liberal tradition of having the title of the bill be the exact opposite of what the bill does. They’ve just taken over where the Liberals left off, using all the same techniques and the same approaches.

This bill, very roughly, relabels and it reaffirms the old, bankrupt Liberal Fair Hydro Plan. Given the background of the current Premier, I am sure they had to relabel rather than whitewash. It gives a mechanism, Speaker, for permanent subsidy of the hydro bills through the tax base. Right now, that runs us at about \$2.5 billion a year—\$2.5 billion a year that people in Ontario are borrowing to reduce hydro bills.

Given the deficit that we have in Ontario, you would have thought that the Conservatives, who said they had a plan to reduce hydro bills and deal with structural issues, would have put in place those structural changes so that we wouldn’t have to be borrowing a lot of money. We all know it’s really critical to keep hydro bills affordable, but we also know that it’s irresponsible to be borrowing billions of dollars a year to keep those bills low. So if you’ve got things you want to bring forward that will actually reduce the costs, you should bring them forward. But that isn’t the way the Conservatives have proceeded. What they’ve decided to do is borrow \$2.5 billion a year.

I thought that they were fiscally conservative. Typically, fiscal conservatives wouldn’t be running deficits. Typically, they wouldn’t be borrowing money to subsidize activities but, in fact, that’s where we are, and it’s a strange spot to be in.

The Conservatives voted against the Fair Hydro Plan when the Liberals brought it forward, and I have to say it was a real pleasure to reread the Hansard debates and how vociferous and eloquent the Liberals—sorry, the Conservatives; they go back and forth; hard to tell the difference some days—how eloquent, how well spoken, how passionate the Tories were in denouncing the borrowing of money to subsidize hydro rates. They were really good. I look forward to bringing out some of the quotes, because the language was such that it shouldn’t be allowed to just lay in a dusty volume somewhere. It needs to be brought back out into the light of day and heard.

This was a bill, a program, that the Conservatives denounced thoroughly. It was an orphan until the last provincial election, when the Tories brought it into their home, gave it pride of place, and now are bringing forward legislation to make sure that it continues for an extended period.

Interestingly, since the legislation says nothing about when this borrowing will end, and since I’ve heard nothing from the minister or the parliamentary assistant, it sounds like it’s a perpetual plan. Intriguing, Speaker; intriguing.

I want to note that what we have in this Conservative solution to the hydro problems seems to be simply to reiterate and relabel Liberal policies. If I were the Liberals,

I would be very angry at how my policies were being stolen. They worked very hard on that. They avoided questions in committee when I tried to figure out who thought this up. They didn't want to name names. I guess there's an embarrassment factor here. But they were very connected to this, and now they've lost their child to the Conservatives, who seem to love it a great deal.

This bill could have been used to roll back the Liberal mess in the hydro area. It could have actually made a big difference. I may well have had a substantial difference with the Conservatives with their approach, but if they had started dealing with the structural issues, one could say, "Yes, this is actually dealing with the mess." But it's not. The underlying structural problems are there. On top of the fact that it continues borrowing to subsidize hydro rates—and many Conservative voters who are fiscal conservatives don't like the idea of running deficits to subsidize something—it's going to be rewriting the laws around the Ontario Energy Board.

Speaker, you're well aware that when we used to debate Liberal bills about the Ontario Energy Board, I would refer to the Ontario Energy Board as a glove puppet operated by the Liberal Ministers of Energy—Chiarelli, Thibeault and those before—and I think I can justify that by looking at what the Ontario Energy Board did when the Liberals were in charge.

When it came to the sale of Hydro One: not a peep. This is a major issue that has a big impact for a long time on rates and on the operation of the system. Not a word from the Ontario Energy Board.

The smart meters: an initiative that demanded a business analysis that was never actually reviewed by the Ontario Energy Board. They were simply told, "Go and make this happen," and they did it.

The Ontario Energy Board had no hearings on the Fair Hydro Plan when, in fact, it's a huge policy piece.

They, at the Ontario Energy Board, have not stood up for those who pay for electricity against the investors' rights with regard to the huge tax gift that the Liberals gave Hydro One when they privatized that corporation.

When people brought allegations of perjury on the part of utilities to the Ontario Energy Board with regard to rate hearings, the Ontario Energy Board would not hear those allegations, would not investigate.

So in all ways, this was a board that looked out for the interests of the government and of private investors.

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With this bill, what we have is a demotion from a glove puppet to a sock puppet—so not as sophisticated—and with a hint of gravy train, and I'll talk about that later. It's sort of Muppets on a train, with someone in the background pulling it along the floor. I think we need to start with two questions that are substantial here and should have been answered when the government was putting together this bill: Why do we have a hydro mess—and I'll explore that at greater length—and what could the Conservatives do, other than borrowing a mountain of money to bury this problem? Two questions that should have been answered, and were not answered, with this bill.

Why do we have a hydro mess? Let's understand, first, why we had a good hydro system in this province. At the beginning of the 20th century, industrialists understood that the bulk purchase of power through a non-profit, publicly owned corporation—renewable power, because we here in Ontario have a substantial gift of renewable power, hydro power—would make a huge difference to Ontario's ability to attract and hold industry.

Up until 1909 or 1910, we depended very heavily on coal. In fact, Ontario had been hit very hard with what was called the coal famine in 1905 when a huge strike in the Pennsylvania coalfields meant that coal didn't get here. Not only were we dependent and vulnerable to events outside our borders, but we were shipping money out of the province, constantly, to buy those fossil fuels.

These industrialists weren't socialists, but they understood that a publicly owned company that was not marking up the cost of power, using renewable energy that didn't have to be imported, was a good thing for Ontario. That was the basis for us building an industrial society here in this province. Business people understood it then and, frankly, a lot of them understand it now.

In the 1990s, I was on Toronto city council. I was on the board of a downtown utility, Toronto District Heating Corp., which you may not be familiar with, Speaker. Downtown Toronto, First Canadian Place, TD Centre—those big institutional and commercial properties down there—get their heating, and now their cooling, from what was then Toronto District Heating and now is called Enwave. In the 1990s, a number of corporations were deeply interested in getting hold of that utility because they could see the profit potential. It was huge. One of the corporations that was interested was a company called Enron. Now, Enron was a criminal organization that masqueraded as an energy trader, an energy developer. It was operated for the benefit of insiders and the corporate leadership, many of whom went to jail after the corporation collapsed.

It was interesting in that fight to find out that big developers and big commercial building owners downtown understood that with the Toronto District Heating Corp. being publicly owned, they didn't have to worry about a private operator coming in and charging the maximum the market would bear. So when the stories first got out about the privatization, new customers said, "No, thanks. We don't trust you." An interesting story. We were able to stop Enron, and we were able to recover those customers. But it's useful to understand that those who use large amounts of power—and, frankly those who use small amounts in their home—have benefited from publicly owned, renewably based power to ensure that they have a stable footing for the economy that they want to build.

So that's what we had. Last week, the parliamentary assistant talked about the stable, solid electricity system we have—the affordable one—which we did have until Mike Harris was elected. With that election came this whole commitment to market operation of the electricity system, abandoning everything that allowed us to industrialize and looking at selling off and privatizing the

electricity system. So he leased Bruce nuclear. That was a big loss for the publicly owned system. He was setting things up to sell off Ontario Power Generation, so he took all the debt off the books that was sitting on those nuclear power plants, and he put it in the stranded debt. And so, if anyone will remember the debt retirement charge that used to be on their hydro bills, that was the nuclear debt. He didn't think the plants would be saleable without taking the debt away; he had to do that. So not only was he selling things off, but he was increasing hydro rates for all other forms of generation by moving the numbers around.

Oh, and not to forget that Ernie Eves tried to privatize Hydro One, was blocked in court and realized that it was a bit too late for him, with an election coming up, to follow through.

Then the initial privatizing impulse from Harris got things rolling.

Dalton McGuinty was elected on a platform of stopping privatization. As you're well aware, Speaker, Dalton McGuinty wrote the rules so that virtually everything that was developed, in terms of power, from the time he was elected until the time the Liberals were defeated, was privately owned. There were a few exceptions, but virtually everything was then privately owned.

So we had an expansion of interest on the part of private power developers in increasing the amount of generation in Ontario. These were generators who were, I would say, fairly generous with their donations to politicians. These were generators who were not shy about coming to this building and pushing forward their case. So we had a situation where we had an ongoing expansion of generation that we didn't need and couldn't afford. That was a huge problem for us.

Then Dalton McGuinty was followed by Kathleen Wynne, who made it very clear that she wasn't going to sell off Hydro One, ridiculed Andrea Horwath, our party's leader, when Andrea talked about these clear indications they were going to sell it off, saying, "Absolutely not," and then she sold it off, which led to her political demise. It rewrote people's understanding of who she was and what she was about.

That's the background: a stable system that allowed us to industrialize, sent down a dead-end road by Mike Harris, Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne, enjoying that road so much that they stepped on the gas and went down it as quickly as they could.

That brings us to the mess that we have today.

Does the bill before us actually take the steps necessary to clean up that mess? Does the minister—does the Premier—plan to bring Hydro One back into public ownership? Or, when private power contracts come up, when they expire, does he plan to take them back into public ownership so that, again, we have a public system in Ontario? Not that I can see in this bill.

Does he plan to use conservation to drive down the need for new transmission and distribution lines or new generation? Conservation is absolutely the cheapest option before us. No. In fact, he has cut back conservation. I'll talk more about that later.

Did he do a cold business analysis of the refurbishment contracts that are being executed with Darlington and Bruce Power, to see if that really is the direction that we need to go in? Apparently, he took the Liberal assessment as was provided.

I wouldn't take the Liberal assessment as was provided. I don't think any sensible person who wants to have containment of hydro costs in Ontario would take the Liberal assessment. But they did. They did.

Did the minister look at the cost-benefit of importing renewable power from Quebec at five to six cents a kilowatt hour? No, not that I can tell. In fact, reading through I think it was Le Devoir about a month ago, I found that the Premier of Quebec had been rebuffed in his efforts to sell more power to Ontario.

