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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 April 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 avril 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE
CLASSROOMS ACT, 2019

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 2, 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Miss Monique Taylor: Good morning, everyone. It's always my pleasure and my honour to be able to rise in the Legislature to speak on behalf of the people of Hamilton Mountain, and, quite frankly, for many families across this province.

The bill that we have before us today, Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act: again, a great title, but I'm not quite sure, as I've been reading through it, what it is that creates the safe and supportive classrooms. I don't see anything in the bill that talks about increasing supports, like extra EAs in the schools. I don't see more teachers. Quite frankly, the government announced a couple of weeks back, or not that long ago—I don't know; time seems to fly pretty quickly around this place lately—that we're cutting teachers, that we are freezing hiring for teachers. Does that fall under the title of this bill? I'm not quite so sure. It's kind of uncanny, really, that the government is announcing freezing on teachers and yet puts a bill with this title before us pretty much at the same time.

There are a few things within this bill:

—regulating the behaviours of teachers and early childhood educators. It talks about how, if a teacher is found guilty of sexual abuse, a prescribed criminal offence, that teacher would not be able to teach anymore. I fully agree with that. I don't think anybody in this House doesn't agree with that;

—requiring the Ontario College of Teachers and College of Early Childhood Educators to provide funding for therapy and counselling;

—dissolving the public interest committee—I'm not sure how that's safe and supportive schools;

—requiring applicants for a teaching certificate to successfully complete math tests—I'm not sure how that's safe and supportive schools;

—enabling the Minister of Education to create policies and guidelines with respect to service animals in schools—that has my attention.

I brought forward a bill in this House back on May 2, 2018, the Service Dogs Advisory Committee Act, where I asked—I'll read it to you:

"1. Inquire into and report on the use and training of service dogs and the barriers faced by persons who are assisted by service dogs or who train service dogs.

"2. Consider how the barriers faced by persons who are assisted by service dogs or who train service dogs can be minimized or eliminated and how accessibility for those persons can be improved.

"The committee is to be established within 60 days after ... royal assent" and established within eight months.

That was a bill that consulted the people in Ontario, people within the service dog world, people who train service dogs.

I know many folks in this House have been visited by Deanna Allain, a young woman who has been coming to Queen's Park. I believe she's officially registered as a lobbyist. She's 18 years old. She just turned 18 last June. She's already registered as a lobbyist because she has put her dedication into service dogs and training service dogs. It was important to her to have legislation to ensure, first of all, that there are dogs in the schools and, secondly, that dogs in training have the same access as a dog not training or that's already graduated. Because if you're training a dog, you need to be able to access places like Queen's Park; it's a good thing the Legislature allows it, because there's no real rules or legislation that allows her to come here. Hamilton district school board allows access for the dog because Deanna worked hard to make that happen. Deanna has travelled on GO buses and anywhere that she possibly could to ensure that her dog had the training to move on to its forever family. But there is no legislation that allows her to do that.

The legislation that I've seen put forward within this bill doesn't do the type of work that's necessary. She was at committee. She has spoken. But nothing in committee seems to matter these days. Amendments, all put forward—nothing passes. The government's bill stays as is. In this bill, it says:

"Schedule 2

"Education Act

"The Education Act is amended to provide that the Minister may"—that's always a fun word around here:

“may,” not “shall”—“establish policies and guidelines respecting service animals in schools, and require boards to comply with the policies and guidelines and to develop policies in accordance with those policies and guidelines.”

Well, Speaker, policies and guidelines make no difference to a school board. They follow procedures.

Where is the consultation that needs to happen with this? This is an important aspect of something that we need to move forward in the world of accessibility to ensure that when people have service dogs, they have access to places that they need and that it makes sense. But instead we have a government who just wants to push this through, probably to make the member from Kitchener happy after all of the autism kerfuffle that we’ve had. And I congratulate her. I’m happy that this is in the bill, but we need to do it properly. We need to make sure that proper consultation happens and that it includes service dogs in training so that we can make sure that those dogs get the training in the appropriate places that they need to be.

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: Sorry? I’m sure you’ll have two minutes to respond. I’m looking forward to it. I’m looking forward to it, member. I think this is something that we need to be doing. We need to be talking. We need to be making sure—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes; sorry, Speaker.

The whole point is, we need to be talking in this House. We need to be working together. We can’t have a government that just wants to roughshod through everything, bulldoze through everything, throw in legislation so fast. Legislation that hurts people in this province has been just happening so fast in this House that people have so many balls in the air and nobody is allowed to speak to it.

We have a health bill that is the biggest change in the province of Ontario and the government is so proud of it. We’re allowed 30 deputations and we have 1,500 wanting to speak. How is that democracy in the province of Ontario? That is in the wrong direction. We have government policies that are coming in, like the autism policy, and we watch the government have to backtrack. Why? Because they didn’t speak to anybody first. That’s the problem. If they put forward bills with great titles but they don’t listen to any other party’s recommendations—they allow a few deputations, but they don’t make changes to actually reflect that—then what are we doing? Is this a democracy? It concerns me.

0910

The lack of supports in schools for children with special needs is great. We have many children within our system who should have EAs, and they don’t. If they’re lucky, they get to share one. That’s not right.

We have children who are runners in our school board, and how do we have a teacher with 28 kids in the classroom—and that’s another thing: School class sizes increase in grades 4 to 8. In the most trying times, probably, for a lot of our young people, where they’re anxious and they’re going through all different things in life, and we’re going to increase those class sizes. How much attention are those kids going to get? Add some special-needs kids

into that class—which is exactly what almost happened on April 1. If the minister hadn’t finally reversed some of the decisions that she made in her bad autism plan, we would have seen an influx of children into our schools on April 1, and schools having no idea how to handle that when we’re already short on adults in the school system.

That is not what the people of Ontario signed up for when they voted for this government. That is not what they were promised. But, unfortunately, there was no platform, so what were people basing their decision on? I think it was just, “No more Kathleen Wynne.” That was the basis of this election, and, unfortunately, this is where it has sent us: to a place where we have bills that don’t make sense, where we have a government who doesn’t listen to people, who doesn’t care about consultation, and who pushes through and then wants to backtrack. Is this what they’re going to do on every policy that happens in this House—backtrack when they have a public outpouring?

There’s going to be a public outpouring across this province. On April 6, there’s a rally happening right here at Queen’s Park on the front lawn. You should come. You should join it—educators from across the province. We have students—500-plus students. Over 100,000 students are walking out of schools tomorrow. Students are walking out of schools tomorrow because of this government’s bad policies and plans. That has to say something.

It’s time for this government to get back to the table, start talking to the people of this province, and do the right thing.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I’m going to try and stick as much as I possibly can to what the member opposite said, but it’s going to be really difficult because this bill is Bill 48 and it’s about the Early Childhood Educators Act, the Education Act, and the Ontario College of Teachers Act, and, really, there wasn’t a whole lot she said that fit into that.

There was one thing that she started off with that I do want to address. She started off with, “What about this bill makes classrooms safe?” Let me read from the bill, because perhaps she hadn’t:

“1. Various amendments are made with respect to professional misconduct:

“i. The definition of ‘professional misconduct’ is amended to include proscribed sexual acts, which are offences of a sexual nature under the Criminal Code (Canada) and proscribed by a regulation under the act.

“ii. The new subsection 1(8) clarifies that sexual abuse of a student does not include touching or behaviour that is a necessary part of a teacher’s professional responsibilities or remarks that are pedagogically appropriate.

“iii. Section 30.2 of the act is updated to require mandatory revocation of a member’s certificate if the discipline committee finds the member guilty of an act of professional misconduct that consists of or includes sexual abuse of a student, a prohibited act involving child pornography or a proscribed sexual act.”

To me, that sounds like we are making the classrooms safer because we’re making sure that that type of behaviour is not acceptable. Anyone who engages in that type of

behaviour should not be in the classroom with our students. That is very much about making safe classrooms. Perhaps you should re-read the bill.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: This bill contains a number of things. It talks about mandatory math testing for teachers, it talks about service dogs in schools, and it talks about sexual predators in schools. Obviously, with the sexual predators, we're supportive of getting those people out; it's a real danger in our schools. As a former school board trustee, we had to deal with some situations that involved this, and giving the school boards more tools is absolutely essential.

The service dogs one, we're very supportive of that as well, but you've got to get it right. The problem with the way this government operates is that they don't actually consult with the people who are going to have to implement the decisions that they're making. Bringing service dogs into schools requires consultation with the school boards and with the schools that are going to be accommodating those dogs. They need to be prepared. They need to prepare the other children that a service dog is a working animal and not just a pet that you're going to be petting all the time. So they need to prepare the children for that. They need to prepare the schools for it. When the dog has to relieve itself, how is that going to be dealt with? There are a lot of things in there.

The thing about this bill, though—while we're talking about this bill, the elephant in the room is the cuts to education that this government is making. That's the big thing that's on people's minds. If you're a parent or a student in this province, the big concern you have right now is the increase in class sizes. We're talking about changing the student-to-teacher ratio from 1 to 22 to 1 to 28 in our high schools. This means cutting 20% of the teachers out of our high schools. And then, the following year, they're talking about having students do four of their 30 credits online. That means cutting another 15%. So in the next couple of years, our high schools could see one in three teachers leave the building. And then the question will be: How can they manage and deliver an effective program?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I was listening to the member from Hamilton Mountain give her comments and, frankly, I was kind of perplexed, because she was talking a lot about what is not in the bill but not what is in the bill. At the same time, she was telling us that we don't give enough time for members to discuss the bill. So I was wondering why her comments were not focused on the bill.

Let's talk about what is in the bill. The legislation brings important amendments to a number of acts, including the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act, the Teaching Profession Act, and the Education Act. I think I said when I spoke to this that my constituents in Eglinton–Lawrence are actually very excited about what the bill brings forward, because it brings

common-sense reforms to teacher discipline. That will make the classrooms safer, as my colleague from Peterborough–Kawartha pointed out. Frankly, education stakeholders and the opposition are supportive of these changes. This is a bill about safety in the classroom, and it's also a bill about supports in the classroom for children who need the service dogs.

The members like to say that we don't consult, but I think, as a government, we have been doing a lot of consulting. In fact, on education, we had the biggest consultation in Ontario history, where 72,000 people weighed in and gave us their views. I think that is really important to inform policy going forward, and we haven't had that before. It's the largest in Ontario history, so that goes a long way to consulting.

In addition, on the supportive part of this legislation with the service dogs, we have the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler, who has made this issue her passion and has been consulting for years on the issue. So we have a lot—

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate this morning. I want to congratulate my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, who dug deep on the file and made reference to a lot of the concerns that this government just isn't listening to from the general public and those who are on the front lines of our education system: those teachers, parents and student council members.

They can, on the surface, say that they made broad consultation, but if they are not listening to the vast majority of parents and educators, who are saying, "Please, stop attacking our education system. Don't make this a crisis that you create for the sake of covering up a whole litany of other terrible policy decisions," then they certainly aren't listening to the general public.

0920

We will see that on April 6, when I expect thousands of students and parents to once again rally and join each other on the front lawns of this building to send a clear message to this government that they're on the wrong track.

We see that this bill carries three provisions, one that deals with sexual predators. Of course, everyone in this House can agree that we should and can do as much as we can to protect children from sexual predators and give the tools to school boards and to associations to identify and to deal with that. But the other two issues, around the College of Teachers: There hasn't been enough consultation on that, as submitted by the various teachers' associations, and on service animals as well. The third issue, on math tests for teachers: That is a direct attack on the teachers; that's what that is. It's a clear, direct attack. It's their opening salvo to teachers, to show that they mean business. They're open for business, but guess who's first on the radar? It's the teachers.

I would ask and I would submit that if they're serious about this, they would add a provision there to force the Premier to pass a grade 6 math test before he takes the chair in this House. I would say that a proctored exam

would be a very difficult challenge for this Premier, given his academic record. Let's see them put that in the bill and see how far it goes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member from Hamilton Mountain for final comment.

Miss Monique Taylor: I want to first address the member from Peterborough–Kawartha. A good skill of a politician is to speak less and listen more, but he failed that already this morning in this House because of the fact that what he talked about, sexual abuse, was the first thing that I acknowledged in my speaking notes this morning. It was the first thing I acknowledged, so he really should maybe take the test of learning to listen.

There are a lot of things that need to be consulted on when it comes to service dogs. There are things like: What happens when there are children in the class with severe allergies, when teachers have allergies or when there are phobias of dogs? They have to be serious concerns. What about if there's a temp teacher, a spare—what do you—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Supply.

Miss Monique Taylor: Supply, thank you—a supply teacher in the classroom? What happens then? How does that teacher know how to deal with the service dog? Who takes the dog out to go to the bathroom? Is it just the child that has the dog or is there a support person with the child that takes care of the dog? There are so many aspects of this. I just think, to get it right—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to speak to the member, but I really can't hear her, as it's my turn to stand and speak, and she didn't take the opportunity to rebut when she had the opportunity. I would have loved to hear from her. I asked to hear from her, but she didn't speak to me then.

It's important that we get this right. I believe that she has good intentions. I know the work that she did with service dogs before coming here. I remember very clearly when she and Kenner were on the front lawn with their service dog, fighting over #AutismDoesntEndAt5, against the Liberals. That's when I met the member.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: How far away—

Miss Monique Taylor: How things have changed.

But it's important that we get it right. I'm happy to speak to the member off-line to hear how we can make sure that service dogs in this province are the right move.

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

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'm honoured to rise here today and speak to this very important piece of legislation, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, because it underlies how important this government believes education is, making sure that our classrooms are safe, making sure that education is a priority for this government, because that is exactly why we were elected: to ensure, whether it's our education or whether it's our health care, that we fix the broken system that the previous government left us after 15 years of waste, mismanagement and scandal. This is a very important piece of

legislation that is going to make some very important and substantive changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act, the Teaching Profession Act and also the Education Act.