So, all of the things that you need to do to actually stabilize the system and untangle this mess that we have before us have been ignored.

Is the minister, in this bill or in any other way, assessing the changing nature of the electricity market and electricity technology? The simple answer to that is no, of course not, and it's the answer to all of those questions that I just asked: No. They like the Liberal policy, they like privatization, they like borrowing money to try and make things work, and that's what they have continued to do.

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The Liberal plan is buried somewhat by the bill before us. What the Liberals were doing with their Fair Hydro Plan was that they were borrowing tens of billions of dollars and hiding it, keeping it off the books, so they could say, "We've solved the problem and we haven't increased the deficit." They were not straightforward with the people of Ontario.

The Conservatives have said, "No, we will borrow the money. We will assume billions of dollars of debt and interest payments," and they didn't try to hide it. Well, Speaker, if you're going to raid my wallet and you're going to be sneaky about it, that's a bad thing, and if you're going to raid my wallet and be brazen about it, that's still a bad thing. That's what we have before us today. We have a plan that's expensive, that's short-term-focused and that's murky: perfect Liberal legislation now introduced by the Conservatives. That's what we have before us.

I just want, on a side note, to point out that the Conservatives have consistently tried to use green energy as the cause for bills going up so sharply in Ontario since about 2004 or 2005. I will note that bills went up 100% from 2006 to 2016, and 12% of our bills was related to green energy. Let's say that the bills would have gone up 90% without any investment in green energy. Are you telling me that this would not have caused problems? It would have caused substantial problems.

Green energy was not the heart of the problem before us. Privatization has been at the heart of the problem before us. They will not reverse it. They have no interest in it because they don't have confidence in governments doing things. They think it should all be turned over to the private sector. Frankly, the industrialists in Ontario at the beginning of the 20th century understood the fallacy of

that approach, and because they rejected it, they were able to build an industrial society here in this province.

I can't tell you why the Conservatives support privatization in the way they do, but I can observe closely that that is what we can see them doing.

There's privatization and then there's looking for the most cost-effective way of providing electrical services to the people of this province. Clearly, this is a government that doesn't believe in doing that, because on March 21 the minister put out a media release saying that he was going to be cutting—I think this his term was “refocusing and uploading electricity conservation programs to the Independent Electricity System Operator,” the body that actually runs the system and ties together all the pieces in Ontario so that we have power where we need it and when we need it.

What's interesting is that most of the programs that were cut were those that serve middle-class people. Home heating and cooling plans were cut. Most of the savings, at least identified by the minister, go to large industrial operations. I think that large industry in this province does need support and does need action. With conservation, we could help them dramatically. But the idea that you would beat up on homeowners to reduce bills for large consumers doesn't make sense to me. Homeowners need help at least as much as the large consumers. I would say that the majority of the people in this province understand that.

The Conservatives listed what they were going to cut, and I'll just touch on a few of them, Speaker, because I know your patience is limited. How much can you hear in one day?

One of the things that was cut was the Business Refrigeration Incentive. That wasn't for middle-class homeowners; it was to help small businesses cut their refrigeration demand. Interestingly, that refrigeration, in a province where our biggest hydro demand is in the summer, when we're dealing with heat, would address the most expensive power that we buy, and that's for peak power demand. When I've looked at the IESO in the past—the Independent Electricity System Operator—the price for that peaking power is about 31 cents a kilowatt hour. That's pretty pricey. Most of these efficiency programs charge out at two cents to six cents a kilowatt hour. If I can reduce the system need for power costing 31 cents down to two to six cents, I think the choice is pretty clear. But no; our government cut that program.

They cut back on high-performance new construction. I just want to tell you that it's far cheaper to build a building in the first place that uses less power than it is to go back later and retrofit that building or correct the construction to reduce power demand. That makes no sense in terms of actually reducing power needs, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reducing demand for peak power.

They cut out the heating and cooling incentive. Again, cutting out the cooling incentive, cutting out the support for homeowners to get the most energy-efficient air conditioner, reduces our ability to avoid peak demand, so it increases our reliance on the most expensive power in

the system. Does this make any sense to you? It makes no sense to me, Speaker. I know you can't answer that. But nonetheless, I have to ask the question. I do it rhetorically, Speaker.

This idea that you would avoid investing in the lowest-cost measures to reduce the expense of the system makes no sense unless you like the idea that private interests get to build generation. If you're undermining their market and if you're cutting out their market, they're not going to be happy. The idea that you would cut out the market for power that they want to sell in the future is something they're not going to be supportive of. Don't be surprised, given the privatization inclinations of this government, that they want to make sure that the world is safe for investors and not for ordinary working people who are trying to deal with their heating and cooling bills.

It's interesting. I've looked at some of the precise elements, but there's a larger picture here. Energy efficiency is the lowest-cost resource for dealing with our electricity needs. It has been set aside. To give you a sense of some of the costs, the system operator in 2018 said that conservation costs two cents a kilowatt hour—it's pretty cheap; wind power was seven cents a kilowatt hour; natural gas was eight cents a kilowatt hour; and new nuclear was 12 cents a kilowatt hour. That's the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO. So if you, Speaker, want to reduce costs, you go to conservation. That's your best bet.

This whole approach is going to result in more system privatization. Right now, the local utility company—the Peterborough utility commission, Alectra, Oshawa's public utility commission, Waterloo's public utilities, Hydro Ottawa, Windsor—is it Enwave in Windsor? Right. Those utilities have people now who are delivering those programs. What this means is that those people are going to get laid off and they're going to be replaced by people hired by the system operator. The system operator doesn't have the staff to take on all this work, so you can be sure that what they're going to do is have private companies take on that work. Hundreds of well-paying, useful jobs are being eliminated by this Conservative initiative. That means that we will have less money in our local communities, but a number of American companies will do very well. CLEAResult and Nexant, who are contracted to the IESO, will have more work; people in Peterborough, Oshawa, Kitchener-Waterloo and Windsor will have less.

The other thing, just to note, is that in the past, these local distribution companies, these local public utility commissions, would do this work, and their programs would be assessed by the system operator, the IESO. Well, that's going to end. The IESO will evaluate itself in future. That is not to our advantage. It's always better to have someone who is marking an exam who didn't write the exam. What we have here is a restructuring to move money and jobs out of Ontario and to reduce the accountability of the system as a whole. Given everything I've seen with this government so far, I'm not surprised, but it's something I think most people don't know and should be aware of.

What could the government have done to clear up the mess? That's the other question. What's the alternative to borrowing \$2 billion or \$2.5 billion a year to keep the bills low?

In 2017, the NDP came forward with a plan for reducing electricity rates called Pay Less. Own More. It was a useful plan. It didn't require borrowing tens of billions of dollars, which was the Liberals' strategy and is now the Conservatives' strategy. It looked at changing a variety of measures that are in place now that could reduce people's costs.

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That's something that this government could have done. It could have phased out this borrowing and brought in its own or someone else's restructuring plan to reduce hydro costs, and that would have given the people of Ontario what they need.

One of the things that we pointed out at the time was to end mandatory time-of-use billing. I don't know about you, but when I canvass during the day, I find seniors, I find stay-at-home moms and I find small business people who are having to run, in the summer, their air conditioning—in the winter, they've got their lights on; they're trying to deal with the effects of the cold—and they get dinged because they don't have any choice. They have to run it then. The IESO calculated that most people who are now on time-of-use could save about 10% by going back to a flat rate.

There are some people who benefit from time-of-use. I'm here all day. I get home in the off-peak period, so, frankly, I'd save by staying on time-of-use. But it would help a huge number of people in Ontario if they had a voluntary option. That's something that the government could do.

We need to start bringing Hydro One back into public hands. Hydro One is going to be spending many billions of dollars in the years to come on the transmission system. They're a major player and a major cost in our hydro bills. Right now, they're in the hands of those who want to maximize the amount of money they make, rather than provide power services at a cost people can afford—two very different goals. If this government wanted to stabilize hydro prices, they'd be bringing Hydro One back into public hands. It's not an interest on their part.

We'd just re-establish the transparent, independent, public oversight of Hydro One by bringing back the authority of the Auditor General, the Financial Accountability Officer, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Ombudsman, the Integrity Commissioner, the French Language—well, we used to have a French Language Services Commissioner. There are so many things that have changed, Speaker. I'm sure that the private investors would be cranky, but it would be to our advantage to actually have that oversight. We'd put in place mechanisms to block future sales, requiring referendums so that people would actually have the opportunity to block this madness.

The sell-off of Hydro One by the Liberals is something that could be reversed using the profits from the part that

has already been sold off. As we bring it back, we'd bring back hundreds of millions of dollars that we can use to pay off debts for purchase.

Note that the Financial Accountability Officer, at the time of the sell-off, said that there would be an ongoing negative impact on budget balances from forgone net income and payments in lieu of taxes from Hydro One.

People should be aware that with the privatization of Hydro One, tax money that used to come to Ontario now goes to the federal government—tens of millions of dollars. Why on earth would you give tens of millions of dollars to the federal government when the money should be staying here to meet our needs? It's not even considered by the Conservatives in this plan that they've brought forward—not even considered.

Right now, Ontario Power Generation pays for money that runs through the hydro dams—hundreds of millions of dollars a year, money that could be better used in reducing hydro bills. That's something that this government has not looked at.

We could cap private profit margins. Speaker, right now, companies that want to increase rates to cover costs for new investments get to claim the costs of borrowing plus 5.5% return on equity. That's pretty good. If interest is at 3% or 4%, you're talking 8%, 9% return. In contrast, in Manitoba, the public utility has allowed 3% on top of borrowing—much less.

There is no reason for us to make this business more profitable than it has to be. When you're producing electricity into a market that's stable like this, it's a fairly straightforward business. There's no reason for us to be increasing the profits of investors.