I want to start by thanking the honourable Minister of Education for all the work that she put into this piece of legislation, and the member from Niagara West, who serves as her parliamentary assistant, for the great work that they have put into making this piece of legislation, bringing this piece of legislation forward and bringing this piece of legislation through committee and now for third reading, which I have an opportunity to speak to.

Education is of the utmost importance to people across this province and especially for a lot of my constituents in my riding of Brampton South, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, education is a top priority for our government. We campaigned on a promise to get the education system in Ontario back on track, and that is exactly what we are doing. As I canvass my riding and speak to my constituents, I have spoken with many parents in my riding who agree that changes are long overdue. I am proud to say that our government is taking action. We are making the necessary changes, and we will get our education system back on track.

Safety is one of the biggest concerns for parents and students across Ontario. Students should always feel safe and supported while they're in our classrooms and getting an education. Students deserve, at the very least, a safe learning environment. This bill, if passed, will ensure safer and more supportive classrooms. It will do that by making it mandatory that the discipline committees of the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators revoke an educator's certificate for committing any act of sexual abuse of a student or child where the discipline committees of the colleges have found the educators guilty of such acts.

As a government, we have always put safety at the top of our priorities, and this bill is aimed at ensuring our students and children are learning in safe environments. Our government has zero tolerance for any form of sexual abuse. We are taking action to create a safe and supportive classroom for students in Ontario, and that starts with Bill 48.

We are also taking action to keep children safe by providing regulation-making authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to proscribe other acts of a sexual nature prohibited under the Criminal Code that would result in a mandatory revocation of an educator's certificate.

Bill 48 will strengthen protections for students and children by expanding the definition of sexual abuse to include any proscribed act of a sexual nature prohibited under the Criminal Code of Canada. I think this is something we can all agree with.

In addition to this, Bill 48 will help to advance students' mathematics skills by better preparing both students and also teachers. Math scores are going up in every single province except for Ontario. The stats provided by the EQAO have shown that our success numbers have decreased each year since 2013. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a

shame. Over 51% of Ontario's grade 6 students and 38% of grade 3 students failed to meet provincial standards in math in 2018. Let that sink in for a second: 50% of grade 6 students and 38% of grade 3 students failed to meet provincial standards. That is unacceptable, and that is why our government is taking action.

The EQAO data showed that 21% of students who met provincial standards in grade 3 failed to do so in grade 6. Parents are turning to private tutors and after-school classes to get the same math skills that these students should be getting in class. This is unacceptable. Students and parents in Ontario deserve better. The Minister of Education introduced Bill 48 with an emphasis to resolve this issue. The Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act would support teachers across Ontario to become even better prepared to teach the fundamentals of mathematics. We want to make math the central focus of our education system, and by preparing our teachers in advance, we will ensure that our students are ready for the future. Our measures will help instill confidence in parents that Ontario continues to have one of the best education systems in the world.

I also want to recognize the MPP for Kitchener South–Hespeler, who has played a great role in this piece of legislation, and all that she has done for service dog animals and making our classrooms much more supportive, because it is so important that we support our students in every way possible.

With that, Mr. Speaker, recognizing the importance of this piece of legislation, recognizing that one of this government's top priorities is making sure education is at the top of the list, making sure that our students are better prepared to face the world that they will go into, and are better prepared on their mathematics skills—that is of utmost importance to us. That is exactly what this piece of legislation is doing.

I would now like to move that, pursuant to standing order 48, the question be now put.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Sarkaria 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.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day. I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you. No further business at this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being no further business, this House will stand recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 0932 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We have a number of dentists and various people involved with dentistry from across Ontario, but I'd like to welcome my friend LouAnn, who's here all the way from Timmins. We don't share an office, but we're in the same building.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: It is my pleasure to welcome Ted Hunter, Brenda Hunter, Grace Petty, Marsilio Gobio, Alessandra Gobio, Dante Gobio, Rick Gobio and Delanah Gobio from Sutton, Ontario. They're the family of our legislative page Julia, and they should be very proud of Julia. It is my honour to welcome them to the Ontario Legislature today.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, good morning to you. I have three dentists from my area today for the dental lobby day, trying to convince the government to give them more money on the Healthy Smiles program. I have Charles Frank, Lesli Hapak and Edward Cervini. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind members to keep their introductions brief, and with no political statements or commentary.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to welcome our friend and colleague Laura Albanese, the former member for York South–Weston, here with us today. I would like to welcome her to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I too would like to welcome Laura Albanese to the Legislature. She served in the 39th, 40th and 41st Parliaments, representing the riding of York South–Weston. Once again, on behalf of the whole Legislature, welcome back.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm so excited to welcome Jim Jones, regional councillor for Markham, here. He's somebody who really is very engaged and wants to see traffic and transit moving.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Really, it is my absolute honour this morning to introduce students from St. Mary Catholic Secondary School in Hamilton, their principal and their proud parents. Mr. Speaker, these students have been heralded as heroes for safely bringing their school bus to a stop and offering first aid after their driver collapsed from a medical emergency—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry to interrupt the member. I would ask the House to come to order, and I would ask the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas to start from the beginning again so that every—

Interjections.

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

The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

So it is with great pride that I introduce students, their principal, Mr. Daly, and parents from St. Mary Catholic Secondary School in Hamilton. Mr. Speaker, these students have been heralded as heroes for safely bringing their school bus to a stop and offering first aid to their driver after he collapsed from a medical emergency.

So let me read the names of these students. We have Aidan Gilmore, Logan McCorquodale, Rachel Watson, Keven Brennan and Kennedy Couture. Please join me in welcoming these incredible adults to the Legislature.

Applause.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce from the Ontario Dental Association, from the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington, Dr. Arthur Worth, and from the other great riding of Dufferin-Caledon, Dr. Lisa Bentley, who practises in Mississauga. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As I look over in the galleries, I see our friend Dustin Allen from Oshawa joining us at Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park, Dustin.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to welcome, from the Ontario Dental Association, a good friend and colleague of mine from the riding of Carleton, Dr. Don Friedlander, as well as Dr. Grace Lee from the city of Ottawa.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would also like to welcome a member from the Ontario Dental Association, a local doctor, Dr. Brock Nicolucci. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I would like to introduce two of my guests today: new town of Midland councillor Bill Gordon, and his wife, Donna. Thank you for being here this morning.

Mr. Chris Glover: I would like to welcome to the House today John Powell-New from my riding.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm pleased to introduce a constituent of Oakville, the president of Aligned Capital and a great entrepreneur for our community, Chris Enright.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to welcome Dr. Don Young, Dr. Judy McCartney and Dr. Jerry Smith to Queen's Park today. They're great dentists in Thunder Bay.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Today I'd like to introduce, from the Ontario Dental Association, from Mississauga-Lakeshore, Brian Tenaschuk.

Mr. Jamie West: Also from the Ontario Dental Association, I'd like to introduce, from downtown Sudbury, Dr. Roch St-Aubin.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I would like to welcome two dentists from Scarborough, Dr. Raffy Chouljian and Dr. Nick Sanci. Dr. Raffy is the chair of Brush-a-mania.

I also would like to welcome Daniel Koivisto, a student from the University of Toronto Scarborough campus. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am looking forward to meeting later today with Dr. Joe Armstrong, who is chief of dentistry at London Health Sciences Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I would also like to welcome my friend from London Amanda Stratton, who is also a former NDP candidate.

Mr. Joel Harden: It was my great pleasure to meet with the dentists this morning, in particular Dr. Don Friedlander, who has a practice only steps from my house, and Dr. Steven Fremeth, who I look forward to meeting with later today. Thank you for coming to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to welcome 44 students from grade 5 from St. Rose of Lima school from the great riding of Mississauga-Erin Mills. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, I would like to welcome Dr. David Stevenson, the president and chair of the board of directors for the Ontario Dental Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à mon dentiste favori, le D^r Roch St-Aubin. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: This morning I had a great meeting with representatives from the Ontario Dental Association. I want to welcome Dr. Mostyn, a phenomenal dentist from King-Vaughan, to the people's House.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I'm delighted to welcome the parents of our page captain, Niko, today. George Diplas and Vicky Agelopolous are here. Their son is doing a great job. Congratulations.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I would like to welcome this morning Dr. Lisa Bentley and Dr. Alyna Lin from Mississauga. Welcome to Queen's Park. They are part of the Ontario Dental Association.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I see in the gallery my friend, a member of the Ontario Dental Association, Mr. Frank Bevilacqua, who is here. I want to greet him and welcome him to Queen's Park.

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I have the honour of introducing a good friend of mine and one of Canada's finest entrepreneurs, Karan Walia, who is the CEO of Cluep. He just sold his company for \$54 million.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: It's my pleasure to introduce my friend Dr. Lisa Bentley to the House. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome a dentist from my riding, Dr. Venelin Topouzov. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1040

Ms. Jane McKenna: I just wanted to say, from the beautiful riding of Burlington, Dr. Larry Pedlar is here today. I want to thank him for my white teeth and my braces. Thanks so much.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to welcome a good friend of mine, Dr. John Milne. He's from the riding of Sarnia-Lambton, a long-time personal dentist. He's here representing the Ontario Dental Association today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South on a point of order, I think.

Mr. John Fraser: A point of order. I am seeking unanimous consent so that the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North will take my position on the estimates committee and that I will take his position on the social policy committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow a switch on the committees, so as to allow him to take a position on the estimates committee and the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North to take a position on the social policy committee.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I got it reversed? The reverse. It would be helpful to get this in writing. Agreed? I heard a no.

The member for Timmins on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion to reschedule the clause-by-clause consideration for Bill 74 so that members of the Standing Committee on Social Policy have time to adequately consider the close to 7,000 written submissions received prior to submitting amendments to the bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion to reschedule the clause-by-clause consideration for Bill 74 so that members of the Standing Committee on Social Policy have time to adequately consider the close to 7,000 written submissions received prior to submitting amendments to the bill. Agreed? I heard some noes.

Interjections.

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

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, at committee, members heard from some of the thousands of Ontarians worried about the Ford government's plans to create a mega-health bureaucracy and open the door to privatization. In his testimony, Michael Sherar, the president and CEO of Cancer Care Ontario, said that agency was not even consulted on the government's legislation and that they first heard of the government's plans through the media.

The government praised the work of Cancer Care Ontario. Why the heck were they not consulted, Speaker?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the question. Obviously, that individual the member opposite has referred to had the opportunity to appear at committee yesterday. We've had a couple of days of committee hearings at the social policy committee on the health care bill, Bill 74, which was brought forward.

I just want to add a little context here because what the House leader of the official opposition and what the leader of the official opposition have asked for this morning is for us to have 70,000 different people appear before committee. I just want to put that into perspective—70,000 people before committee. That's what they're looking at, Mr. Speaker. That would take us well over a year, to hear in person from all of those different people, many of them friends of the NDP who have filed these submissions in our inbox.

What we are doing is allowing anybody who wants to provide a written submission on the health care bill, we

encourage them to do so, and the health ministry will consider—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, there the government goes, making stuff up again: 7,000 documents, at least, have been received by committee. They are not going to be able to be reviewed in time for clause-by-clause. That's the way this government is shutting down the people of Ontario.

For weeks, the government has insisted that organizations like Cancer Care Ontario, for example, could be shut down itself without any disruption of services. In fact, the minister claimed yesterday that the new mega-agency would learn lessons from Cancer Care Ontario. Yet the organization was very clear yesterday: They first heard of the government's plan when they read about it in the news. How can the government claim that they're going to learn lessons from Cancer Care Ontario, Speaker, when they can't even be bothered to consult with them on their plans in the first place?

Hon. Todd Smith: I know that the member opposite knows what happened on June 7 last year. After a lengthy campaign where the people of Ontario had the opportunity to choose for a plan that was focused on ending hallway health care in our hospitals, they chose the Ontario PC Party and our Premier, Doug Ford, to lead the way in clearing those backlogs to ensure that the patient care that people were receiving in Ontario was focused on the patient. They don't want more logjams here at the Legislature, Mr. Speaker; they want action. They want to ensure that we are getting rid of hallway health care in Ontario. Our Minister of Health, Christine Elliott, has done an outstanding job in putting together Bill 74, which is going to achieve exactly that.

If the member opposite wants to stand in her place and defend the local health integration networks, the LHINs, she can do that, Mr. Speaker, but we're focused on ending hallway health care in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Before I ask the Leader of the Opposition to do her final supplementary, I will remind all members, as it is our convention, to refer to each other by our ministry names if applicable or our riding names, not our personal names.

Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What they didn't know is they were electing a government that thinks it's all right to take away their voice and participation in their own democracy. That's what they didn't know, because that party over there didn't tell them.

At every turn, this government has tried to shut people out. Hundreds of people were denied a chance to appear at the committee; we know that. Almost 1,600 people: 1,594 people denied a spot at committee. The minister insisted they can make written submissions the other day, but thousands of people who took the minister at her word are now learning that the government won't even give the committee time to read through those submissions before ramming through their changes.

Will this government stop plowing ahead with their mega-bureaucracy health privatization bill and take the time to see and hear the literally thousands of Ontarians who have serious concerns with their health care schemes?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader to reply.

Hon. Todd Smith: Our government for the people committed during the election campaign that we would end hallway health care in Ontario, and we're fully committed to following through on that promise.

There were 1,500 requests to appear at committee. Do you know how long it would take us to get through that process of hearing from them directly? It would take us 50 weeks. It would take us a full year of inaction on this front. If the NDP want to continue to support the status quo or the Liberal policies of the past, they're entitled to do that, but we're not going to do that on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We're acting to end hallway health care in Ontario.

Of the 7,000 that were written to us, the vast majority of these written submissions came from an NDP, union-led write-in campaign. These are their friends trying to block our transformative change in the health care sector that is going to ensure that we end hallway health care and have a patient-centred approach to delivering health care in Ontario.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Minister of Education, but I would have to say that people think that good government means you listen to folks and you have a democracy. I don't think that's what we have in this government, and it's very, very disappointing to many, many, many Ontarians.

Tomorrow, thousands of students will be walking out of classes in public schools across Ontario. They're taking this dramatic step for one simple reason: They feel their education and their future is at risk. Can the minister explain to students and to young people across Ontario why the Ford government thinks education cuts that will mean larger classrooms, massive teacher layoffs, elimination of arts and music programs and elimination of tech and trade programs make students more resilient?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: What I would like to reply back to the Leader of the Opposition is that she is wrong, wrong, wrong and wrong again, with all the fearmongering and all of the assertions that she and her supporters are trying to make the students embrace.

1050

Do you know what I think is really shameful? The fact that we should be celebrating is the fact that we had 72,000 students, parents, teachers and concerned citizens participate in the largest consultation in the education history of Ontario. The fact of the matter is, that is the proper forum to have their voices heard.

We are continuing the consultation right now, through to May 31. I encourage all teachers, all students, all parents

and school boards to make sure that they embrace the opportunity to have their voices properly heard in the current consultation that we have going through to May 31.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is the minister who is wrong, wrong, wrong. It's not just students sounding the alarm bell; school boards are echoing their concerns.

In Hastings and Prince Edward County, the board wrote the minister to say, "We are particularly alarmed by changes to class sizes in elementary and secondary schools."

The chair of the Toronto District School Board wrote to express her "deep concern" about the "magnitude of permanent teacher reductions."

They're pretty clear. These changes will not make kids more resilient; these changes will damage their education and shortchange their future. Why is the minister not listening?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, what I can say is, the drama classes that the Leader of the Opposition has enrolled in are maybe paying off, because the fact of the matter is, it's the PC government of Ontario that's standing up for students. We're listening to parents, and we're standing up with teachers as well.

But with regard to tomorrow, Speaker, I want to be very serious here. We need to make sure that school boards, as well as teachers, understand the responsibility they have to parents to make sure whatever happens tomorrow, they keep their students safe. Classrooms should be a place for learning, not for pushing ideologies and nonsense and fearmongering.

Again, I would like to invite all students and parents and teachers to engage with me in the proper manner. We have a consultation open right now until May 31. I welcome your input.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Apparently, the minister hasn't bothered to read the letters, so I'm going to send them over, by page Mirren, so she can actually look at what the real facts are in terms of the damage that her changes to education are going to do.

Parents are also standing with their children as they stand up for their education. One school advisory council put it well in a letter to the minister: "Your government ran on the platform 'For the People.' However, by targeting public education to balance the budget, you have shown us that young people are not included in the 'people' for whom your government claims to be working."

The Ford government claims they're making students resilient. Really, they are leaving our kids behind—again, another Conservative government making changes to education that leave our kids behind. They did damage last time they were in government; they're doing the same damage again.

Will this minister listen to the thousands of young people protesting tomorrow and stop her plans for the cuts in the classroom?

Interjections.

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

We're just over 10 minutes into question period. That means we've got 50 minutes to go. I could barely hear the Leader of the Opposition's question. I have to be able to hear the Leader of the Opposition's question. I would ask members on both sides of the House to come to order and allow us to be able to hear each other as we debate these important issues.

Start the clock. The minister to reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to remind everybody watching and in the House today that it's the party opposite—the opposition party—who, 97% of the time, propped up a Liberal administration that absolutely put the education system in Ontario into chaos. That party, across the hall from me, failed our students.

So, what are we targeting? We're targeting the messages that we heard from parents loud and clear. We're targeting getting back to the basics. We're targeting fundamentals. We're looking at math. We're looking at science. We're looking at technology. We're embracing technology for good. And guess what, Speaker? Employers and parents and students and teachers are embracing that because we're investing in job skills, we're investing in life skills; we're investing not only in our students but our teachers, as well. Later today, I'll never be so proud as when we see Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, become law.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Minister of Education. Speaker, the Upper Grand District School Board has issued layoff notices to 54 elementary school teachers due to a loss of funding and programming. This is what the Ford government's attack on education in Ontario has done. There will be fewer adults in our schools and students will no longer have access to the educational programs that they once enjoyed.

The Ford government's Education that Works for You scheme is a farce. Since it's not working for the students and it's not working for the teachers, who was this plan really designed to work for?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm really glad to have another opportunity to stand in this House and to actually remind everybody in this House that what we're hearing coming from school boards right now is normal, routine annual practice. If the member opposite actually spoke to any of her caucus members that used to be school board trustees, you would know full well that it is a normal, standard practice to issue notices in terms of the number of local factors that are happening, specifically school board to school board.

I might remind everybody that some of the first we heard of this was back on March 6, when Thames Valley

District actually reported in the newspaper that they don't anticipate any actual job losses, at the end of the day, after they issue surpluses "because of retirements, resignations and redeployment." This is normal, annual, standard practice.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: School board officials for the Guelph region have said that the board is being made to operate with less provincial funding. The minister's new education plan is dragging Ontario in the wrong direction. The Ford government's cuts translate to thousands of fewer teachers, bigger class sizes, and less help for kids, particularly marginalized and underserved students. I'm talking about Black students, Indigenous students, queer students, students living with autism, and many other students who live on the margins.

Ontario has the opportunity to have a world-class public education system, but to do that we need to give our children more opportunities, not less. Speaker, when will this government stop cutting the budget on the backs of children and teachers?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Right back to the member opposite—

Interjections.

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

Minister, to reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Speaker.

Right back to the member opposite: I would like to say, when is your party going to stop fearmongering once and for all? Clearly, that is all that they're trying to foster on their side of the House. Quite frankly, I think it's shameful because, again, if the member opposite actually was tuned into the media coverage of what was happening with the Upper Grand, she would have seen one of the leadership from the local organization saying that this is normal, ordinary, routine on an annual basis, and when all the chips fall after the surplus notices are given and all the resignations, redeployments and retirements fall into place, they're hopeful that everybody will have a job.

Again, to the people watching, don't let this opposition party fearmonger and cause you to stay away from the facts. The reality is, they're doing nothing but fearmongering. What we're hearing in the news today is routine, annual—

Interjections.

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

The next question?

TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: A question to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: Speaker, as we all know, this past Monday, April 1, the job-killing, recession-causing federal carbon tax came into effect. Farmers in my riding have told me time and time again that this carbon tax is going to raise the cost of everything from field to fork. From farmers, to processors, to retailers, to consumers, this federal carbon tax is going to make it more

expensive to grow the food we all enjoy and more expensive for consumers to buy that same food.

1100

Can the minister explain to this House what this government is doing to oppose the federal carbon tax—the Trudeau carbon tax—and offer a real plan to fight climate change?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I recently had the opportunity to host the Premier and the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in my riding to discuss the impacts of the federal carbon tax with the leaders of our agriculture community.

I've heard time and time again from our farmers and leaders in agribusiness that the federal carbon tax will stifle innovation and growth. It will cause a significant increase in costs, from heating fuels to transportation costs, from gasoline to diesel fuel.

Our government brought forward our made-in-Ontario plan that is focused on striking the right balance between a healthy economy and a healthy environment. Our plan will reduce waste and litter, give municipalities a say in the location of landfills and ensure we do our part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This government has a plan to protect our environment and support our farmers without imposing a tax of any kind.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Toby Barrett: This newly imposed federal carbon tax not only affects farmers, it will also affect seniors in the province of Ontario. Living on a fixed income, seniors need to make every dollar count, and the carbon tax threatens the day-to-day budget they try to stick to.

The Financial Accountability Office has confirmed the federal carbon tax will cost the average Ontario household an additional \$648 a year by 2022. Our seniors have worked hard for decades. They deserve to enjoy a healthy and comfortable lifestyle. Our government is concerned that pressures caused by the federal carbon tax will have a negative impact on that quality of life that our seniors enjoy.

My question: Perhaps the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility could explain to this House how the carbon tax will affect our seniors.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to refer it to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Mr. Speaker, through you: I'd like to thank the member for raising a great question.

Many seniors live on a fixed income. For them, every dollar counts. It's not really fair to burden our seniors with an unnecessary tax. Now, seniors have to spend more for heating their homes, groceries and gas due to the federal carbon tax. This will have a negative impact on the quality of life of our seniors. That's why I'm standing up to fight for our seniors.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Gurratan Singh: My question is to the Minister of Education. In an open letter to the minister, the Peel

District School Board expressed serious concerns about the government's education changes because there will be more students in every classroom and fewer teachers in every school.

Students in Brampton, Mississauga and Caledon will have fewer options, including courses that expose students to the skilled trades, technology and recovery courses that help the most vulnerable students complete high school.

Why is this minister denying students in Brampton and Peel region the opportunity to learn new skills and graduate from high school?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: When it comes to making sure that we make sure our students have the life skills and the job skills that parents, employers and students themselves are asking for, we're getting it right.

We've landed in a really good place. We've gotten a wonderful response with regard to the financial literacy package we're going to be focusing on. We're getting it right with the math curriculum that we'll be rolling out and phasing in over the next number of years. We're getting it right when it comes to health and physical education.

Speaker, everything I announced in my plan, the vision that we have to make sure our students finally are back on a pathway to success, is going to show how education works for you and how education is going to work for students and also for teachers.

I might remind everybody in the House today that we first took immediate steps last summer by introducing Bill 48. I bring it up again because this is a piece of legislation that makes sense for every single one of us—

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Back to the minister: Brampton is one of the youngest and fastest-growing cities, and our schools are already chronically overcrowded. Our youth deserve to have quality education and smaller class sizes, but the Premier's scheme to increase class sizes and cut 500 teaching jobs from the Peel region alone will take things from bad to worse.

Will the minister admit today that larger classes, fewer teachers and less opportunity for our students is not how you help kids become more resilient?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I will tell everybody in this House today that what doesn't help students is the fear-mongering we're hearing from every single member of the opposition party. It's absolutely disgusting. Because the fact of the matter is, Peel region, just like every other school board district in this province, matters. They're going to be working with us to get it right. People are finally having hope, because the fact of the matter is, through our consultation, we've listened.

Again, the health and physical education curriculum: We've listened and we've got that right as well. We've listened to employers and we're going to be talking about job skills and life skills. When we talk about STEM, that's going to be the focus of our fundamentals that our students require going forward to address the jobs of today and tomorrow. We're going to make sure they have a balanced curriculum so that they can enjoy school and they have

programming and curriculum that matters to them. But most of all, they'll be employable and—

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

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question is for the great minister who keeps building up success, the Minister of Infrastructure. Congestion on our roads has real costs to both people and our economy. People stuck in gridlock are trying to get to work on time, trying to get to soccer practice or home to their families. It's frustrating and it's stressful, and it costs the average person \$273 per week. There are also economic costs. If it takes longer to deliver goods and services, it slows down businesses.

Our government, however, for the people wants to grow success, wants to grow the economy, and we want to send a clear message that we are open for business. We are committed to making the future easier for hard-working families in Ontario.

Can the minister please tell us about the \$1.62-billion transformational investment for commuters like those in Barrie–Innisfil and outside the GTA?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you to the great member for Barrie–Innisfil for that question this morning.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased, on March 26, to join the Minister of Transportation and our Peterborough and area MPPs Dave Smith and David Piccini to announce how our government is investing in smart infrastructure to create jobs and grow Ontario's economy.

We announced the opening of the public transit stream of the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. This intake will unlock up to \$1.62 billion in federal and provincial funding for public transit projects outside of the GTHA.

Mr. Speaker, I have great news to share. Yesterday we began accepting proposals. The 85 eligible municipalities now have eight weeks to submit their projects. This investment will enhance and increase local transit options. This investment will create and sustain good jobs across Ontario. This is, again, our commitment to ensure that Ontario is open for jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you to the Minister of Infrastructure for that great response and getting healthy competition amongst our municipalities. I am so pleased to see our government for the people investing in transportation networks to get people moving here in Ontario.

1110

It's important that we are supporting municipalities by providing predictable and secure funding that addresses local needs. Our highways, roads and bridges are vital infrastructure that we must maintain to keep people moving and allowing them to get from point A to B as efficiently and quickly as possible.

I know my community of Barrie–Innisfil was very pleased to hear the funding announcement. Our government for the people is delivering on our promises to get

people moving faster through new infrastructure funding that will keep and make our province open for business and open for jobs.

Can the Minister of Transportation tell us more about this excellent program?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks to the member from Barrie–Innisfil and the great Minister of Infrastructure, Monte McNaughton, for that question.

Speaker, I come from the great riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, and I truly understand the needs of transportation and infrastructure throughout rural ridings in this province, particularly in my own. The people of Ontario, especially those in my neck of the woods and northern Ontario, depend on our roads, highways and bridges to take them to work, take them home, take them to see their friends, take them to participate in everyday life.

I was pleased to join the Minister of Infrastructure to announce the opening of the public transit stream of the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. Municipalities can easily apply for the ICIP funding streams using the Grants Ontario website, a one-stop-window source for the entire process.

Our government for the people is committed to get the people of this province moving. I can surely know that my municipalities and the municipalities throughout this province are in desperate need of support, and our government is going to deliver that.

LICENCE PLATES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, the Ford government admitted that their plan to slap their “Open for Business” campaign slogan on Ontario licence plates is purely political. The Premier admitted that his goal is to have the taxpayers of Ontario foot the bill so that he can promote himself and his party on private licence plates.

Speaker, my question is pretty simple. Will the Acting Premier or the Premier be declaring the costs of thousands of new licence plates as a campaign expense with Elections Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Government and Consumer Services.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. To the member from across the floor: I can tell you that there actually has been a lot of discussion about what we should be doing after following 15 years of disastrous Liberal mismanagement for our province. I can tell you that we are looking at a new slogan.

But despite speculation, passenger licence plates will not feature the slogans “Open for Business” or “For the People.” Despite the NDP fearmongering on almost every topic in this House, there is no truth to that whatsoever. People are either misinformed or they're lying, Speaker.