One other thing they could have done is—when the Liberals privatized Hydro One, they gave Hydro One \$2.6 billion in a tax gift. That's a lot of money. It was an outrageous amount of money. I had the opportunity to go after the Minister of Energy about it in committee. We had a chance to go after the Liberal government about it in question period—\$2.6 billion, a gift to Hydro One.

Recently, in a rate hearing, the Ontario Energy Board—and I'll talk about them a bit further—said that a part of that has to go to reduce customer bills, and the rest goes to the investors. That makes no sense, Speaker. All of it should be going to reduce hydro bills. It's the money of the people of Ontario. Why are we giving it to investors when it should be going to reduce hydro bills? That's something—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you.

That's something that the Conservative government could do. Just send a directive to the OEB and say, "Tax gifts: 100% return to customers; zero to investors." I don't see any of that in the bill before us, nor any of that in any of the announcements that would be made.

We did a quick calculation. Over four years, turning all the money back to the customers would reduce bills by 3.2%—2.6 billion bucks over four years. It's worthwhile holding on to.

In summary, burying this problem in a mound of \$20 bills is not solving the problem; it's just burying it. It's not

as sneaky as the Liberals were; it's much more upfront: "We're going to borrow a ton of money. We're going to put you in debt that you're going to have to pay off for a long time." But when you're straightforward in saying to people, "We're going to make life more difficult for you," it's just as bad as being sneaky about it, Speaker. It's just as bad.

Conservatives say they have plans to reduce hydro bills by another 12%. So, bring them forward. Bring them forward. We've seen or heard announcements from the minister about cutting renewable energy contracts. I have questions about whether that will actually save any money, but it isn't going to reduce today's bills.

I saw this with Liberal ministers all the time: "We're going to cut something that, five years from now, will avoid a cost." That's a wonderful thing. Well, that isn't what people were asking for. They were asking for action on the problems they had today with the costs they were facing.

This Conservative minister learned well from Liberal ministers Chiarelli and Thibeault, and is copying their methods and their approach.

Prior to 2010, electricity wasn't covered by provincial sales tax, that 8%. We in this party oppose the imposition of the 8% sales tax on electricity. Interestingly enough, so did the Conservatives. But in this bill, do you see the permanent elimination of that HST charge on hydro bills? Because I can't find it. Maybe someone over there can go through the bill and say, "Subclause 3(a) of section 22 does it," but I have my doubts, Speaker. If the government was serious about taking the HST off hydro bills in perpetuity, they could have put it in this bill, and they haven't. Right now, it's dependent on the whim of a particular government as to whether or not people are protected from that extra 8%. It should be very clear; it should be eliminated.

We need to end privatization of our hydro system. We need to take advantage of the fact that many of the old gas-fired power plants had contracts that were signed 20, 30 years ago, and those contracts are going to expire. We have an opportunity to end those contracts, reduce our hydro costs, and instead of paying 10 or 20 or 31 cents a kilowatt hour for gas-fired power, spend two cents, three cents, maybe six cents for energy conservation—not contemplated by this government. We need to be approaching things that way. And we need to have real regulation. I'll talk about that when we talk about the Ontario Energy Board.

1630

I'll just note that it's also clear from this legislation and all statements made so far that this government has no sense of how profoundly the ground is changing underneath our feet with regard to electricity markets and technology in the next decade. I had a chance to talk to a local distribution company yesterday about the fact that, as they're making their rate plans now, they aren't sure that items they're bringing forward like hydro poles will be used for 40 years. They may only be used for another 10 or 15 years.

We're at a state with electricity technology and markets where things were at with telecommunications in the 1980s, when companies that supplied land lines thought it was going to go on forever, and they'd heard about this fad with mobile phones but were sure that it was going to pass. I remember reading the Report on Business in the Globe and Mail in the early 1980s with telecom executives saying, "It's a fad. It's too expensive. It's too inconvenient. It ain't gonna happen." Well, the whole of telecommunications was rewritten, and electricity is on the verge of being rewritten, and I don't see that with this government. I don't see that understanding of the reality of the change that's coming at us.

When you're paying what you're paying with your hydro bills now, and the cost of batteries and solar power are dropping so sharply—the cost of efficiency being so much less than regular bills—it's pretty clear to me that in the next decade, decade and a half, we will have a very, very different scene before us.

This plan before us isn't looking at the impact on hydro bills from the refurbishment of the Darlington nuclear power plant and that cost, and the refurbishment of the Bruce nuclear power plant. For those who saw the Auditor General's report at the end of last year, the cost of power from Darlington is going to hit 17.2 cents a kilowatt hour in the mid-2020s. It's going up substantially every year, and that power cost is probably going to be about the same with Bruce nuclear because they have the same financing constraints.

Hon. Bill Walker: Great company.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Great company, but it will be very expensive power. And the reality is that as it goes up to 17 cents a kilowatt hour, you're not going to be able to borrow enough money to keep our hydro bills affordable. It is going to be very, very tough.

I just want to note, in reference to the changing market for communications and for electricity, that in February the Calgary Herald reported that in 2017, wind energy in Alberta was contracted out at 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour, and at the end of 2018, the Alberta government signed contracts with solar power producers for solar power at 4.8 cents per kilowatt hour. These are very different numbers from the ones we're dealing with now, and they speak about a huge shift in where power will be produced and at what cost.

It was Ontario's advantage at the beginning of the 20th century to have large volumes of inexpensive power; that made us an industrial society. Well, if we lose that because other jurisdictions are going with technologies that provide power at a third of what we're charging, we will not be able to retain industry. It's as simple as that.

Speaker, to summarize on this part, we have a plan before us that will not deal with the challenges coming before us in the next decade, that will stick us with tens of billions of dollars in debt and lock us into a difficult and problematic future.

Now, I had said at the beginning of my speech that I would quote some of the Conservative speeches about the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan, and I can't resist any longer. I

have to go there, because it was so good. They were so eloquent and so passionate in their comments that one has to go back to what they had to say, because they were good.

Let's see: The member for Bay of Quinte, a former energy critic—

Hon. Bill Walker: Excellent guy; great minister.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: —an excellent guy—talking about the Fair Hydro Plan and the plan to borrow tens of billions of dollars to keep hydro rates low: “When you dig deeper into this bill, which I will over the next hour, it exposes a lot of the failures of this legislation. It exposes a lot of the gaps in this legislation. It, again, speaks to the urgency of the government to bring something forward which wasn’t well thought out, that isn’t planned, because they just simply want to be able to say to the people of Ontario, ‘Hey, your electricity bill is a little bit cheaper.’ But they haven’t actually fixed the underlying reasons as to why the electricity bill is soaring.”

So the member for Bay of Quinte understood that borrowing large amounts of money without dealing with the underlying problems was not a good strategy. He could see that it was going to be expensive and, ultimately, self-defeating.

He notes that, “Any interest payments included in this scheme are recoverable through the rates, meaning electricity customers are going to have to pick up that cost.” Well, that has changed with this bill. It’s now not just electricity customers; it’s people who pay taxes. They’re going to have to pick up the interest costs: “That means that, for the next 30 years, Ontario ratepayers—electricity customers”—and, as I’ve explained, now taxpayers—“are going to be paying bankers on their hydro bill. Some bond traders down at Bay and Wellington are going to get very, very wealthy on this deal.”

Well, he was right. And if he would look at the bill before us today and say exactly the same thing, he’d be right again.

There was another member who spoke to this, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Hon. Bill Walker: Excellent.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: He was great, and I think people really need to understand how well he put it: “What we are certain of is that this Liberal government’s new hydro scheme is going to be a big hit in the pocketbooks of Ontarians, one of unprecedented proportions. The short term gain that they’re professing out there, a 25% hydro-rate cut this summer, will lead to long-term pain.” He was right: Borrowing money to reduce hydro bills instead of actually dealing with the structural problems will lead to long-term pain.

“Let’s not forget, again, that the taxpayer is going to be on the hook for this extra \$25 billion for moving it out, for deferring payment—remortgaging your mortgage, as they like to say.” He was right. Who was this great member? Who was this great guy who understood the problem? “This is money that will not be going to other programs like health care, education, long-term care and mental health.” Damn. He was right, Speaker. He was good. “This

is money that’s borrowed on the backs of our children and our grandchildren. They can spin it however they like, but someone has to pay the debt, and it’s not going to be them. They have just moved it off their plate.... This is deferred payment. They have done nothing to truly address the actual cause of the problem with this bill.”

Well, truer words rarely ever spoken, Speaker—truer words rarely ever spoken. He nailed it, that member from—where are you from?

Hon. Bill Walker: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. That’s a long name. It’s like Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—all those four-territory names.

“At the end of the day, you move whatever shell on the board you want; it doesn’t really matter. The people of Ontario are on the hook for all of that debt.”

He goes on to say, “As I say, it’s a double-edged sword, because while you’re paying all those, and we are spending all of the money we are on debt payments, then we’re not putting it into things like our hospitals. They’re closing 600 schools across this great province because they ran out of money. At the end of the day, that’s not acceptable.”

Well, Speaker, it wasn’t acceptable then, and I say it’s not acceptable today.

Hon. Bill Walker: That’s why we’re going to fix it, Pete, with your help.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, I have to say, Speaker, if using the same poison that got you sick in the first place makes you well, then I’ve come into another universe, because that ain’t the case.

There was another member who spoke to this matter, the member from Nipissing, who’s now the finance minister: “This money has to be paid back. This 25% reduction—8% is equivalent to the HST rebate, so that just gets transferred to the taxpayer. You’re not really saving that money. You as a ratepayer are saving it, but you as a taxpayer now have to pay that bill.”

He understood that you weren’t actually dealing with the fundamentals; you were just borrowing money to cover up the problem, which is what this bill does. That’s what is before us. The child of the Liberal bill is now the child that the Conservatives have in their home.

1640

The Conservatives have moved things around, they’ve put all kinds of labels on it, but they haven’t dealt with the fundamental problems. They’ve just simply taken Liberal policy and moved it forward.

Not ramping up the cheapest energy source we have—conservation—really speaks to a lack of understanding of or commitment to what it’s going to take to deal with hydro problems in this province.

I’ve covered a fair amount of ground, and unfortunately, there’s not enough time left, but I want to talk about the Ontario Energy Board changes.

Happily, Speaker, there’s not a lot here to talk about. It’s pretty thin stuff. There’s very little that will address the problems. There is new secrecy in appointments to the

commission that will adjudicate rate cases. The commissioners who will actually hear rate cases won't have to come to the Legislative Assembly for approval; they'll be approved by the board of directors.

I see more high-end jobs for failed Conservative candidates, and that's part of the gravy-train part of this bill. The Ontario Energy Board Act, as it stands today, says that a minimum of five members should be on the Ontario Energy Board. There are actually eight at the moment, according to their website. This bill allows up to 20. There are a lot of failed Conservative candidates out there, wandering the wilderness, homeless, jobless, who will be rescued, Speaker, and brought back into the fold and looked after. That's what this is all about.

I don't see any direction for dealing with future tax windfalls, a point that I raised earlier. I don't see direction for verification of claims made by those coming forward for rate approvals. I don't see restoration of OEB authority to investigate the need for, and the utility of, new transmission lines, something that we fought the Liberals on but not corrected by this government.

I don't see the ability of the OEB to review government electricity plans—something that the Liberals got rid of. The Ontario Energy Board was dealt out of reviewing the Liberals' so-called Fair Hydro Plan. They shouldn't have been. If you're going to have good regulation, when you have very substantial initiatives or changes like this, they should go through the regulator. There should be public hearings. There should be questioning of witnesses. There should be a demand that evidence be put on the table. It's not the case.

We believe, here in the NDP, that the power of the Ontario Energy Board should be expanded—not the number of people who are going to be hired because life is hard, but actually the power to review and protect the people of Ontario from unreasonable rate increases.

You should be well aware that the Ontario Energy Board only regulates about 35% of the generation in the province; 65% doesn't go through the OEB, doesn't go through an OEB hearing. So whenever I would hear Liberal ministers say, "Oh, the Ontario Energy Board is going to protect you; they're a tough regulator"—yes, they regulate one third of the generation in the province. It undermined their credibility, Speaker. What can I say? If you're saying you have a tough, comprehensive regulator who doesn't actually get to regulate the big stuff, then you don't have a regulator that you need. That is not being changed by this bill.

When the Liberals came to put together the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator a number of years ago, they changed the law so that the Ontario Energy Board couldn't question transmission lines, couldn't ask for an explanation of why this would make sense, couldn't demand that a business case be presented and tested in an open tribunal. This hasn't been changed by this government.

The OEB wasn't allowed to review the sell-off of Hydro One. I'm sure that in this new atmosphere, there won't be the ability to review those big sell-offs. Should

the government decide one day that it wants to sell off Ontario Power Generation, there's nothing in here that would require public hearings and a testing of evidence, a cross-examination of proponents—nothing. So if you're telling me that you're actually going to have a regulator who is dealing with fundamental problems, and you are going to leave them as restrained as the Liberals restrained them, then I don't have confidence that you're actually going to make the changes that we need.

A few years ago, the Auditor General brought in a report about Hydro One and the problems she saw in Hydro One. One of those problems was the reality that Hydro One was putting in applications for rate increases, saying that there were a number of transformers—big transformers—that had to be replaced because they were at the end of their lifespan. It was an emergency; you had to jam it through.

What the Auditor General found was that the money was given for those transformer replacements, and a year later or two years later, Hydro One came back again with the same transformers, saying it was an emergency, they were at the end of their lifespan and we had to have money to replace them. I had a chance in the public accounts committee to ask the chair of the Ontario Energy Board, "So don't you check to see whether or not you're being scammed on this? Aren't you checking to see whether they're telling the truth?" I was told, quite bluntly, "No, we don't check that stuff."

Well, I don't see any requirement in this bill to actually check that things are accurate or honest when they're presented to the regulator. The government could do that. The legislation is there right now. The whole thing is open. But it's not being checked.

Speaker, if we're in a situation where a body can come to the OEB for a rate increase for something they're not actually going to do, and come back later and ask for money again for something they're not going to do, you don't have an effective regulation system. That, unfortunately, is the situation we're in today, one that is not going to be corrected by this bill.

Now, at the time we were debating this before, I likened this to the play—people may be familiar with it—The Drowsy Chaperone. We have a regulator who gets fed a few mickeys a day by the government and told, "Don't worry your pointy little regulator head about these costs; we're all going to deal with it later," because in many ways, the OEB, as I said, is just a sock puppet. It does what the Minister of Energy wants done at any given moment and doesn't actually protect the people of Ontario, and the bill before us is not going to change that.

Last week, the member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte asked the Minister of Energy one of those backbench questions. I call those questions the "why are you so good looking minister" kind of questions, because they're planted by the minister and the member gets to read them out. The member asked, "What are you going to do about the Ontario Energy Board?" and the minister talked about how he was going to deal with all of the overly extensive demands for documentation that were

being asked for in these hearings, that the people who ran the utilities were saying that having to provide all these answers was killing them.

Well, what's really intriguing, Speaker, is that none of that is addressed in this bill. If in fact it's going to change the standard for evidence, is going to change the standard for presentation and the method of assessing a rate application, it isn't here. So if you're saying that you're going to change the board so it deals with these pressing problems, you would think it might get mentioned in the bill. But it doesn't.

Speaker, in the end, we have a bill that allows diversion of tax money to reduce hydro bills, something that fiscal conservatives are generally against; a bill that allows massive borrowing to reduce hydro bills, something that will not change the fundamental problems that we have with the system; and a bill that allows the reorganization of the Ontario Energy Board without noting how this will actually deal with the hamstringing of the OEB.

As far as I can tell, none of the sins that one can trace back to the Liberals, in their time, are actually going to be addressed, and that's not just an extraordinary waste of an opportunity, because getting a bill through the House is not a 10-minute thing—well, maybe with this government, occasionally it might be, but generally speaking it takes more than 10 minutes. It's a substantial initiative, and so when you waste the opportunity to deal with a problem that's pressing for the people of Ontario, you're wasting your time; you're wasting our time.

This bill won't deal with the fundamental issues, and so don't be surprised if three years from now, or two years from now, something else blows up in this file and everything that was left undone comes back to haunt this Legislature. Speaker, that is no way to write legislation. It's no way to run a hydro system.

1650

People should vote against this bill. The government should go back to the drawing board. They should look at the fundamental problems with the system and come forward with a bill that actually addresses those problems. It should not be wasting our time when it doesn't do that.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: I honestly wish I could say it was a pleasure to listen to that speech, but it wasn't, for so many reasons. It strikes me that I am told that the member has been a critic for a long period of time. I don't know how, after so many years, the member could have gotten it so wrong on so many fronts. I don't understand that.

We talk about rate protection in the bill for homeowners. It's in the bill; he says it's not there, but it's actually in there. We expect them to come back with regulations by November. It's actually in the bill. We talk about the OEB, the paperwork burden. We expect the new OEB to come back to us with how they're going to do that. It's actually in the bill. He says it's not there.

He talks about the cost of hydro. It's not because of green energy, he says; private people are what caused—private interests in the energy sector. Well, who does the

member think owns the green energy projects? It's not government. Private industry owns the green energy projects.

He talks about nuclear. Nuclear is at 6.8 cents. He keeps bringing this phantom 12 cents—17 cents, he said today. Wrong.

But what's most disappointing is that after one hour, was there anything in there that any of my colleagues heard to suggest how we would move forward? What does the bill do? It listens to the FAO and the Auditor General on how we should account. It reduces the bill by \$4 billion. He might not think it's a lot; I think \$4 billion is a great start. It is another step on the way to returning stability to Ontario's energy sector.

But the part that really must gall Ontarians is this: He talks about green energy and how it's cheap in other jurisdictions. Well, congratulations to the people of Ontario. Because of a Liberal-NDP coalition government, you've given Alberta and Saskatchewan some of the cheapest green energy in Canada, built on the backs of Ontario ratepayers—a plan they brought in. They should apologize to Ontarians.

We've got it right, and we're moving in a—

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Toronto-Danforth has been on this energy file a lot longer than anyone else in this House, and he knows the history and the institutional knowledge of what has transpired. He laid it out very accurately for this House. The members on the opposite benches may not want to hear it, because they have before them a bill that does not solve the mess. The bill, once again, is not titled correctly, I would say.

The point that the member from Toronto-Danforth truly made very clear is the power of conservation. The smart money, the return on investment—the job creation around conservation in the province of Ontario was working. But what does Bill 87 do? It pulls back on several of the conservation programs, like the business refrigeration incentive, the Audit Funding Program, the high performance new construction—which, in my riding of Waterloo, creates jobs on a daily basis; this one provides design assistance and incentives for building owners and planners who design and implement energy-efficient equipment within their new space, a smart investment in the economy—the existing building commissioning, the monitoring and targeting, and the heating and cooling incentive.

We've actually already heard from businesses in Waterloo where jobs are being lost because of this bill. What this government doesn't understand is that when they roll out legislation in the manner in which they are doing, they actually build instability and they compromise confidence in the economy. When you have a Premier who goes out and gives his cell number but doesn't create legislation which actually helps the situation, you undermine the confidence in our economy.

The smart money on the power file, the energy file, is on conservation. The member from Toronto-Danforth made that very clear.

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

M^{me} Goldie Ghamari: Je voudrais remercier les députés pour leurs discours aujourd’hui.

Le 28 mars, notre gouvernement pour la population de l’Ontario a annoncé que nous tiendrons des consultations à l’échelle de la province auprès des entreprises sur les prix et les programmes de l’électricité industrielle.

Les consultations ont débuté hier, le 1^{er} avril, sur le répertoire des consultations en ligne de l’Ontario. Les soumissions électroniques seront acceptées pendant 60 jours. Les séances en personne débuteront en avril et se tiendront dans toutes les régions de la province. Il y aura également des séances de consultation sectorielles avec des industries clés, notamment de l’automobile, la foresterie, les mines, l’agriculture, l’acier, la fabrication et les produits chimiques.