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

Hon. Bill Walker: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): He can conclude his remarks.

Hon. Bill Walker: Passenger and commercial plates will not have the same slogans.

But I can tell you, we are excited about what we're doing for the people of Ontario. We're turning this province around, and we will be announcing with great excitement in the coming weeks what we will be doing on behalf of the people of Ontario. We are very excited. We're very confident and—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, I'll forgive the minister for being confused about the Premier's policy on this, but people outside of this building have a different perspective. If the Premier is interested in better suggestions, the people across Ontario have been putting their ideas forward. There's "Ontario: Race to the Bottom", "Ontario: Yours to Recover," and, Speaker, my personal favourite, "Ontario: Clap or Else."

Thousands of people are also calling on this government to abandon the wasteful exercise in self-promotion. Why is this Premier so determined to use every licence plate in Ontario to promote himself and his cheesy campaign slogans?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order. The government side will come to order. The opposition side will come to order. The member for Essex will come to order. The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry will come to order.

Restart the clock, and I can hear the minister's reply now.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I can tell you is, if it were the NDP in power, probably "closed for business" would be the slogan.

If we want to talk slogans, maybe we'll come back to my riding and we'll say, without a shadow of a doubt, we will continue to do things that the people of Ontario want. We want to turn this province around. We want to make sure people are proud to be Ontarians.

We will not be sending 350,000 manufacturing jobs out of our province like the Liberals did. We will not be closing down businesses in all of our small, rural and our large urban cities, like happened under that government. And we will not be supporting a continuation of how the Liberals mismanaged this whole province, Mr. Speaker.

We will definitely bring things in that are going to make people proud to be Ontarians. We want people to step up and see that we have a government and a Premier who are here, and he is focused on turning around lives, ending hallway health care, and making sure we have better opportunities for our kids in the future and an education system that we're all proud of here in Ontario.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Ma question est pour la ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires.

Since the government's announcement of the new Ontario Autism Program, children, parents, front-line workers and organizations have been in a state of complete chaos. Mr. Speaker, I really hope that the minister won't do her always-the-same tired political spin with her answer. I really don't want to hear today again about the fact that they'll reduce the wait-lists, or they'll eliminate the income test, or that they're doubling the investment in diagnostic hubs, or that they are listening to parents by actually providing OT and speech therapy, or that the existing programs of the children who are receiving the proper services were extended by six months.

Minister, what I want to know, and what I think everyone in Ontario wants to know, is, what are you actually doing? No more political spin. No one actually knows what you're doing. Mr. Speaker, my question is simple: What is the minister actually doing to help the day-to-day lives of parents of children with autism?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask the minister to reply, I'm going to remind the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry once again that he has to come to order. The member for Kitchener-Conestoga has to come to order.

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to thank the honourable member for her question. I think it was a really important question to ask.

Here's what we're doing. We went to Treasury Board. We were able to get \$102 million to keep the current program moving. We invested \$321 million in February, and we're investing an additional \$300 million to double the funding to support all children with autism in the province of Ontario.

We have invested into diagnostic hubs by doubling those, and those wait-lists will start to be cleared this month. There are 2,400 children that are on that list.

There are 23,000 children waiting for service from their Ontario government. That's why we're going to a childhood budget. We're going to be offering those children a lot of choice in what types of services they get.

We've also said that we're going to bring forward a massive consultation process as of May 1. We would encourage members opposite to be part of this process with us. We're going to be ensuring that there are parents

involved, clinicians involved, and many other people. We're also going to extend an invitation to members opposite to host round tables. We hope that they take us up on that offer.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I want to say thank you to the minister for having missed some of the all-political-spin talking points that she has said for a very long time now.

I want to say that I'm taking the honourable member to heart, because I have actually two consultations in Orléans, on May 6 and May 16, to discuss the consultation.

I think parents still have questions, and that's what I'm asking the minister today. They're wondering why we haven't started the consultation. Members of this House are probably all wondering why the consultation did not start first, before doing this wonderful approach of chaos to those parents.

I'm going to ask, on behalf of all the parents here: Why? I'm going to ask. Hopefully I'll get an answer.

1120

My question is—and I hope you answer, Minister—when families who have been thrown off the wait-lists will be starting to receive funds. I'm going to ask the minister how families—

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

The minister to reply.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'm proud that this government started consultations as early as June last year, when we were first elected and when I was first appointed. We had over a dozen round tables led by my parliamentary assistant, Amy Fee.

But let me be perfectly clear: With the additional \$300 million that we were able to secure thanks to the flexibility of Premier Ford, we are going out for a needs-based assessment tool and we are going to be consulting. As of May 1, there will be an online survey at ontario.ca/autism. I hope all Ontario parents take part in that.

The second thing that we're going to do is to have telephone town halls right across the province in the month of May. The third thing that we're going to do is to ensure that every single MPP who wants to have a round table has an ability to provide support to their constituents and then fill that information in to my ministry.

Fifth—this is one I'm very proud of, and this is what everyone's talking about—is the fact that this ministry, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, for the first time ever, are doing wraparound supports. We are going to leverage all resources for children with autism in the—

Interjections.

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

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Minister, many members of this chamber have heard concerns about the

long and bureaucratic processes required to access government services. Whether it is paper-based processes for businesses and citizens or delay with birth registration, we all know the frustration delays can cause our constituents.

The issue I raise again and again is that the problem lies with outdated processes causing long waits and delays. I know this is an issue the minister is well aware of and one he understands needs to be fixed.

Ontarians can do everything else online, from buying groceries and gifts to paying their hydro bills and mortgages. Mr. Speaker, can the minister share with the assembly our commitment to improving the quality of service delivery to Ontarians?

Hon. Bill Walker: I want to thank the honourable member from Mississauga—Erin Mills, Mr. Sabawy, for the great job he does for his constituents. I want to assure him, his constituents and everyone listening that we take this issue very seriously.

Ontarians are used to banking online at any hour of the day. We're used to shopping online and having purchases delivered right to our doors. The people of Ontario have choice and flexibility in nearly everything but government services.

For 15 years, the previous Liberal government refused to change out-of-date, overly bureaucratic processes that reduced the quality of service provided to the people of Ontario. The fact is that there are currently dozens of provincial laws governing multiple ministries, forcing them to rely on outdated and inefficient processing methods like fax machines and snail mail. I firmly believe we can and we must do better.

Mr. Speaker, I can say to the member that our government is committed to delivering a plan for simpler, faster, better services for the people of Ontario, and we will implement that at every opportunity.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I am very happy to hear that the minister and government continue to correct the mistakes of the past 15 years of Liberal rule and are bringing Ontario into the 21st century.

One issue I have heard recently from my constituents is a delay in receiving birth registrations for their newborns. As I'm sure the minister is aware, without having a birth registered, there are a number of federal and provincial programs that new parents cannot sign up for, delaying the process of getting their and their infant's life in order.

The private sector long ago reacted to the customers' demands and made shopping, banking and practically everything we do easier to do and accessible online. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: What processes is he putting in place to correct outdated Liberal practices in order to solve those delays?

Hon. Bill Walker: Again to the honourable member: Thank you for the question.

It is no secret that ServiceOntario is currently experiencing longer-than-normal processing times. A couple of weeks ago, I visited the Office of the Registrar General in Thunder Bay. The staff there, as well as across Ontario, are hard-working and dedicated to serving the people of Ontario, but sadly, in many cases they're working with

outdated processes. Right now, if parents make a mistake, even a minor typo on a birth registration form for their newborn baby, manual intervention is needed to fix the problem, delaying the processing time.

We need to rethink these outdated rules and processes. We need to engage in digital solutions to make life easier and more convenient for the people of Ontario and to modernize our government. Above all, we need to put the people back at the centre of everything government does. This, Mr. Speaker, is something that I am committed to.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Acting Premier: Global News is reporting on the abusive practices of Wyse Meter, a company that meters individual apartments. Brock University students were billed double for the power they were using in their unit. Yesterday, we found out that in Oshawa, Wyse was charging tenants for power from a sub-meter when Wyse had not installed any such meter for that unit. The individual apartment metering business is the Wild West, but Bill 66 eliminated the protection that tenants need from predatory private energy metering companies.

Why did the government decide to not protect tenants from these predatory companies?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for the question.

Speaker, in the dying days of the previous government, the Wynne Liberals made a misguided commitment that would have raised electricity bills for low-income tenants: Rate-regulating unit sub-metering companies would have increased hydro bills for low-income tenants. This is unacceptable to our government. Consumers are protected from price gouging through competition. We know this because unit sub-metering companies often offer metering services at lower costs than local utilities.

There are several measures in place that protect low-income customers. Unit sub-metering companies must still be licensed under the OEB and must comply with consumer services rules as set out by the OEB. We know that these protections are working because, out of 326,000 sub-metering customers, only 95 complaints were made to the OEB in 2018.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary? The member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again to the Acting Premier: My constituents in Oshawa deserve protection from predatory energy metering companies like Wyse Meter Solutions. The Global News story made it clear students were charged at least double their actual consumption of electricity by a company that had not even installed meters. Students, families and the programs meant to help people need protection from predatory companies. This government stripped them of that protection—specifically, on purpose—in Bill 66.

Why did this government knowingly open the door to corporate greed and cancel laws that are supposed to protect people from predatory billing?

Hon. John Yakabuski: To the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Todd Smith: We're ecstatic about the passage of Bill 66 yesterday, the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, which reduces red tape across a number of different industries, which is going to make Ontario open for business.

I can tell you that when we introduced Bill 66 on the last day of the Legislature before Christmas, the opposition members had all kinds of opportunity to opine on the contents of Bill 66. They had the opportunity to protest some things. They had the opportunity to start petitions.

When the bill actually went to committee, our members were there and we actually put forward a couple of very friendly amendments to change the bill to make it work better for the people of Ontario. Do you know what the members of the NDP did when it went to committee, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely nothing. Zero. They stand here today on their feet and they complain about it after the fact. Mr. Speaker, they had no amendments.

If we had an NDP licence plate in Ontario it would simply say, "Ontario: No Darn Plan."

EDUCATION

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for the Minister of Education. Like many Ontarians, I was really pleased when the minister introduced Bill 48 to ensure that our classrooms are, once again, safe and supportive communities. Our schools are the place where our children grow and learn. In my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook, and for students right across Ontario, the passage of this legislation means an education that works for all students.

1130

Can the Minister of Education tell us what our government is doing to ensure that all students in Ontario are receiving a meaningful education?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you so much to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook. You do a great job representing your constituents, and I really appreciate working with you as well.

Speaker, I'm also pleased to be able to stand up and speak to the safe and supportive classrooms that are going to succeed through the passage of this act later this morning. It's our responsibility to stand up for students and begin to make sure that they have a safe environment in which to learn.

With this legislation, we are creating an atmosphere that allows our students to feel safe, to learn and to grow. Our government will not tolerate the abuse of our students and children. This legislation makes it very clear, Speaker, that any educator found guilty of any sexual abuse will lose their licence. This is an area that we simply cannot tolerate. This is an area that does not allow for second chances.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Back to the Minister of Education: Minister, I am so pleased to hear you mention how we are going to be ensuring that our classrooms are once again

safe and supportive environments. It's refreshing to hear we finally have a government that puts students first.

I know that we are supporting our students in the classroom, but can the minister tell me more about what the government will do to help our teachers provide our students with a quality education?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much for that. It's a pleasure to stand up and talk about the fact that in order to make sure we support our students, we also need to be supporting our teachers. This government of Ontario, the PC government of Ontario, is doing just that.

In Bill 48, we propose that we're going to be supporting teachers by helping them be better prepared to teach the fundamentals of math. By making math content knowledge tests a requirement for certification with the Ontario College of Teachers, we're going to ensure that all of our new teachers are entering the classroom with a strong foundation in math. We're going to be supporting our teachers already in the classroom, as well.

It's important that there is confidence in the classroom, and that is what our plan for education in Ontario is going to do, Speaker. This is going to give parents the confidence that our government and our educators are working together to ensure Ontario continues to have one of the best education systems in the world.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. For weeks now, I've been hearing from anxious parents about Special Services at Home funding. SSAH helps families support their children with physical and developmental disabilities. Usually families get their funding notice in March—last week—but this year staff are saying that funding has been frozen until the budget is released on April 11. That's next week. The ministry won't share any more information other than that.

Families have lost services and are afraid that cuts are coming. Parents are not able to plan and feel that they are being targeted. Will the minister tell us why the government is leaving families and their vulnerable children in the dark?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you for the question. Special Services at Home is a very important program throughout our ministry. I can assure the member opposite that we have a budget process. The budget will be announced on the 11th of April, as the member opposite knows and as Ontarians know, because the finance minister publicly indicated that.

But let me assure the member, with respect to Special Services at Home, I have not sought to reduce, nor will I be reducing, Special Services at Home, and it would be irresponsible for the member opposite to continue to fearmonger.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Parents are asking for these questions, Minister, so it's not about me fearmongering.

You need to do your job and educate the people of this province.

Families know this government has a cruel track record on supporting vulnerable children. First, they abolished the child advocate, then they introduced a bad autism program—which she has still yet to acknowledge was bad or apologize for. And now parents are afraid of what they'll do to Special Services at Home.

Parents have received no information except that funding is frozen until the budget is released. Parents need to plan for their child's care and their own finances. Is the government cutting this program? If not, will the minister please provide parents the information they need to be able to plan their lives?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I answered that question when she first asked it. I am not reducing funding for the Special Services at Home program, period. I was very clear with that after the first question. Families currently receiving support through the program will be notified of their 2019-20 funding allocations after the finance minister tables his first budget. He was very clear about that.

Our government for the people is committed to providing support to families living with developmental and/or physical disabilities. The Special Services at Home program helps families care for children living with developmental disabilities or physical disabilities by helping children learn new skills and abilities and purchasing services that help the families.