Le ministre de l’Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines a déclaré : « Si nous voulons que l’Ontario soit ouvert aux affaires, la stabilité des prix de l’électricité est très importante pour nos secteurs industriels créateurs d’emplois », et « Nous voulons entendre de vive voix les idées des entreprises sur la façon dont notre réseau électrique peut améliorer leur compétitivité. »

Monsieur le Président, notre gouvernement pour la population de l’Ontario est ici pour réparer la situation héritée du gouvernement précédent. Pour cela, il va falloir trouver des solutions aux prix de l’électricité pour aider les entreprises à développer leurs activités et à créer des emplois. Les consultations sur les prix de l’électricité industrielle font partie de l’engagement du gouvernement dans sa stratégie envers le secteur automobile.

And that’s the reason why, Mr. Speaker, I support this bill and I look forward to voting in favour of it.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: It is a reasonable goal to move towards a renewable and affordable electricity system for Ontario. When I listened to the member for Toronto–Danforth and read up on this bill, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, I don’t see it achieving these goals. It doesn’t seem like it’s going to be fixing the problems that are facing our electricity grid today.

When I was listening to the member for Toronto–Danforth, a few key points really struck home for me. One was the fact that in this plan, this government is still borrowing money today, over \$2 billion a year, to keep hydro rates artificially low, but that money will need to be paid back by future taxpayers, and so will the interest. I think that’s very problematic.

The second piece that I have deep concerns about is the decision to eliminate conservation programs that allow us to reduce the amount of energy we use in the first place—energy programs like building energy-efficient homes, energy programs like helping people by subsidizing energy-efficient air conditioning and energy-efficient heating—because in the long term that is a way more cost-effective way to keep our electricity costs down than investing in generation. I’ve got big concerns about that.

Overall, I do see that our plan, the Ontario NDP’s plan, to make energy more affordable makes a lot more sense. That plan includes moving towards a publicly owned electricity system so we can take the private profit incentive out of it, and it includes investing in renewable energy and investing in conservation so that we can build towards an electricity system that helps us now and helps people in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We’ll now return to the member from Toronto–Danforth for his summation.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the members from Markham–Stouffville, Waterloo, Carleton and University–Rosedale for their comments.

I find it interesting that the parliamentary assistant doesn’t accept the Auditor General’s statement in her most recent report that the power from Darlington will be 17.2 cents a kilowatt hour around 2025 to 2026. If you ask me where I get the number, I get it from the Auditor General. In this building, most people accept that she’s pretty accurate. So I think that’s something that he should be paying attention to, because if he isn’t reading the Auditor General’s reports on Darlington, he’s in for a rude shock when those prices start popping up.

1700

He said that I made no suggestion for how to deal with the price issue, the mess that we have. I thought I was repetitive, frankly, in saying we needed an end to privatization; we need to use energy conservation as the lowest-cost source of new supply. That cuts our costs. Increasingly, in the United States, utilities like Con Edison are using energy efficiency and conservation to reduce their operating costs. We need to do that here. If you’re not doing it, you’re going to be paying too much for your electricity system.

Speaker, the member for Waterloo was quite correct when she said that what the Conservatives have brought forward doesn’t solve the problem before us, can’t solve the problem before us, because it doesn’t deal with the structural issues. It’s just a continuation of the borrowing that the Liberals were doing. When you continue failed Liberal policies, don’t be surprised if you have a failure; don’t be surprised if you continue to have a mess.

I would say, those who were around in this Legislature before the election know very well how badly the Liberals did on this file in a variety of ways. I see the Minister of Agriculture has fond recollections of that.

With that, Speaker, thank you.

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

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: Before I speak on this bill, I just want to mention that the member from Waterloo mentioned that the member from Toronto–Danforth has been on this file for too long. Well, it doesn’t matter how many times you read Mother Goose; it’s still a fairy tale, right?

Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to stand here to speak about a promise—a promise that we have kept and are keeping. That promise is fixing the hydro mess.

I want to thank the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines for introducing a bill that will

undo the mess created by the Liberal government. I also want to thank my friend, my colleague from Markham-Stouffville, for working on this bill. Thank you very much for all your hard work. I really appreciate that—amazing.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, is a comprehensive reform to the Ontario Energy Board and conservation programs. This bill will also end the not-so-fair Fair Hydro Plan. Our government for the people is reforming the electricity system to reduce costs, drive efficiencies and lower electricity rates.

I spoke to the residents of Mississauga East–Cooks-ville, and many of them had one concern: the hydro mess. One of those constituents was Maria. I remember meeting with Maria during one of the days we were canvassing. She came to me and said, “Kaleed, look at this. This is my hydro bill. How can I afford the payment when I am a senior citizen living on a fixed income? Can you please help me?” I remember saying to her, “Yes, we are going to help you. We are going to fix this hydro mess that was created by the previous Liberal government.”

Mr. Will Bouma: Help is on the way.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Exactly, help is on the way. High energy costs have been too big a concern for too many Ontarians for far too long.

Yesterday, our federal government fooled us with their carbon tax, an unnecessary burden put on the people. Bill 87 is a retaliation to that absurd tax. After the job-killing, back-breaking carbon tax and 15 years of mismanagement, with skyrocketing energy costs and billions wasted, the Liberals left yet another major mess for Ontario’s government for the people to clean up.

Mr. Speaker, with Bill 87, we are listening to the people. We were elected on a promise to fix this mess, and fix it we shall by building an electricity system that works for the people; using a consistent approach to conservation and avoiding unnecessary duplication in administrative costs; improving transparency; stabilizing residential electricity bills; providing opportunity to stakeholders for giving their input in streamlining the process, and expanding the Ontario rebate for electricity consumers.

Now, let’s talk about the electricity system that works for the people. We are building an electricity system that works for the people. The minister has taken a comprehensive, pragmatic approach to building a modern, efficient and transparent electricity system that the people of Ontario deserve. If Bill 87 is passed, there will be savings of up to \$442 million by refocusing and uploading electricity conservation programs to the Independent Electricity System Operator, IESO.

There will be an overhaul of the Ontario Energy Board to make the regulatory system more efficient and accountable while continuing to protect consumers. It will hold residential electricity bills to the rate of inflation. It will wind down the Fair Hydro Plan and, as a result, save billions of dollars in borrowing costs. It will introduce a new transparent on-bill rebate on consumer bills to replace the Fair Hydro Plan, something that will actually be fair for the people, Mr. Speaker.

Our government is taking a consistent approach to conservation across the province and avoiding unnecessary duplication in administration costs. Because of this change, local companies will no longer receive up to \$150 million in bonus payments for achieving targets, payments that did nothing to help low-income families or seniors like Maria lower their monthly electricity bills. The honourable minister said, and I quote, “These savings will help lower rates for large employers, allowing them to invest in their company to create more good jobs, and reduce the debt left to Ontario families by 15 years of ideological decisions.”

And that is correct, Mr. Speaker. If we want our prov-ince to prosper, we must take a consistent approach to fixing this mess. We are doing this through Bill 87. We are committed to lowering hydro bills by 12%. This bill builds on actions taken today, including overhauling executive compensation at Hydro One and terminating more than 750 unnecessary renewable energy contracts, avoiding \$790 million in costs.

The conservation changes are expected to lead to savings for medium and large employers. For example, a large employer consuming 50,000 megawatts hours a month would see a bill reduction of about \$30,000 a month, allowing them to reinvest these savings in modern equipment or expansion to create new jobs.

The proposed overhaul to the Ontario Energy Board, OEB, was informed by the recommendation of the OEB modernization review panel, stakeholders and regulatory experts. The changes reflect best practices and support independent decision-making.

The Financial Accountability Office estimated that the previous government’s Fair Hydro Plan added almost \$4 billion in borrowing costs for Ontario families, seniors and businesses. That does not sound fair at all to me, Mr. Speaker, and I’m sure my colleagues here have the same feeling that this does not sound fair.

For improving transparency: Mr. Speaker, when I spoke to the people of Mississauga East–Cooks-ville during the campaign, one concern they had was the lack of transparency within their hydro bills. They were fed up with the mess that the previous government left. They were so fed up that they voted for change. That is why we stand here today and we are fulfilling that promise we made. We are here to make things right for the people of this province.

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Through this bill, we will replace the Fair Hydro Plan with a rate relief structure that would significantly lower government borrowing costs while increasing transparency.

Bill 87 will increase accountability and align with the recommendations of the Auditor General and the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry.

The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario esti-mated that the Fair Hydro Plan added approximately \$4 billion in borrowing costs for the people of Ontario—\$4 billion in borrowing costs. That’s just for borrowing. That is not fair for the people of this province.

Interjection.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I welcome you back, Mr. Speaker.

Through this bill, people will see a rebate, effective November 1, 2019, which would replace the Fair Hydro Plan that hid the true cost of electricity from consumers. Starting this fall, the people will know the true cost of power. The new rebate will be clear and fair. It will display every single item, line by line. You know how our President of the Treasury Board says, “Line by line”? This is exactly what it’s going to be: line by line.

Bill 87 will stabilize the people’s electricity bills. The government is also introducing regulatory amendments to keep electricity customers’ bills stable. Increases to the average residential electricity bill would be held to the rate of inflation, starting May 1, 2019.

These actions are part of the government’s plan to increase transparency and accountability in the electricity system, while working to make life more affordable for Ontarians.

I have seen first-hand how the previous system was not working for my constituents and for the people of Ontario. I have had constituents constantly complaining about the Liberal mess.

Through this bill, Mr. Speaker, we will stabilize costs so that people will not have to worry about whether they will have electricity or stay warm this winter.

Mr. Speaker, when knocking on doors and doing canvassing, a lot of constituents were saying, “Kaleed, sometimes we don’t know if we will have enough funds to heat up our house or put food on the table.” It was becoming difficult for the people of this province, under the previous Liberal government, to make ends meet. We are going to change that.

We will be consulting with the industry on electricity pricing. This government is committed to consulting with Ontario’s industrial sector on electricity pricing, to inform new policies to manage electricity costs and help Ontario businesses grow and compete. This will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to provide input on the design and effectiveness of industrial electricity pricing programs, starting this spring.

Helping businesses and the people with electricity costs stimulates the economy, encourages job creation and sends the clear message that Ontario is open for business.

Bill 87 will expand the Ontario rebate for electricity consumers. The proposed legislation will establish a new structure for electricity bill relief that would come into effect on November 1, 2019. Under the new structure, the full electricity cost, including global adjustment, would be shown on the electricity line of the bill. A new replacement for the reductions provided through the refinancing of the global adjustment and the current 8% Ontario rebate for electricity consumers would appear on bills as a single line item rebate.

The Fixing the Hydro Mess Act will keep hydro rates under control, and keep more money in the pockets of families in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville and of the people of Ontario. It will restore accountability and trust in our electrical system and will send yet another

strong signal to the rest of Canada and the world that Ontario is open for business.

Mr. Speaker, to sum up, our hydro initiative for the people is focused on three main fronts: keeping electricity affordable and improving transparency; reducing costs by centralizing and refocusing conservation programs; building a modern, efficient and effective energy regulator for Ontarians.

Our plan will find savings of up to \$442 million—\$442 million in savings—and will make regulatory changes to the Ontario Energy Board to make it more efficient and accountable. Bill 87 will bring electricity bills to the rate of inflation and save billions in borrowing costs that were tied to the failed Fair Hydro Plan. This will clean up the mess and replace failure with a new, transparent rebate on consumers’ bills.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to reducing costs by centralizing and refocusing and providing electricity rate relief for Ontarians. The proposed changes will have no effect on the environment, will lower system costs and will reduce hydro rates for medium and large employers, increasing competitiveness and opportunities for growth.

Moving to a central program delivered by the IESO, as opposed to a local distribution company delivery model: This would also reduce the cost of program oversight, administration and delivery, and end up to \$150 million in wasteful bonus payments to LDCs that do nothing to help conservation. That’s why we have introduced Bill 87, Mr. Speaker.

Ontario’s electricity system is one of the cleanest jurisdictions in the world, thanks to our reliance on nuclear and hydro power. Over 95% of our electricity is emissions-free, making Ontario’s electricity system cleaner than other jurisdictions like Germany and California.

Now, after 15 long years of mismanagement, relief has finally come to the people of Ontario. We know how critically important fixing the hydro mess is for hard-working families and the bottom lines of businesses that create jobs and contribute to Ontario’s economic growth and development.

Our government is committed to putting more money back into people’s pockets, restoring accountability and trust, creating and protecting jobs, and cleaning up the hydro mess. Bill 87 is a promise that we have kept—and we are keeping that promise, Mr. Speaker.

I want to assure constituents like Maria that we are working to help her by lowering the hydro price and by cleaning this horrible red mess created by the previous Liberal government.

1720

The Fixing the Hydro Mess Act will significantly fix this mess for the people. I’m so proud of the work our government, our minister, the parliamentary assistants are doing to bring relief to the people of Ontario.

I can assure the people of Ontario and my constituents that the work our government is doing to bring relief to you and to the people of Ontario—you’re going to be extremely proud of the work. I’m so proud of our government and the work they are doing.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: To the member from Mississauga East—Cooksville, you made some good points. I agree with you that the Liberals made a big mess in the last 15 years of our hydro system and didn't reinvest in our hydro system. The green energy program that they put forward was definitely a disaster—a lot of holes in it. In fact, I think we still owe about \$4 billion to Samsung, which you guys haven't addressed in this presentation. It's still there. Certainly, adjustment of the rates would help.

I must remind the member—how did we get here? I can remember, when I was on council in Stoney Creek, when Mr. Harris and his government deregulated hydro. That's what started this big mess. It went privatized. We had nothing but trouble. Our service isn't as good. We pay more than we ever did. Actually, our system was first back on the grid when we had the big blackout during that time period. I think an animal somewhere in Ohio caused it by getting into the lines. I do remember that. When we deregulated, and you sold, and then Horizon and all the other companies got involved—well, guess what? I don't recall getting a rebate cheque from the hydro people when the Harris government deregulated hydro. In fact, I'm still waiting for a cheque back from hydro.

There are a lot of other hidden costs that you're not dealing with that you have to deal with first. So it will be a long time, again, before I get my rebate cheque for hydro for what you're doing.

I've got to reiterate: This all started because of a Conservative government back in the 1990s that put us in the mess we're in, and then it just got worse under the Liberals. So be careful what you wish for. I hope you're going to do a better job and not privatize it like they did. I think you're headed for more privatization, and I think you're making a big mistake.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: What fantastic timing, to be able to speak to Bill 87 after the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

I'll tell you, I think that Harris government of the mid-1990s and early 2000s did a pretty bang-up job.

I'm going to say it again, Mr. Speaker: No one on the opposite side of this Legislature seems to want to talk about the "good things" that former Premier Bob Rae did, because there weren't very many.

Just to get back on track here, the member from Mississauga East—Cooksville—

Interjection: Zero.

Mr. Mike Harris: You're right; zero.

The member from Mississauga East—Cooksville touched on a few really important points. This is one of the chief reasons that I got really invigorated, over the last few years, to become as involved as I am now in politics, and—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: You were raised by a good man.

Mr. Mike Harris: I was raised by a good man. Thank you.

The Fair Hydro Plan that the Liberals put in place is mind-boggling. I still can't even wrap my head around this whole thing. I think that when we look at what's really happening here and what has happened with the previous government—

Mr. Paul Miller: They started it all; 1996 is when it all started.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will come to order, please.

Mr. Mike Harris: —the Liberal government borrowed money on the backs of our children to buy votes. Mr. Speaker, I can't stand here and let that happen.

I'm so glad that our Minister of Energy has put this bill forward. It's a fantastic bill and I am proud to support it any day of the week, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for his comments. It is incredibly important—you're right—that government be transparent. However, when we look at Bill 87, on fixing the hydro mess, it would be more transparent to call it the "Fair Hydro Plan, Part 2." It makes me really realize that when you consider what has happened with the hydro mess, from the privatization started by the Conservative government and really driven down the road and continued, as the member from Toronto—Danforth has mentioned, that this does smack a PC-Liberal coalition. They seem to be really interested in privatizing and taking away—

Mr. Paul Calandra: Looks like I touched a nerve.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I can hear the member from Markham—Stouffville shrieking over there, but it doesn't make it any less right. We really require a stable system.

It's also a Liberal-Tory same old story. Borrowing taxpayer money to hide a problem is really an issue. This is really anathema to the entire Progressive Conservative agenda. It is not fiscally responsible. One does not have a gambling debt and go out and borrow money and go to a casino hoping that eventually they're going to correct a problem. At least with gambling there is the outside chance that there will be some sort of cash windfall. We know that that doesn't often happen.

With Bill 87, we know that the people of Ontario will lose. This government is borrowing money hand over fist, pretending that they're going to pass rebates off to the consumer, and really all they're doing is kicking the can down the road, hoping that future generations will pick up this \$2 billion a year that they're borrowing, plus interest. It is something we cannot support. It is kicking a problem down the road and, quite frankly, it is not addressing the problem. Addressing the problem would be to bring hydro back into public hands, as the member from Toronto—Danforth so eloquently put. That is the way to bring it back.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I try really hard when I'm doing these comments to stay on what the speech was, but I've

got to talk a little bit about some of the stuff that the members opposite are coming across with.

I worked for Ontario Hydro during the Bob Rae era of 1991-92. They mucked with the Power Corporations Act back then, and that really is what started all the problems that we had because the Conservatives had to address it and fix those things.

Getting on to what the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville started to talk about, though, he mentioned one of his constituents, Maria, and the challenges she was facing as a senior, having to decide on whether she was going to pay her electrical bill or whether she was going to buy groceries.

Let me tell you about one constituent in my riding, Kathy. Kathy actually had a lot of press because she was the lady who stood there when Justin Trudeau started talking about the carbon tax and how he was going to add it to everything back in 2015, and he had the gall to hug her and tell her it was going to be okay—all kinds of photos of it. Kathy had to sell that house because she couldn't afford her electrical bill, and that's just wrong. It's wrong that people in Ontario can't afford to live in their homes because the cost of electricity is too high, because the cost of adding a carbon tax on it made it that much worse.

We're going to save people in Ontario \$442 million with these changes. That's real money back into the pockets of real people. I know that it's a novel approach that we're going to take as well, that line-by-line on your bill so that you know exactly what you're paying for and where that money is going.

Ontario is open for business, and we're open for business because hydro powers industry, and we're fixing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return now to the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville to wrap up this part of the debate.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my colleagues from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and Kitchener-Conestoga.

What amazing work our Premier has done. I'm proud of all the work he has done in the past, and I'm sure you're going to continue the great work.

1730

To London North Centre—oh, okay, there he is. See, the thing is, the people of this province realize that the collaboration work that was going on between the NDP and the Liberals—they were so fed up. They said to us—

Mr. Paul Calandra: NDP-Liberal coalition.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Coalition. They said, "Do you know what? We are giving you the majority." The people of Ontario gave us the majority because they knew that we were going to fix the mess. They knew we were going to fix the mess, and I'm so proud.

To my colleague here from Peterborough, I agree with him that the job-killing carbon tax that came into effect yesterday, Mr. Speaker—people of this province are already struggling to make ends meet. And now we are

forcing them to pay more when they are deciding whether to pay the hydro bill, heat up their home or—

Mr. Will Bouma: Heating or eating.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Heating or eating, yes—or basically put food on the table.

We, as a government, are going to do everything in our power—and again, I'm very proud of the work that the minister and the parliamentary secretary are doing to make sure that we bring relief to the people of Ontario—

Interjection: Real relief.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: —and real relief to the businesses who create jobs.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join this debate today and actually bring forward some concerns from the citizens of Waterloo region as a whole, not just my riding of Waterloo.