But if we want to talk a little bit about the autism program, here's an email that I just received: "Premier Ford, I'm writing to commend you for authorizing the increased funding and the enhanced supports for the Ontario Autism Program. I would also like to commend Minister MacLeod for her leadership and her"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain has to come to order. The member for Waterloo has to come to order.

Next question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Daryl Kramp: My question today is to the Minister of Transportation, a minister who is finally getting Ontario moving once again.

I was pleased to see the Minister of Finance make an exciting announcement last week in his community. Our government for the people is committed to getting the people of Ontario moving and ensuring all of Ontario is open for business and open for jobs. Our roads, our bridges, our transit networks are vital to the quality of life in this province and to all of the local economies. We're committed to making it easier for families to get from point A to point B, whether it's on the daily commute, getting to medical treatments or getting home to spend some time with family, friends and loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, can our Minister of Transportation share with this Legislature the exciting news that was delivered to the community of North Bay last week?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I thank the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington. He’s one of the best caucus chairs we’ve had as a government.

Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Finance announced a great announcement in North Bay. Our government for the people announced that we’re partnering with the Nipissing First Nation to replace the Duchesnay Creek Bridge on Highway 17B. This estimated \$12-million project will include one kilometre of paving, replacement of the bridge and the removal of the abandoned CN railway bridge. We will get this job done through a limited partnership between Nipissing First Nation and Miller Paving company, who created a company where the First Nation will be the majority owner. It’s great news, Mr. Speaker. Through this partnership, Ontario will be able to provide jobs, skills and economic development for Nipissing First Nation while building infrastructure that benefits everyone in the community. I’m very pleased with this partnership. I’m so thankful to the Minister of Finance to be able to announce it. Again, thank you, caucus chair, for being a great champion.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you, Minister. I’m certainly pleased to hear that you and our government for the people are partnering with the Nipissing First Nation to replace the Duchesnay Creek Bridge on Highway 17B. This partnership is just the latest example of strong co-operation between our government and Nipissing First Nation. This announcement is a very, very important example of how we can and do work together to realize the opportunities that are presented to us and exist. It’s also yet another example too, though, that our government is committing to getting the people of Ontario moving and to improve and to provide a better transportation network across Ontario, but specifically in this case in the northern region. So that I know, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Finance directly engage and share with this Legislature more details on this partnership and why it was so important for his community in North Bay?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for the question. This project is the latest step in our government’s work to support Nipissing First Nation. Last fall, we announced \$1 million for their business centre. Recently we announced a three-year renewal of the MOU with them to help the recovery of the walleye population in Lake Nipissing, and now our government is investing \$12 million to replace the Duchesnay Creek Bridge, an invaluable economic link in my riding.

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Here’s what Chief Scott McLeod had to say: that this “marks a significant change in the way of doing business and a real step forward towards reconciliation. This means real opportunities for our people—not just platitudes and promises.”

We will continue working together to ensure we make meaningful change in our northern communities.

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour le ministre des Transports. People throughout northeastern Ontario keep on wondering why this government simply doesn’t care about their well-being. There is a stark divide between the north and the south in our beautiful province, and this government does not seem to care. We need to bring northern Ontario up to par with the south for basic things like intercity transportation. The Northlander, the train that used to connect Cochrane to Toronto, could do exactly that. The train is a reliable, safe, accessible and environmentally conscious way to travel that could help bring prosperity to northeastern Ontario.

Minister, when will the government do right by northern Ontario and restore the Northlander?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks very much for that question. I do have to say that our government is caring for all people of the province. We look after the people in the south, in the east, northeast, northwest and in the GTHA. What we’re doing is building a regional transportation system down here, but at the same time we’re looking at how we can build and develop infrastructure and transportation to spur economic growth and give people more time with their families getting from point A to point B.

The Minister of Finance just had a great announcement in North Bay. I can tell you, from working with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Minister of Finance, that we’re looking at how we can fix the transportation systems up in the north. Unfortunately, the previous government, supported by the NDP, got rid of the Northlander for the people of northern Ontario. We are going to look forward to seeing how we can improve transportation opportunities for the people of the north as well as southern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Let me make one thing clear: It was the Liberals who let us down first by shutting down the Northlander back in 2012; now this Conservative government is on track to do the same. It seems as if both Liberals and Conservatives have been trying to erase 100 years of train history in our beloved region. Liberal, Tory, same old story. Our people deserve so much better.

The government has made an announcement concerning transportation in southern Ontario. It is now time to focus on northern Ontario’s region. We can certainly do so if the Northlander is restored. Is the minister’s intention to give up on the seniors, students, medical patients, immigrants and families who could benefit from the restoration of a passenger route in northern Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Transportation to reply.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I’ve got to tell you: I am absolutely shocked that you would even go down that path. That

shutdown of the Northlander only happened because the NDP supported the Liberals on that. That's the only reason why.

Let me tell you a little bit more, Speaker: When in power, the Ontario NDP reduced bus service from Timmins to Chapleau and Wawa; they docked the new ferry in Tobermory; they cut norOntair service from 21 to six communities; and they sold off Star Transfer, the trucking firm of the ONTC. That's a heck of a legacy you've left.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will take their seats. Order. Government side, order. The clock is ticking, and it's taking your time.

MAPLE SYRUP

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As winter fades away and the temperature slowly starts to increase, I want to draw everyone's attention to a sticky situation: The annual maple syrup season has arrived.

Across the province, more than 3,000 farmers will participate in this annual ritual of tapping trees. Farmers from my riding are looking forward to gathering sap, tapping trees and boiling to make delicious maple syrup and creating some delicious maple products. Year after year, these farmers dedicate hours of care and dedication to preparing this tasty Canadian treat. As a child, I always remember it was a highlight as an end to a long, cold winter.

But the benefits of maple syrup go far beyond the kitchen table. Could the minister please tell the House about this positive impact on the economy of Ontario?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his sweet question. Without sugar-coating it, maple syrup production in our province has a long and storied history, with traditions proudly passed on from one generation to another. Farmers spend months preparing for harvest season. This dedication is clearly seen in the fact that it takes 40 litres to 45 litres of maple sap to make just one litre of maple syrup.

This weekend's annual maple syrup weekend provides an excellent opportunity for Ontarians across the province to learn more about maple syrup making first-hand. Hosted by the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association, maple syrup farmers across the province will welcome their neighbours onto their farms. The Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association encourages everyone to develop a relationship with a producer, check out their local farm and buy local.

I highly recommend your personal favourite producer, mine being Jakeman's Maple Products located in the great riding of Oxford. Each year I have the pleasure of enjoying their maple syrup—

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Education on a point of order.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure, just ahead of the vote that we're about to participate in, to introduce the best ministerial team this province has. My team from EDU is here. Thank you so much for all the work you do day in and day out.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I think you will find that we have unanimous consent for the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North to take my spot on estimates and for me to take his spot on the social policy committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South is seeking unanimous consent that the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North replace the member for Ottawa South on the Standing Committee on Estimates and that the member for Ottawa South replace the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North on the Standing Committee on Social Policy. I hope I got it right this time.

Agreed? Agreed.

DEFERRED VOTES

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOMS ACT, 2019

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

Deferred vote 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for third reading of Bill 48, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to education and child care.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1153.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The doors are closed. I would ask members to please take their seats. Are we ready to vote?

On March 6, 2019, Mr. Clark moved third reading of Bill 48, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to education and child care.

Mr. Sarkaria has moved that the question now be put.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak
Baber, Roman
Babikian, Aris
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby

Harris, Mike
Hogarth, Christine
Kanapathi, Logan
Karahalios, Belinda
Ke, Vincent

Phillips, Rod
Piccini, David
Rasheed, Kaleed
Romano, Ross
Sabawy, Sheref

Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Khanjin, Andrea	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Kramp, Daryl	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Smith, Todd
Crawford, Stephen	Martow, Gila	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McDonell, Jim	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	McNaughton, Monte	Tibollo, Michael A.
Elliott, Christine	Mulrone, Caroline	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fedeli, Victor	Nicholls, Rick	Wai, Daisy
Fee, Amy	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Ghamari, Goldie	Park, Lindsey	Yakabuski, John
Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	Yurek, Jeff
Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy	

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gravelle, Michael	Morrison, Suze
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras
Bell, Jessica	Harden, Joel	Rakocevic, Tom
Berns-McGown, Rima	Hassan, Faisal	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Schreiner, Mike
Bourgouin, Guy	Horwath, Andrea	Shaw, Sandy
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutla	Singh, Gurratan
Fife, Catherine	Kernaghan, Terence	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fraser, John	Lindo, Laura Mae	Tabuns, Peter
French, Jennifer K.	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Gates, Wayne	Mantha, Michael	West, Jamie
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Glover, Chris	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Yarde, Kevin

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The eyes are 62; the nays are 39.

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

Mr. Clark has moved third reading of Bill 48, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to education and child care.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I recess the House, I want to remind all members that it's totally inappropriate to take photographs while we're in the chamber during proceedings, at any time. We have to take a hard line on this or it will be chaotic in here. We're not going to permit it. Your phone may be confiscated, and you may not get it back very quickly.

This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait vraiment plaisir aujourd'hui d'avoir une visiteuse ici, Anick Tremblay, qui est mon adjointe au bureau de circonscription d'Orléans. Je

voudrais la remercier pour tout le beau travail qu'elle fait avec moi depuis les dernières années.

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: I would like to introduce three young students from my riding. They are here this afternoon, along with their teacher Dolly. The students are Aditi, Liz and Laetitia. I will be doing a member's statement about their achievement this afternoon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to welcome Manraj Furmah and Ronnie Gavsie from the Trillium Gift of Life Network and Mr. Onkar Gill from Amar Karma, an organ and tissue donor advocacy group from my riding of Mississauga-Malton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M. Guy Bourgouin: Les aînés et les familles du nord de l'Ontario sont dans une situation de détresse totale. Le manque de places dans les foyers de soins de longue durée cause bien des soucis aux résidents et résidentes de Mushkegowuk-Baie James.

Nous avons entendu la ministre de la Santé parler de places supplémentaires, mais ce n'est pas le cas pour le nord de la province. Nous avons une population vieillissant plus rapidement que la moyenne de la province. La plupart des régions sont isolées des grands centres urbains. Les communautés comme Hearst ont quatre ans d'attente, quand la moyenne provinciale est de 142 jours. À Kapuskasing, la période d'attente est de trois ans, quand la moyenne provinciale est, encore, de 142 jours— inacceptable. Comment est-ce que les communautés peuvent passer à travers ces temps-là ou attendre ces périodes d'attente avec dignité?

Je pense que la ministre devrait être à l'écoute puis rétablir une moyenne qui est près de la moyenne provinciale et donner des lits supplémentaires pour la région de Mushkegowuk, que ce soit pour Hearst ou Kapuskasing. La communauté est en détresse. Nous avons besoin de ces lits supplémentaires, monsieur le Président. Trois, puis quatre ans, c'est inacceptable, quand la moyenne est près de 142 jours.

ELMVALE MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Mr. Doug Downey: The transition into spring means the beginning of tapping season for maple syrup producers in Ontario.

The iconic maple tree and the syrup it provides is found everywhere: in our kitchen cupboards, backyards and on our nation's flag. This cultural symbol and local economic driver is proudly produced and celebrated in my riding, as it is in many other ridings.

On April 27, I'll be attending the 54th annual Elmvale Maple Syrup Festival in the township of Springwater. This historic community event gives local syrup producers an

opportunity to sell their products and educate over 30,000 visitors on the history and practice of their craft.

It's a great example of the kind of community support we find in small towns across Ontario. For 10 months, the volunteer committee works tirelessly to organize. Over 90 different community partners donate everything from money to flowers to prizes and parking spots. Each year, the committee holds a banquet after the festival, and they donate over \$20,000 in proceeds to local schools, libraries, charities and extracurricular programs in the community.

Since 1966, the people of Springwater have volunteered their time, effort, talent and money to help build their community from within.

This year's festival is set to be the biggest yet, with a variety of activities, including the annual log-sawing competition for dignitaries. I still need a partner, so if you're as good at cutting wood as you are at cutting red tape, please give me a call.

I want to thank the volunteers and organizations that make this important community event possible every year. I wish you all a healthy and bountiful harvest season.

SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS CENTRES

Mr. Jeff Burch: Recently, I had the privilege of meeting with Lisa Berketo, the administrative coordinator with the Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre. She described the dire straits they find themselves in due to a lack of proper sustainable funding.

We are living in a time when more victims and survivors of rape, sexual violence and sexual abuse are choosing to speak out about their experiences. However, many cannot access the support they want and need, including free counselling services, because there is an ever-growing waiting list.

This agency is most certainly grateful for the funding that is provided from the Attorney General's office. The rest of their funding comes from generous local donations, grants and fundraising activities. Administration is bare-bones, accounting for 11% of its budget. They now have no idea what additional funds there will be for this year.

We need to ask ourselves: Why is it that in this period of heightened awareness, and with a stated government commitment, we cannot ensure that help is available? We have a social responsibility to all victims and survivors to make sure they can access properly funded services.

As noted by Ms. Berketo during our meeting, with unprecedented growth in demand, coupled with the lack of funding resources, this agency's very existence is threatened, and that will have dire consequences for victims and survivors.

This government must provide the Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre with sustainable, multi-year funding so that it can continue to carry on with the work it has been doing across our region for over 40 years.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Deepak Anand: University Health Network Toronto is one of the top five organ transplant hospitals in the

world. Some 85% of Ontarians are in favour of organ donation, yet 1,600 Ontarians are waiting for a life-saving organ. Every three days, someone in Ontario dies waiting for a transplant.

One organ donation can save eight lives and, through tissue donation, can enhance the lives of 75 individuals.

Hockey legend Don Cherry's son Tim was saved by an organ transplant. Under the leadership of Premier Mike Harris, in 1999, Don Cherry became the head of a new advisory board on organ donations.