But before I start, I just wanted to comment. Before the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville started his comments, he really said some disparaging things about the member from Toronto-Danforth. He indicated that I said that he was there for too long. I said that he has been here so long that his knowledge and his institutional history knowledge of this place makes him a sound critic on the energy file. I would say to the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville that he should only hope to have as esteemed a career as the member from Toronto-Danforth, who is known for being an amazing constituency MPP and an advocate on all files environmental and energy. So we're very pleased to have him as a member of our caucus, and he has been a mentor to me as well over these years.

I always think, when I'm standing here—because you have to remember the context. When I first came here in 2012, I was way up in that corner because I'd come in in a by-election in 2012. Even during that time, all of these benches—this whole side were Liberals. You'll remember this, right?

Hon. Bill Walker: I do remember.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You remember because you were over here. When, in 2014, after the general election, the Liberals had this majority, and everybody was pretty surprised that that had happened, there were a number of very new members on that side of the bench who really felt that this was it, that they were deserving of this seat—we all have the privilege to represent our ridings—and that they were going to be there forever.

Then the privatization of Hydro One became an issue. You'll remember that the 2014 election was about the gas plants—remember, five Liberal seats were saved by preventing two gas plants from being built? They caved on that. They didn't do their due diligence. They certainly didn't consult, but then they just cancelled those contracts, and the taxpayers were on the hook for \$1.2 billion. We thought people would be angry about that; we did. But in 2014, it didn't translate because it was too big of a number: \$1.2 billion. People were incensed, they were disgruntled,

but it didn't shift them off of their voting patterns. So the Liberals came back.

But now they are all gone. That whole side—for six years, I've been looking at Liberals. But in the 2018 general election, energy prices were the major factor in that election, and do you want to know why? I'm going to tell you why. It was hydro bills, because every month they got a hydro bill that made no sense to them, and they were angry about it. It was something tangible that they were holding in their hands, and even the Liberals moved the bills to every—no, it was every two months that they used to get it, and then they did it every month, and people got angrier. So the Liberals at that point were trying anything and everything to make it look like they still were in touch with the electorate, with the citizens we're elected to serve, but nobody was buying it. They didn't even buy this 25% reduction on the energy bills, because by that point the trust has been lost, and when a breach of trust happens between the electorate and the people who are elected to serve them, there is no turning back on that point.

I raise that because when the member from Mississauga East—Cooksville stands in his place, sounding very similar, in my history and my recollection of how the Liberals used to talk in this place, with such a level of entitlement and with a hint of arrogance—when you lose touch with the people that we are elected to serve, you usually pay the price, especially on something that affects the daily lives of citizens. And hydro bills are still a major factor.

The member from Toronto—Danforth knocks on doors four times a week, right? I'm out there one or two times a week. I don't know how many you're doing. But people are still angry. They are still angry, and they're very nervous about this Ford government.

In Waterloo, they are not seeing a cohesive strategy coming from this government on energy conservation, which the people of Waterloo region care deeply about because they see that that is the smart investment and also actually creates jobs. So when the Minister of Energy came out with Bill 87 last week, it was met, really, with a very—I guess the word would be a “chill.” The people of Waterloo region looked at the so-called proposal, which continues to borrow money at high rates—\$2.5 billion to subsidize the 25% reduction—without having a long-term plan to actually have a sustainable way to hold down energy prices, and they see right through that.

Then there was some, because Waterloo and the municipalities and Waterloo North Hydro, where I have visited—it's actually, I think, in the member from Kitchener—Conestoga's riding; it's just outside my riding. They have done an amazing job as an LDC around ensuring that energy efficiency is at the core of their business model, because that signal was one of those things that actually came from this provincial Legislature and had been proven to be a job creator. What do we see now as a follow-up, though, to this plan? It's that we have very little information around conservation programming continuing in the province in a targeted form, with no details on eligibility. It's a huge grey area. And then the following programs are being cut:

- business refrigeration incentive, which provides businesses with incentives for direct installation of product refrigeration equipment upgrades;

- the Audit Funding Program, which provides funding for a portion of the costs of facility energy audits;

- the high performance new construction, which provides design assistance and incentives for building owners. Waterloo is going up. It's a good place to grow; it was designated as such. And so we are not building out; we are building up. New construction is on the rise, and building developers and owners and the municipalities are absolutely trying to build efficiency and conservation into their model. It's a smart investment;

- the monitoring and targeting, which provides incentives to purchase and install a monitoring and targeting system around operational incentives;

- the instant discount, which provides point-of-purchase incentives at retailers for qualifying energy-efficient products, including LED light bulbs, light fixtures and power bars; I mean, what have you got against LED lights?

- the heating and cooling incentive, which provides rebates for purchasing and installing new qualifying energy-efficient heating and cooling equipment; and

- the residential new construction, which provides incentives to improve energy performance and install energy-efficient products in new builds. This is important because retrofitting and going back to buildings that are not energy efficient is more costly.

All of these audit-related activities create jobs. And it's also—as when I went to Reep, and we all have agencies and organizations like this in our ridings which are very focused on ensuring that new builds have a retrofitting component to them. But having the audit is the smartest thing to do, because then you know the way forward. Then you're investing money in maybe not so much insulation or a roof. Maybe you're doing a basement, for instance. The audit component that you are cutting out actually makes no sense, no common sense. There's no Common Sense Revolution happening here on Bill 87.

1740

It does also go back to devaluing what's actually working in the province of Ontario.

I talk about Waterloo North Hydro, and there are other LDCs across the province who have also weighed in. We mentioned Windsor and, of course, I think Peterborough. This is what Waterloo North Hydro had said: “Bill 87 ... announces the cut of many conservation programs, including the pool saver program, which offered pool owners a \$400 rebate for upgrading to energy-efficient pumps”—\$400 in long-term savings, a smart investment. “Waterloo North Hydro is one of the companies affected by these changes.”

The member from Kitchener—Conestoga might want to be interested in this.

“Waterloo North Hydro, like all local distribution companies, was caught by surprise with Bill 87 and the announcement of cancelling conservation and demand management programs delivered locally by LDCs,” said

Rene Gatien.” He’s the president and CEO. ““We were in the middle of a conservation-first framework that was supposed to finish at the end of 2020.””

Here we are, in 2019, fast-tracking a piece of legislation through this House and not consulting with our communities. Really, I’m sure that this is another piece of legislation which won’t see a lot of public consultation or committee attention.

This goes on to say, “The provincial move is expected to have an impact on local jobs at the LDCs, as conservation programs to reduce energy waste have created 5,000 jobs across Ontario.”

This is the place where I insert that moment during the election when then-candidate Mr. Ford said that not one job would be cut, not one job would be lost. Then, of course, he changed it back to “front-line”—no front-line jobs would be lost—and now we’re just totally walking it back and creating licence plates.

But 5,000 jobs across the province, in Peterborough, in Windsor, in Waterloo—those are good jobs. Not only are they good jobs, but they do good things by ensuring that businesses are more energy-efficient, and by ensuring that new builds actually have a conservation component built into them, so that you don’t have to go back.

You know why else these jobs are good? Because they’re very accountable and transparent. When you do this kind of work—when you do an audit, for instance, on a new build, you can’t outsource that to China. It’s a local job, and that money stays in our local community. Anybody who has taken an Economics 101 course knows that that’s a smart investment.

So this runs counter to the brand, and, really, you’re not going to be able to put “open for business” on licence plates if you’re losing 5,000 jobs intentionally. It’s not like you’re even doing it by accident; you are intentionally making a decision, through this piece of legislation, Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, and you are putting 5,000 jobs across Ontario at risk.

The executive director from Waterloo North Hydro says this: “Gatien added the goal of these programs are intended to help customers lower their energy bills.” This is also the end result of a smart and strategic investment. “The Electricity Distributors Association, the umbrella group that represents independent LDCs such as Waterloo North Hydro, argues the new bill dismisses the work and savings that LDCs have contributed, as well as creating a much less personalized atmosphere for customers.

““LDCs have built relationships of trust with the people they serve, and customers have high satisfaction with LDC-led programs to reduce energy waste and lower their bills.”” This comes from Brian Wilkie, who is the CEO of Niagara Peninsula Energy and chair of the EDA. ““Our customers will now lose their opportunity to work closely with a local provider that understands their requirements.””

““The Ford government has a “cuts” agenda, not a “subsidy” agenda....

““We are very disappointed to see our customers that we know locally become “ratepayers” that look to a Greater Toronto Area centred agency for local CDM programs.””

You are removing that local component of jobs and you’re centring it here in Toronto. And you’re doing the same thing on the health care file.

The Premier stands in his place on a daily basis and says, “I’m here for the ordinary folk, the average folk, and we have to get into the bubble of Queen’s Park,” and yet here he is redirecting these good jobs wholly into Toronto. Nothing against Toronto, but these local jobs actually have such a positive impact on our local businesses and our local economies, and nobody asked for it. There’s no report that says that LDCs were not doing an effective job. In fact, there were several accountability measures in place.

The Premier says we need to get out of our bubble. We are going to be watching very carefully, though, Mr. Speaker, who gets those jobs and where those jobs land. Conservation programs that will be centrally delivered by the IESO include a number of retrofitting programs, but we are going to be following where the money goes and who gets the jobs.

There’s no evidence that LDCs were not performing as they should. In fact, we only have evidence that, as the Premier rolls out legislation in the manner that he has been, that undermines confidence in our economy. Certainly while the government has promised to cut costs out of the hydro system, they have also been criticized for intervening too heavily in this sector. Regulators in the northwest United States rejected a proposed merger between the partially privatized Hydro One, which of course is 40% owned by the Ontario government, and the energy utility Avista. That came after Premier Ford made good on a campaign promise to fire Hydro One’s CEO shortly after taking office, and that \$6.7-billion deal collapse triggered \$133 million in penalties to be paid to Avista. This was not a smart move. This was strictly a very partisan action that the Premier had taken on.