By registering to become a donor, we have the power to save or change someone's life

In my riding of Mississauga–Malton, there are 27 people waiting for their transplant.

I'd like to acknowledge Amar Karma, an organ and tissue donor advocacy group from my riding, along with Trillium Gift of Life Network. They have been working tirelessly to increase registration and awareness for this cause. Thank you so much for doing this.

Every April, Ontarians celebrate Be a Donor Month, a time at which all Ontarians are encouraged to show their support.

Mr. Speaker, Mississauga is ranked fifth in registration, but still, there are over 500,000 health card holders who have not registered.

I encourage everyone to please register yourself through www.beadonor.ca.

I hope and I wish that we have plenty of donors so that no one—and I repeat, no one—has to die waiting for an organ transplant.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: In early December, the Ministry of Health suddenly moved the Cambridge ambulance communications centre to Hamilton due to staff shortages. The relocation was supposed to help; instead, it made things worse. Hamilton dispatch was not equipped with auto-locate technology for Waterloo region, and an ambulance was sent to the wrong location.

Last month, when I asked the Minister of Health about this, she said she is "working to modernize and strengthen" the system. Since then, no progress has been made. In fact, the ministry has made things worse.

Here is an update from the front-line Cambridge staff in Hamilton: The workplace is hectic and unhealthy. Staff are unable to take breaks and are being denied vacation time. Unsurprisingly, this has led to staff taking more stress leave. As of last week, Cambridge dispatch was short 20 staff. Managers told them that by March 17, 12 new people would be hired. That date has come and gone, and no new staff have walked through the door.

Provincial dispatch staff are asking for wage parity with OPP dispatchers, so that they can actually retain staff; full-time hours for new staff rather than partial contract hours; and the same equipment that they need to do their job.

1510

The Minister of Health is fully aware of the severity of the crisis with Cambridge dispatch, and by not using the

information at her disposal to address these issues, her ministry is knowingly putting people at risk. We believe front-line ambulance dispatchers deserve so much better than an unresponsive ministry.

ÉVÉNEMENTS DIVERS À OTTAWA-VANIER

EVENTS IN OTTAWA-VANIER

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Je suis heureuse aujourd'hui de me lever pour parler d'événements qui se tiennent dans Ottawa-Vanier les samedis.

À 9 heures du matin samedi dernier, Épelle-Moi Canada, un concours d'épellation en français, débutait. Ce concours est organisé par un groupe d'enseignants, la Coopérative Enseignants Pas à Pas, qui vise à soutenir le succès scolaire des jeunes de la communauté afro-canadienne. Épelle-Moi Canada attire des jeunes qui veulent compétitionner et démontrer toutes leurs connaissances du français. The spelling bee went throughout the day, and I had the occasion to come back around 4 p.m. to listen to the last round of the francophone spelling bee. The "finalistes" went 12 rounds without any mistakes—vraiment impressionnant.

In between the two stints at Épelle-Moi Canada, I attended another incredible event, which was Let Your Voice Be Heard, which is organized by the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre. Inuit youth took the stage and talked about their lives, their culture, their desire to unite to prevent suicide. Moving testimonies were offered, and we had great Inuit hiphop. We also heard wonderful lullabies and love songs in throat singing. We were fed traditional food. It was a wonderful day.

Next Saturday, there is a sugar bush au Muséoparc Vanier. It is the only functioning sugar bush in an urban environment, so I look forward to seeing you next week on Saturday in Ottawa-Vanier. It's always snowing.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: It is my honour today to highlight in this House the accomplishments of three young women from my riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville who are here today. The three bright young students, Aditi, Liz and Laetitia from T.L. Kennedy Secondary School, will be heading to Orlando, Florida to compete in the international DECA competition.

DECA is an exciting business club that has over 180,000 members, with chapters all over the world. DECA allows students to participate in conferences and compete in regional, provincial and international competitions. This year, Aditi, Liz and Laetitia will be representing their school, our province and our country internationally.

I was proud to hear about the three students who showcased their exceptional leadership and communication skills during the regional and provincial competitions. They have now qualified to compete at the international level. Their hard work and dedication have paid off. The young girls are looking forward to representing not only

Ontario but Canada at the International Career Development Conference in Florida.

Let us all together wish the very best, and congratulations to the three T.L. Kennedy DECA members, Aditi, Liz and Laetitia, as they head to Florida this month.

PHARMACARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Did you know, Speaker, that this Monday, April 1, the Ford government changed its drug coverage for kids in Ontario? Without much fanfare, they decided that hundreds of thousands of kids would no longer qualify, and now their families are finding out. Today, a family from Blind River found out that their 10-month-old daughter, who needs special dairy-free formula, is no longer covered and they will have to pay \$700 a month to keep her alive. For the families of premature babies who need hypercaloric formula, it is \$400 a month, and for kids with special needs being fed via G-tube it could be up to \$1,600 a month.

The great majority of drug plans do not cover the special formula that feeds preemies, fragile infants or kids with special needs. The medication and nutrients they need were covered until March 31, but they aren't anymore. Now, families of premature babies and babies with special needs are finding out the hard way that the government has cut them off, with no warning, with no consultation.

What does this government have against babies and children? The minister seems to be making changes on the fly without thinking of the consequences, and these families are finding out that things are going from bad to worse.

The NDP knows how to fix this, Speaker. It is called "pharmacare," a universal drug program for all Ontarians where you get the medicine you need, even if you're 10 months old and don't own a wallet.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Stephen Lecce: In the township of King, there are disturbing reports of the poisoning of dogs taking place in and around Memorial Park in King City. York Regional Police have issued a statement asking for the support of the public in apprehending those involved in what is really a disturbing allegation. The township is taking action to communicate to residents, to post signs and to help ensure that family owners of dogs are safe.

Two individuals have been apprehended, but we must remain vigilant. All of us have a role to play. The safety of our animals is important to us all, and dog owners in King and Vaughan know that I stand with you and support tough penalties for those who harm our pets.

I know that many of you love your dogs, and they're part of your family. I have fond memories of a German shepherd that I had for many years that brought me great affection as a youngster.

I'm asking each person watching to be part of the solution, to remain vigilant and to please contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

HELLENIC HERITAGE MONTH ACT

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my friend the member for Oakville North–Burlington for tabling Bill 77, the Hellenic Heritage Month Act. I want to thank her for this very important piece of legislation. I believe that recognizing the Hellenic community and its contributions to Ontario is very important and timely. Since the arrival of the first Greek immigrants to Ontario during the early 20th century, the community has contributed immensely to the social and cultural make-up of this great province. Greek cultural organizations, businesses and religious institutions have historically played an important role in making Ontario what it is.

On a personal note, I am the son of Armenians, a culture and society very much linked to the culture and history of the Hellenic community. In fact, my maternal grandmother was Greek. I lived in Athens for two years, and as a young man I was able to experience Greek hospitality, warmth and friendship. I learned to speak the Greek language and was able to immerse myself in a culture and society that has left me with memories that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

On a final note, as we celebrated Greek Independence Day we also had to recall the 100th anniversary of the horrific genocide that the Pontic Greeks experienced during the dying days of the Ottoman Empire. As the grandson of a survivor of the genocide, I want to mention that this bill will hopefully contribute to the healing of the people who are still living with that horrific memory today.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I think the member for Orléans has a point of order.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm terribly sorry, but I have a guest who's here. I would just like to recognize Mark Henschel, who's here with us today for the introduction of a private member's bill that I will be tabling. I would like us to welcome him to our Legislature. Merci.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

INDEPENDENT ONTARIO PROVINCIAL
POLICE COMMISSIONER
APPOINTMENT ACT, 2019LOI DE 2019 SUR LA NOMINATION
EN TOUTE INDÉPENDANCE
DU COMMISSAIRE DE LA POLICE
PROVINCIALE DE L'ONTARIO

Madame Des Rosiers moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 95, An Act to amend the Police Services Act and the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 with respect to a Commissioner Appointment Advisory Committee /

Projet de loi 95, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers et la Loi de 2019 sur la sécurité communautaire et les services policiers en ce qui concerne le Comité consultatif sur la nomination du commissaire.

1520

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'm going to ask the member for Ottawa–Vanier to give the House a brief explanation of her bill.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: This is a co-sponsored bill by MPP Schreiner and myself. It responds directly to the Integrity Commissioner's recent report that made clear that we need to create a formalized, independent process for selecting OPP commissioners moving forward, similar to judicial appointments.

The bill amends the Police Services Act and the Community Safety and Policing Act to enact a commissioner appointment advisory committee. Both acts require the commissioner to be appointed on recommendation. These recommendations will be derived from a list of potential candidates prepared by the new commissioner appointment advisory committee.

The committee is charged with advertising a vacancy, assessing candidates and preparing a ranked list of at least two candidates that the minister will appoint. This is drawn on similarities with judicial appointments.

The Minister or the Solicitor General can reject the list and require the committee to provide a fresh list.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION
ACT, 2019LOI DE 2019 SUR LA PARTICIPATION
DÉMOCRATIQUE

Mrs. Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of democratic participation / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la participation démocratique.

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 give the House a brief explanation of her bill.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I introduce a bill that, if passed, will strengthen democratic participation. The specific changes proposed in this bill include lowering the voting age to 16 to increase youth participation and mandating the Chief Electoral Officer to study making election day a provincial holiday. It also discusses the possibility of bringing a feasibility study regarding mandatory voting and expanded mail-in voting. It also proposes a ranked ballot pilot project in upcoming by-elections and during the next provincial election, and a full analysis of its effectiveness.

Mr. Speaker, the status quo is not working. We must work together in a new way. I look forward to beginning the conversation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's my pleasure to present this petition on behalf of my constituent Stephanie Gomes. It reads:

"Don't Increase Class Sizes in Our Public Schools.

"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 have quite a few of these here. I'm happy to affix my signature in support of this petition, and I'll hand it off to Gajan to table it with the Clerks.

TAXATION

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

"Whereas the government for the people was elected on a mandate to put more money back in people's pockets; and

"Whereas for too long high tax rates have hurt Ontario's middle class, making it harder to go ahead and invest in their family's future; and

"Whereas Ontarians are increasingly taking on debt in order to keep control of their finances:

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario continue to make life more affordable by cutting the income tax rate paid by the middle class."

I'm affixing my signature and giving it to the page.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Burch: "Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Don't Increase Class Sizes in Our Public Schools.

"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 affix my name and pass it to page Niko.

WASTE REDUCTION

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I want to thank Maeve and her grade 5 class for this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas plastic bags and polystyrene are so lightweight that they get blown into trees, streams, lakes and oceans. Only 11% of all plastic in Canada gets recycled annually...;

"Whereas Canadians use 2.86 billion plastic shopping bags per year...;

"Whereas plastic bags and polystyrene are made from petroleum, and mining it adds greenhouse gases to the air, and pollutes the ground and streams;

"Whereas plastic bags and polystyrene break down into microplastic bits and get ingested by marine life and birds making them sick, as well as entering the food chain;

"Whereas up to one million seabirds and 100,000 sea mammals and countless fish die each year from ingesting plastic, according to the Ocean Conference, United Nations...;

"Whereas plastic bags take 10-1,000 years to decompose and polystyrene never biodegrades and can be fatal for wildlife.... We could recycle all remaining amounts for future needs;

"Whereas stores can sell reusable plant fibre bags, and takeout food and drinks can be served in cardboard or reusable containers;

"Whereas the students of Ms. Jerreat's grade 4/5 class, and all grade 5s from Elginburg and District Public School in Kingston, Ontario, and all children in the province of Ontario want and need clean lakes to swim in, clean air to breathe, and a healthy planet:

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

“To ban plastic shopping bags and Styrofoam (polystyrene) packaging used for drinks and food from being manufactured, or commercially distributed, in the province of Ontario.”

I’m very happy to put my name to it, and I will give it to page Elizabeth.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

1530

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

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

I am affixing my signature and giving it to page Arthur.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Joel Harden: It’s my great pleasure today to introduce a petition entitled “Don’t Increase Class Sizes in Our Public Schools.” It reads:

“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 will be happily signing this petition and giving it to page Katie for the Clerks’ table.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Amy Fee: This petition to the Parliament of Ontario is to ensure the safety of residents of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition. I am affixing my name and handing it to page Mirren.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Linda Adler from my riding for collecting these petitions. They read as follows:

“Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas quality care for the 78,000 residents of (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a

legislated minimum care standard ... of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page Alma to bring it to the Clerk.

PUBLIC SAFETY

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

“To Ensure the Safety of Residents of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I think it’s an excellent petition. I affix my name to it and I’ll give it to page Virginia.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is on affordable housing.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for families throughout much of Ontario, owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive;

“Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold;

“Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing. Whether a family wants to rent or

own, live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario’s social housing stock, commit to building new affordable homes, crack down on housing speculators, and make rentals more affordable through rent controls and updated legislation.”

As an MPP who represents many, many tenants, I fully support it and will affix my signature to it.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Premier Ford has made a clear commitment to ensure fairness in Ontario’s auto insurance system; and

“Whereas Ontario’s drivers have been continually disappointed by Liberal and NDP ‘stretch goals’ of bringing relief to the auto insurance system; and

“Whereas the approximately 10 million drivers in the province expect the government of Ontario to take action to address the issues found within the auto insurance system;

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

“Continue working with stakeholders across the province to develop an auto insurance system that puts the needs of drivers first.”

I will affix my signature to this petition and I will pass it on to page Sanjayan.

EDUCATION

Ms. Jill Andrew: I’m proud to rise on behalf of the former pages serving from February 19 to March 7 in group SP19-1.

“No More Cuts to Education.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Education’s changes to the teacher-to-student funding ratio will end up increasing class sizes;

“Whereas larger class sizes could cause a lack of necessary support for students and decrease the amount of ‘one-on-one’ interactions spent with teachers—valuable time that can help students succeed;

“Whereas less teachers will decrease the amount of special programs and extracurricular activities (clubs, teams, choirs, etc.);

“Whereas the government trying to balance the budget is taking priority over investing in our kids’ future;

“Whereas making it compulsory for four credits to be from online courses for secondary school students will be harmful to all students;

“Whereas the Ontario eLearning Consortium website states that online courses are not for all students;

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“Whereas not all students have access to a reliable electronic device and high-speed Internet; and

“Whereas all these decisions will be detrimental to all students of Ontario and will result in the loss of thousands of job positions—breaking the Premier’s promise of budget cuts without job losses;

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

“—That the Ministry of Education launch a large and publicized consultation with a large amount of students, teachers, unions, etc. on the new proposed rules that lasts for a reasonable period of time and all results be made public;

“—That a cap which is agreed to by teachers, students, parents, etc. be put on the size off all classes;

“—That the Minister of Education define what involuntary job losses are;

“—That the Premier, ministers and members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario respect the decisions and choices teachers, parents, students, advocates and other members of the community make (work action, strikes, walkouts, protests, etc.);

“That the government restores funding used to repair schools which was cancelled when the cap-and-trade system was abolished; and

“That the Minister of Education give students the choice when it comes to taking online courses.”

I proudly sign this petition on behalf of the former pages serving from February 19 to March 7 in group SP19-1, and hand this to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. The time for petitions has now expired.

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 April 2, 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Before we get started with debate, I’m going to just gently remind members on both sides that I expect respectable debate this afternoon. I don’t want any calling across at each other at all.

Therefore, further debate?

Mrs. Robin Martin: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 87, the very appropriately named Fixing the Hydro Mess Act—because after 15 years of Liberal mismanagement, unfortunately, everybody knows that in Ontario hydro is a mess. I spent more than a year before the last election knocking on doors in my riding, and there was no issue that got my constituents as riled up as the issue of the skyrocketing cost of electricity and the mismanagement of the system by the former Liberal government. Even today, electricity prices are one of the most common concerns that I hear about from the residents of Eglinton—

Lawrence. We have seen, all of us, first-hand the damage that the mismanagement of our electricity sector has done to families, to communities and to businesses across Ontario.

Our government has been working hard to bring common sense back to Ontario’s electricity system, to make it one that everyone can rely on, and we’ve been working on doing it properly, consulting with our constituents, with industry stakeholders and with small, medium and large businesses across the province of Ontario.

But we’ve also moved with some speed and haste. One of the first bills that we passed in this Legislature after the election was the Hydro One Accountability Act, which required the utility to develop an executive compensation framework in consultation with the province and other stakeholders, and established new public disclosure requirements for executive compensation, something that the voters wanted.

We have also repealed the Green Energy Act, which led directly to many of the challenges facing our electricity system, including the disastrous feed-in tariff program that directly led to skyrocketing electricity rates. Unfortunately, all of that actually gave green energy a bad name by making it more expensive than it needed to be.

We have cancelled more than 750 unnecessary and wasteful renewable energy contracts, saving Ontario electricity consumers more than \$790 million in direct costs.

But these changes, Mr. Speaker, are really just the start of addressing the work that the former government did, or mismanagement that the former government did, in our electricity system. That is why moving this bill, Bill 87, forward is very important. Bill 87, if passed, will make changes to conservation programs, overhaul the Ontario Energy Board, ensure residential electricity bills are held to the rate of inflation, wind down the previous Liberal government’s Fair Hydro Plan—

Hon. Greg Rickford: There’s not much that was fair about it.

Mrs. Robin Martin: No. We could call it the unfair hydro plan—and introduce a new, transparent, on-bill rebate for consumer bills. In the course of my remarks today, I will touch on all five of these objectives of this legislation.

I am going to start with the wind-down of the disastrous Fair Hydro Plan. During the fall, I had the honour of being a member of the Select Committee on Financial Transparency, which looked at some of the hydro accounting schemes made by the previous Liberal government. This unfair hydro plan was a particularly egregious example of a government trying to find a way to hide the damage that they had done to our electricity system from the voters. In attempting to do this, they put in place a scheme that would cost Ontarians at least \$4 billion—that’s \$4 billion—more than simply following standard borrowing and accounting practices. Frankly, the voters I talked to about this before the election—even the Liberal voters—were scandalized. We heard during the committee hearings that they did this in spite of direct advice from their own advisers, who told them it was a bad idea.

Once the plan was rolled out, these additional costs were identified and they were called out by both the Financial Accountability Officer and the Auditor General. They both said this is \$4 billion more in cost, at least, than it needs to be.

The Auditor General said in her October 2017 report, “It was known that the planned financing structure could result in significant unnecessary costs for Ontarians.”

The Auditor General went on to say, “Through the Fair Hydro Act,” as they called it, “the government created a needlessly complex accounting/financing structure for the electricity rate reduction in order to avoid showing a deficit or an increase in net debt in its budgets and in the province’s consolidated financial statements.”

The Auditor General even warned members of the previous Liberal government about the mistake that they were about to make before the bill was passed, during the public hearings at that time at the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Despite this advice, the previous Liberal government went full speed ahead. It wasn’t responsible and it wasn’t the right thing to do, but they did it anyway.

Mr. Speaker, we are taking action in Bill 87 to restore trust and accountability in the government’s finances while saving Ontarians \$4 billion by rolling back the complicated, misguided, costly, unnecessary financial structure put in place by the previous Liberal government in their unfair hydro scheme. We are going to make this change in a responsible way that ensures relief for electricity consumers is maintained during the transition period, while aligning Ontario’s accounting practices in this sector with the recommendations of the Auditor General and the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry.

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We will replace it with a transparent on-bill rebate effective November 1, 2019, so electricity customers will know the true cost of power in the province of Ontario. The amount of the rebate will be listed as a single line item, because that transparency has been missing from our electricity system for far too long. Under the proposed new structure, the full electricity costs, including the 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.

We know that Ontarians need reliability and predictability in their hydro bills. That’s why one of the other changes in this legislation is to introduce regulatory amendments that hold the average residential electricity bill to the rate of inflation beginning on May 1, 2019. It is another measure that will contribute to increased transparency and accountability in the electricity sector, while making life more affordable for Ontarians.

For the industrial sector, we will continue to consult on electricity prices to inform new policies to manage electricity costs and help Ontario businesses grow and compete, because we know that they have been struggling with the results of the failed Liberal energy policies as well.

Speaker, I now want to address the changes proposed to energy conservation programs in the province of Ontario, because I know these programs are important to many of us, including many of my constituents in Eglinton–Lawrence. There is certainly a role for conservation in our electricity system, but we need to make sure that every program is in place for a reason, that it makes sense for consumers and that it provides a benefit to the electricity system. We know that there are some programs that work and there are others that don’t work. There are some that actually cost ratepayers more than the benefit that we get back. That just doesn’t make any sense. We’re trying to fix it with common-sense policies.

So what we’re proposing is that the province both re-focus and centralize delivery of conservation programs in the province of Ontario. We expect that these measures will save both electricity customers and taxpayers as much as \$442 million over the next three years. The reality is that customers already understand the value of conservation, and require fewer initiatives to realize reductions on their electricity bills. They’re already doing the best they can to minimize those bills, because they’re trying to keep their lives more affordable. So we will re-focus our conservation programs to those who need it the most, including low-income families; small, medium and large businesses; and First Nations communities.

Just moving conservation programs to central program delivery alone, managed by the Independent Electricity System Operator, has the potential to reduce the costs of program oversight, administration and delivery, while ending up to \$150 million in wasteful bonus payments to local distribution companies.

Speaker, if this legislation moves forward, the IESO will present a conservation and demand management plan to the government that would set the course for conservation and demand management programs across the province. But some of the important initiatives we expect to continue, either as is or through an equivalent program, include:

- targeted programs for on-reserve First Nations communities;
- home energy assessments and installation of savings measures for income-eligible customers;
- process and system upgrades and the Industrial Accelerator Program;
- the retrofit program for businesses upgrading old or inefficient equipment; and
- the energy manager program, which helps companies identify energy-saving opportunities and investments.

This, of course, also means that some programs will not continue. Those are going to be the programs that don’t make sense to continue—a common-sense fix—some that don’t deliver value for money, some that don’t make a significant impact on conservation and some that simply have outlived their usefulness.

Interjections.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I hear the NDP grumbling. I know they think all programs should continue forever.

Interjection.

Mrs. Robin Martin: That’s it: They’ve got no darn plan.

These are really important decisions, and we feel we need to review programs from time to time to make sure they're still delivering value to the people of Ontario.

Important decisions need to be made if we are going to clean up our hydro mess here in the province of Ontario. There will still be opportunities for local distribution companies, like Toronto Hydro in my riding, to deliver local conservation programs. But most importantly, the proposed changes will have no effect on the environment, largely because over 95% of our electricity is emissions-free, so they'll have no negative effect at all.

I want to turn to the other important element of this legislation: the proposed reform of the Ontario Energy Board. Many Ontarians may not be aware of the role that the Ontario Energy Board plays in our electricity system. But the truth is, most changes that affect consumers, like changes to the distribution or delivery charges, have to go through the Ontario Energy Board before they show up on your bill at home.

It's not working for consumers right now, and it's not working for other players in our electricity system, like local distribution companies. It's not working for them either. In fact, a lot of measures taken by the former Liberal government started to chip away at the value that the Ontario Energy Board had been offering before, and we need to fix it. We're going to separate the adjudication functions of the Ontario Energy Board from the administrative functions while maintaining or enhancing the independence of that board.

Let me give you an example of why this is important: We've heard from local distribution companies that for even the smallest of applications, hundreds or thousands of hours have to be utilized, and a similar number of pages—paper—needs to be put together. It's not efficient and it's not effective. When local distribution companies incur all of these costs, they are passed on to each and every one of us on our hydro bills. No, thank you; I can do without that. This is the perfect example of what we've been trying to do as a government when we talk about reducing red tape, making things better for job creators and ensuring that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs.

Here's what we're doing: We will establish a new governance structure, including a board of directors and a CEO, and better separate the Ontario Energy Board's management, administration and adjudication responsibilities. The chair of the board would ultimately be accountable to the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines for ensuring independence and the effectiveness of the Ontario Energy Board's adjudicative process.

We will also create the role of commissioners, who would assume an adjudicative role in hearing and determining matters within the Ontario Energy Board's jurisdiction, and we will create the role of chief commissioner—accountable to the CEO—who would be responsible for assigning casework and ensuring the timeliness and dependability of the regulatory process. We will also streamline processes by amending the Ontario Energy Board's consumer education objective and reducing duplicate responsibilities in transmission procurement between

the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Electricity System Operator.

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When you get into the energy field, what you find is that it's the land of acronyms. There are all these agencies. It's an alphabet soup—OEB, IESO—but we're trying to make some clarity there.

We'll promote efficiency and reduce the regulatory burden by requiring the Ontario Energy Board to report annually on its efforts to simplify regulations for the energy sector.

These proposed changes build off recommendations of the Ontario Energy Board Modernization Review Panel, stakeholders and regulatory experts. They reflect best practices and support independent decision-making. This was quite an extensive process. The modernization review panel consulted with over 45 organizations and individuals and received 60 written submissions from stakeholders across the energy sector, from industry associations to consumer advocacy groups. The panel heard about broad support for a modernized Ontario Energy Board with a focused mandate and enhanced governance structure.

These are much-needed changes, and I'm pleased that our government is moving forward with them. It's another important step in undoing 15 years of damage to our electricity system undertaken by the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP in many aspects.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, it's the residents, the ratepayers and taxpayers of Ontario that pay the price for the poor decisions of the past. We've asked them to do that for far too long, and it's not right. We're committed to cleaning up the hydro mess, and we've taken some steps forward with this legislation, which I hope everybody will support.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I have a tendency to agree with the government that the past Liberal government made a real mess of energy in this province. They had what they called their Liberal Fair Hydro Plan. It appears to me, from what I can read through the submissions, that this Fair Hydro Plan is continuing under the Conservatives, with some minor regulation changes. I'll remind the members and the new members that regulations really don't mean a lot, and I'll tell you why: because at any given point, the cabinet can order it changed. It's not a law. It's not voted on by the whole Legislature. Whoever is in power can change it tomorrow. So regs are not a big thing for me. I prefer to see it in law, and that would be a lot better.

The Conservatives say, "We're going to help the consumer. We're going to save money." Well, they cancelled the GreenON project. Some of them may have been controversial, but I think the majority of the projects were helping people renovate their homes. A lot of these projects—you're going to put small companies that have started up to renovate homes and to do work for consumers. Who better to save money at the base level for communities than the people in their homes? This cuts down on the consumption of hydro, which does not cut

into the grid. So I wouldn't be cancelling that. I think that's a mistake.

I'd like to finish off by saying that this all started—I was there, back in the 1990s, as a city councillor when Mr. Harris and the Conservatives deregulated hydro in this province, and that's where all this mess started. They privatized then; you're going to privatize again. Don't kid anybody, it's going to happen again. I was there when you guys absolutely killed us when it went private back in the 1990s. This is like an instant replay for me: the TSN moment is back.

Let's see where you go with this. I'm certainly watching very closely, and I'm extremely worried about where this is going to end up, because I've got a feeling that someone's going to be in my pocket again for money.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: I'd like to thank the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health for her wonderful speech. She really highlighted a lot of the good things that are in this bill. What we saw in the response, just a moment ago, really highlights the difficulty that the members of the previous Liberal-NDP coalition government had. They're having a difficult time, and you hear it in the discourse, because they have actually no suggestions at all. They're suggesting that saving taxpayers \$4 billion is a mistake, that we shouldn't do it. They're suggesting that listening to the FOA and the Auditor General—we shouldn't do that, colleagues, because you know why? It saves taxpayers \$4 billion. Well, that's what we are doing. We're systematically unraveling everything they've done.