It will also affect local businesses, and it will put a chill on those local businesses who had built a conservation agenda into their business model. One of those folks contacted me from my riding. This is from Backyard Resorts Pool, Patio and Hot Tubs.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I got that one.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Do you have a hot tub? That’s good. Good for you. Everyone in this place should have a hot tub after working here, I tell you.

She goes on to say, “I am writing to you as a local business serving your region that has been recently affected by the sudden changes announced on March 21 by Ontario’s Minister of Energy. Our business was a company that, among others in Waterloo region, participated in the Poolsaver Program. There was a rebate program which, in conjunction with co-operating hydro distributors, allowed us to provide a \$400 rebate to clients interested in upgrading from a single-speed pool pump to a variable-speed pool pump.” Obviously, this would save the consumer a lot of money and reduce the energy requirement for this.

She goes on to say, “The challenge presented to us and many of my affiliates is that my product and orders for this

season were placed in December of 2018.” But what does this government do? It drops a piece of legislation which pulls the rug out from these small businesses, leaving them with excessive inventory, putting a cool and a chill on the market. I’m not in the pool business, but I’m telling you that if I was, I would want an energy-efficient pool pump.

“This sudden cancellation will hurt small businesses such as mine and many others throughout the region.” This is a Waterloo-region business that was looking towards the provincial government to not further destabilize the economy and that was to be very clear and transparent in the policies that were currently on the books because they had built their business plan around that. Here we are, on April 2, 2019, and the government just totally rips up these agreements. This is not an acceptable business practice. This is not a strong economic strategy. On the whole—right from the top, around continuing to borrow \$2.5 billion a year, which is not a long-term sustainable plan for the province of Ontario, to reducing the ability for effective audits to happen, interrupting successful businesses, both at the local level and I’m sure at the provincial level, and then, of course, the manner in which this Premier conducts himself and is so volatile in the way that he rolls out legislation.

1750

Just to go full circle to my original comments, this interrupts and is a breach of trust.

Certainly, the Liberals felt that in the last election—the local consumers, just like this business owner, just like the LDCs, just like those 5,000 jobs that are at risk because of Bill 87.

I don’t know how you can stand in your place, and (1) defend it and (2), go back to your communities and say, “Yes, reducing these conservation initiatives is good for the economy.” It isn’t. It isn’t good for the environment; it isn’t. It doesn’t instill trust and confidence in our economy.

As the critic for jobs, employment, research and innovation—it is really such a missed opportunity. I remember so well the Premier of the day, under the Liberals, saying that she was going to broaden the ownership and modernize but never sell it.

I will tell you this: When I hear the tone and the tenor from the opposite side of the bench, I remember Liberals speaking just like that. It comes full circle. That’s the beauty of our democracy. But undoing the damage of a bill like this to local businesses is going to take us a long time.

I thank you for your attention, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I would like to address some of the comments that were made this afternoon by the member from Waterloo.

I have to admit that I agree with her that hydro rates certainly were one of the deciding factors in the outcome of the 2018 provincial election—an election, I must say, that resulted in a majority Conservative government. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because the people of Ontario trusted the Conservatives to clean up the hydro mess that was left by

the previous Liberal government, thus, the name of Bill 87.

Let’s talk about fixing the hydro mess, starting with the things that it will accomplish. If passed, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act will achieve the following:

It will find savings of up to \$442 million by refocusing and uploading electricity conservation programs to the IESO.

It will overhaul the Ontario Energy Board to make the regulatory system more efficient and more accountable, while continuing to protect consumers.

It will hold residential electricity bills to the rate of inflation.

It will wind down the Fair Hydro Plan, saving billions of dollars.

It will introduce a new transparent rebate that is clearly stated on consumer bills, to replace the Fair Hydro Plan.

The member opposite raised the Avista sale. I know that our government isn’t interested in bringing back coal-fired plants, but it appears, following what the member stated, that clearly the NDP is interested in supporting coal energy. Mr. Speaker, I can assure you, that is not the direction of the Conservative government.

Fixing the hydro mess will fulfill some of the promises made during the last election campaign. We said we would fix hydro, we would lower rates, and we’re well on our way.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker, and to the member from Catherine—

Ms. Catherine Fife: From Catherine?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: From Catherine—right. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo. Sorry about that, Speaker.

There are a couple of things I want to say. I was listening intently, and she’s right. First of all, the government, when you listen to them, are very similar to what the Liberals were, when they were in government, as to how they’re approaching this whole debate and how they comport themselves on the other side of the House.

I agree. Conservatives, New Democrats—we’re ideological parties who believe in certain things, and we’re very different. You believe in privatization; we don’t. You believe in certain things that we don’t believe in. That’s fair game; that’s not a problem.

But I listened to some of the stuff that was said this afternoon in response to debates, and a lot of it was just like—where is it coming from? Out of the air.

I just heard, for example—did you know that, apparently, according to the government, the NDP is in favour of coal-powered plants? Where does that come from?

They don’t even know their own history. It was the NDP, Conservatives and Liberals who agreed to get rid of coal in this province. Each party took the same position. But they just say it and then it’s true, and this is—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The point is, they just keep on saying it over and over again as if it's a truth. There's nothing further from the truth. We have never stood for coal. We are one of the parties that drove getting rid of coal in this province. If you don't know that, then you don't know the NDP.

The second point I would just make is this: I've been here since 1990, and this whole issue of hydro has been around for a long time. But then I heard another member saying we caused it. Do you know what we did? We froze hydro rates for four years. That's what we did when we were in government. We stopped the privatization that the Liberals had started with non-utility generators. We cancelled about two thirds of them, and we froze hydro rates for four of the five years that we were here.

I've got to say to the members across the way, check your facts before you throw mud.

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

Mme Goldie Ghamari: Les consultations sur les prix de l'électricité industrielle font partie de l'engagement du gouvernement dans sa stratégie envers le secteur automobile. Et, monsieur le Président, les familles de l'Ontario dépendent du secteur de l'automobile pour subvenir à leurs besoins.

La construction de voitures et de pièces de voiture est le moteur économique de la province. L'Ontario est fier de ses réussites. En 2017, la province était au premier rang des producteurs du secteur de l'automobile en Amérique du Nord, avec près de 2,2 millions de véhicules construits. Cependant, la production a baissé de 25 % depuis 2000, et une concurrence mondiale féroce s'est installée dans le secteur.

Le secteur de l'automobile de l'Ontario est à la croisée des chemins. Les bouleversements technologiques et les tendances mondiales de l'industrie présentent à la fois des défis majeurs et des perspectives intéressantes. Toutefois, l'expertise unique de l'Ontario dans les domaines de l'automobile et de la technologie lui procure un avantage considérable sur le plan de la conception et de la construction de la prochaine génération de véhicules.

Le gouvernement de l'Ontario renforce son engagement envers le secteur de l'automobile. Il s'agit d'agir stratégiquement, de mobiliser nos ressources collectives et de miser sur la collaboration. En collaboration avec l'industrie, les secteurs de la recherche et de l'éducation ainsi que d'autres ordres de gouvernement, nous allons créer un climat d'affaires qui favorisera la croissance et l'innovation et qui aidera l'industrie à s'adapter aux tendances mondiales.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I rise today to discuss Bill 87, fixing the Conservative-Liberal hydro mess act, 2019. I have to tell you, hearing that Conservatives were tinkering with hydro sent a chill up my spine. I think all reasonable Ontarians—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Government members, come to order please.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: —who already know that this government is tinkering with hydro will feel the same way. In fact, them tinkering with this—I'm expecting a Hollywood blockbuster, because this is serious horror that I think they could inflict on the province.

I also wanted to mention, interestingly, that I did agree with the member from Kitchener-Conestoga that the Harris government did indeed leave the province banged up. I'm not sure exactly how he said it.

This legislation is full of thick, juicy gravy. I'll tell you where. They are going to add—and they love adding salaries—more board members; more big corporate salaries are going to get added here. I think the thing that they must be salivating about—absolutely salivating—is the fact that you will be appointing adjudicators now. Imagine that: Instead of having to face the scrutiny of a committee showing where you're from, "Did you or not work for the PC Party?" we are seeing—again, let's call it what it is by the PC Party—progressive cronyism. That is what I expect from this party. It's coming up. I can't wait to figure out who those adjudicators are going to be because, sure and away, you're going to keep the media gallery busy with those names.

I just can't wait to see what kind of havoc you're going to now inflict on this, and I can guarantee that the NDP opposition are going to fight you tooth and nail.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Government members, please. We only have a couple of more minutes to go.

I'll return now to the member from Waterloo for her two-minute wrap-up.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the members from Flamborough-Glanbrook, Timmins, Carleton and Humber River-Black Creek.

I don't know how the member—I talked about conservation audits and renewable energy, and how, in conservation, the return on the investment is so sound, and that evidence in the research supports it. I don't know how she got to coal-fired plants from that point, but that does suggest to me that there is a pretty serious disconnect there.

I will say that Bill 87 is of concern to us, because it doesn't address the mess that the Liberals—I think the only thing that we do agree on is that the Liberals did leave a mess. I remember so distinctly, as do some of the members who sat here before, the Premier of the day saying to our leader at the time, "We are not going to sell. We're not going to privatize." And then they just changed the language, right? Language matters in this place. Then she moved to "broaden the ownership" and "modernize Hydro One," and then "overachieving"—you remember the overachieving years.

This bill is a long way from overachieving on fixing the hydro mess. In fact, I would say that the PCs have made a Liberal hydro mess even worse by meddling with Hydro One, instead of putting it back in public hands, and doubling down on privatization, which we should not be surprised by, but also by ripping up valid contracts while spending hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars to not

invest in renewable energy, when the evidence and the research is so sound for that.

It's a missed opportunity for this government, but at least they're consistent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Unfortunately, this ends our debate for this afternoon. I want to thank you all for being almost on your best behaviour.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Being that it's past 6 o'clock, I deem the motion to adjourn to have been made and carried.

Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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