Now, the reason they have so much trouble—colleagues, you will know I served in the federal government. I know they bristle at the talk of the Liberal-NDP coalition government. But lo and behold, who was the Minister of Energy under the Liberal-NDP coalition government? He was a gentleman I served with in Ottawa. His name was Glenn Thibeault, an NDP member of Parliament.

When we talk about the coalition that created 15 years of havoc that we are now systematically unraveling, it is because it was them, the Liberal and NDP government, that gave us the mess that we're having now. You will hear not one member of the opposition get up with any suggestions. They're going to suggest we spend billions of dollars buying shares—stupid. They're going to suggest that we continue to pay for programs that have no tangible benefit—stupid. We've been down that road. It has cost taxpayers billions and billions of dollars. We're making the right moves to make the system accountable, open and transparent and, by gosh, save taxpayers money. That's why it bothers them so much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm happy to stand and continue debate on this bill, a bill that continues, as my friend from Toronto–Danforth said yesterday, the Liberal tradition of having the title of the bill be the exact opposite of what the bill actually does. They've just taken over where the Liberals left off, although they did stick a new label on it.

I guess the Premier is good at putting labels on things, I've heard.

It gives them a mechanism for a permanent subsidy of hydro bills through the tax base. Right now, that runs at about \$2.5 billion a year—\$2.5 billion a year that the people of Ontario are going to borrow to reduce 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 changes so that we wouldn't have to be borrowing all this money. We all know it's critical to keep hydro bills affordable but we also know it's irresponsible to be borrowing billions of dollars a year to keep those bills low.

They say they're fiscally conservative, but they voted against the Fair Hydro Plan when the Liberals brought it forward and were denouncing the borrowing of money to subsidize hydro rates. Since this legislation says nothing about when this borrowing will end and since we've heard nothing from the minister, it sounds like we're just going to continue to borrow year after year. The Conservative—

Interjection: Spend, spend spend.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Spend, spend, spend.

The Conservative solution to the hydro problem is to simply reiterate and relabel Liberal policies. If I were the Liberals, I'd be angry that my policies were being stolen. It's Liberal, Tory, same old story.

The member from Markham–Stouffville talked about giving away money. I think he was at the table with Stephen Harper when they gave billions of dollars to General Motors with no strings attached. And what happened in Windsor recently? Talk about giving away money. Shame on you.

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

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. We're going to try it again. Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to touch on one of the things that stuck out to me when the member from Eglinton–Lawrence was talking. She mentioned intelligent conservation, which provides a bigger benefit than cost. And now I'm going to go back to something that was thrown at me by somebody from the opposition yesterday in one of my comments. I actually worked for Ontario Hydro customer energy services demand management during the Bob Rae era, and one of the conservation things that they tried to do that I thought was a complete waste of money was shower head replacements. We replaced shower heads for anyone who wanted them because that was a good thing to save electricity. The thought process behind it was, it was going to reduce the amount of hot water that was used. But we didn't care whether they were using electric hot water or natural gas hot water or propane hot water. We just gave everybody new shower heads who wanted them. That really wasn't an intelligent thing. When I was talking about how the NDP really started the mess, that's what I was talking about—my lived experiences working in customer energy services demand management.

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With this bill, though, we're doing some really great things. Some \$442 million is going to be saved by people in Ontario from what we're doing. That is real money back in their pockets. We're addressing \$4 billion in costs that were hidden from the people of Ontario by putting in that line-by-line accounting on the bill so that everyone will know exactly where that money is being spent. Nothing is being hidden.

I'd like to make one last comment. The member from the NDP said that the Conservatives sold Ontario Hydro; 2015 is when the IPO came—

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to thank the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Markham–Stouffville—the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy—Niagara Centre and Peterborough–Kawartha for their comments. Needless to say, I found more useful the comments from my colleagues over here on this side of the House—the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm shocked.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I know.

Also, my colleague from Peterborough–Kawartha—as he pointed out, for example, we do have a plan; the NDP said we don't. We have a plan. We ran on a plan as to how we were going to go about reducing energy—and this is part of that plan. That \$442 million, which, as he pointed out, will be real savings in the pockets of taxpayers—that money was part of our plan to put back that money into the pockets of taxpayers.

I think it's important to note that we have been taking steps on our plan—step by step, saving more money. We don't want to make electricity completely unaffordable for people. We are trying to manage the mess left by the former Liberal government, and we are trying to make common-sense fixes to get us to a solution.

Frankly, 15 years of recklessly putting more expenses on the bills of average Ontarians is not going to be fixed in a few months. It's going to take time for us to unwind some of this mess.

What I like about this legislation is, it is the next step. As my friend from Peterborough–Kawartha also pointed out, it meets that promise of being more transparent with ratepayers about what is on their bill. That is a really good step in the right direction.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. It's always—
Interjections.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, thank you. Look at that.

It's always good to take my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Listen, hopefully by the end of what I have to offer to the debate—there are three points that I'm going to be raising, and they are ideas in regard to what we had done and what we had gone to the doors with

and what resonated with Ontarians in regard to reducing hydro bills. I would hope that that message is heard, as well, and that the government takes it into consideration. Our platform is still out there. You can use it at any point in time and have that discussion.

We're faced once again with a bill that tries to tackle the recurring problems that we have here in Ontario with our hydro system. Those problems run deep and there's no quick fix; that's for sure. That's one of the things we have to get into our minds. We have to stop looking at the four-year cycle, and we have to look at the long-term vision. The long-term vision is what's really challenging for us.

When I look at our pages we have here, who I have a lot of fun with every single day while they're here, a lot of the things that we're doing here today—maybe some of you are going to be in these seats, either saying, “That was a good idea” or “That was a bad idea.” You're going to be debating as we are because you're going to be the leaders of the future. So it's really nice to see you here participating each and every day, with your undivided attention to every single word that we have to say, right? And I love it when you guys trip me in the hallways.

Speaker, we're not going to fix this problem overnight. But let's face facts: This problem happened under the Mike Harris government when he brought in the deregulation of our hydro system as a whole. That, as a whole, opened up the door for the deregulation and the ongoing privatization that we saw after the McGuinty and Wynne Liberals decided to allow it. That's what broke the seal. That's what set things off. That's what took the door off the hinges, and that's really why we're in the mess that we're in today.

Here we are now: Hydro is a total mess. People have to endure higher fees because Hydro One has to create that big, fat profit. What's attractive about privatization is that there is a profit to be made. Lo and behold, in today's society, in economics, if there is a profit to be made, then, yes, there is an interest for individuals to get their hands into it in order to get that profit. And when you're getting into that profit, those are dollars that we're taking off homeowners and away from their hydro bills in order to get them the savings that they're looking for.

The last two decades have been beneficial only to the friends of the Conservatives and Liberals in high places. None of those changes have really benefited Ontarians. We've seen band-aid solutions over and over again, but over the course of the years, we keep seeing our bills going higher and higher. It has left people having to choose between putting food on the table or paying their hydro bills. And you know what, Speaker? That's not okay. We've really gone from bad with the Liberals to worse with the Conservatives.

We went through an election. New Democrats offered a strong, comprehensive plan to fix our hydro system, which I'll touch on a little bit later. The Conservatives offered no plan. I'm still, actually, looking for that plan that they claim to have put out there.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Where is it?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Where is it? I can't find it. I would like someone to provide me with a copy of what that plan looked like because I still have not seen it.

But they are the government and they still have to listen to all Ontarians and everybody who pays a hydro bill across this province.

Even though I see a bill nicely titled Fixing the Hydro Mess, I am not sure I understand how this Conservative government is going to fix the hydro system. What I'm seeing here is a broad piece of legislation that will do very little to directly address the concerns of so many families across our province, and most particularly in northern Ontario.

There is lot to do with the way the Ontario Energy Board and the hydro trust will be opened, will be operating, but not much on how it's going to save money for the people that have to pay the bills.

The bill mainly does three things: It cuts conservation programs and centralizes them under the IESO; it reforms the Ontario Energy Board; and it replaces the Liberal refinancing scheme with a Conservative refinancing scheme. Kind of groundbreaking, isn't it? You take the Band-Aid off, you polish it up, but you put the same Band-Aid back on? You're still going to infect the wound, aren't you?

Frankly, not everything in this bill seems bad, but I don't see how this is going to address the root cause of our problems. You can change the governance and the refinancing scheme all you want. It doesn't change the fact that the hydro rates are going to be kept artificially low and the investors are going to make tons of profits from the public money that should be directed to essential public services.

Because the messaging of the people who benefited from the existing system has reached the ears of the minister, we see a broad plan that is really not fixing what people have been asking for.

First off, this bill is going to cut conservation programs that are currently worth \$1.128 billion down to \$442 million. That's almost two thirds less for conservation programs—one that affected particular communities in my riding, in Wawa, where there were a lot of green initiatives that were going on there; also the First Nation on Manitoulin Island, Wiikwemkoong First Nation. There are other contractors such as those in Elliot Lake. Roly Dubois is one of those individuals that lost a lot of opportunities—and jobs. We hear this government talk about creating jobs—but this is a quick opportunity to generate economics and also grow jobs within the industry.

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It sounds a little strange to me, because if you want people to save money on their hydro bill, you invest in things that will help them cut down their electricity consumption. That's just a logical explanation, or an idea that you should be holding in the back of your mind. If you have more people conserving more energy, won't you have more power to sell or export or give preferential rebates from big industries that are thinking of moving to Ontario and creating more jobs?

I'm pretty sure you're following where I'm going with this, right, Speaker? If you have more people consuming

more electricity because there are less conservation programs, you'll have a higher demand and you'll eventually have to build more power plants, and you'll have to import more electricity and have higher rates. I'm just thinking this doesn't add up—but again, I believe you know where I'm going.

This bill also replaces the Liberal financial scheme with a Conservative financial scheme. That's quite amazing—when you think that the intent of the Liberals was to subsidize electricity, to keep the rates artificially low. Again, under this Conservative government, they're thinking that still continues to be a good idea, instead of getting to the root cause of the problem.

Also in this bill is a reform to the Ontario Energy Board, which is kind of an interesting idea, but unless it can block any further dumb ideas from the government, like the privatization to continue, what's the point of continuing on this avenue? So far it seems like a rebranding exercise, like changing its name to the Ontario Energy Regulator.

Honestly, this government has already undermined public confidence with the partisan appointment of Jenni Byrne, who had no relevant experience to be named to the OEB besides having helped the Premier getting elected. Also, within the context of this bill, on the board you have eight members, but it opens it up for 20 members, so I guess other individuals are going to be getting some help or some pretty nice appointments for having helped this government in some capacity or another.

This way the Conservative government has been acting shows a clear partner to little change, but big rebranding. They keep criticizing every single bill the Liberals ever introduced—as a lot of my colleagues have done in the past as well from this side; I remember we were doing a lot of complaining together—but they seem more interested in naming their friends to high-paying jobs than actually improving things. This bill is another proof of it.

Meanwhile, communities in northern Ontario are still waiting for relief, and this bill does almost nothing to fix the long- and short-term risks of having privatized Hydro One.

I remember having brought up these issues in the past, and I think it's worthwhile bringing them up again, because nothing within the context of this bill that is happening right now is actually going to address those issues.

Dinelle's grocery store was in Echo Bay, and they ended up closing. Over the course of this family-run operation, which had run for generations, passed on from grandfather to father on to their son, roughly about five years ago—back then; this was about two years ago, so seven years ago—they had been operating their grocery store at roughly about \$1,700 a month as their hydro cost. At the point where they had to lay off all of their employees after 37 years in operation, their hydro bills had ballooned to \$5,000, and they just couldn't operate anymore. They had to lay off most of their workforce, and to this day I think there's still just a handful of individuals who are working there. They can't hire the level of individuals—they've had to reduce the footprint of the store. They had just invested into getting all brand-new lighting

and fridges that were put in in order to save consumption and energy, but they just couldn't continue to operate.

Here's another good one that I have talked about in the past: the community of Chapleau, who have a beautiful community centre. Here's the kicker. Their actual use of electricity, their actual electricity cost for a month was \$3,076.68. Added to that is the transfer discount, the delivery charges, the regulatory charges, the debt retirement, the global adjustment and the HST. Guess how much their hydro bill was. The usage—and I want to be clear on these numbers—was \$3,076.68. Do you know what their bill was at the end of the month? It was \$26,156. How the heck can a community continue to provide those services or that type of infrastructure when you're getting those types of bills? If we're not going to address the root cause of what our hydro problem is, then we're putting a Band-Aid on the solution that this government is putting forward.

Brad Lundquist from White River, an electrician—actually, I remember working with him up in White River when I was up in those areas. He said, “Mike, the meter has been turned off on my home. I'm not there. It's done.” And he gets an electricity bill—wait. So mid-peak, there were zero kilowatts. Off-peak, there were zero kilowatts. Total consumption: zero kilowatts. But his charge? It was \$118.34, for zero consumption. Again, we're not fixing the root cause of what the problems are.

There's another one that I wanted to highlight. It's the Taylor Sawmill on Manitoulin Island, which is situated on M'Chigeeng First Nation. Again, they were looking at cutting their costs. They did everything they could possibly do. At one time, at their high peak, they had roughly 25 employees. Again, I reported to the House a couple of years ago as we were debating this that they were down to 12.

We did everything to look at trying to find some energy. I remember having worked with the then minister and saying, “Come on. There's got to be something we can do.” The only advice that was given to them was, “Well, we'll send out one of our technical guys. Maybe he can come up with a suggestion.” The suggestion was—guess what. “Since you can't pay your hydro bill or you're having difficulty paying your hydro bills, you should look at investing \$160,000 to \$180,000 into your business in order to get some capacitors. Maybe six to eight months from now, you'll be able to qualify for a particular program. But at this point in time, there's nothing we can do for you.” Again, we're not fixing the root causes of what is creating the generation.

Some of the things that we can be doing or we should be looking at doing—we should be looking at time of use. Why can't we eliminate that time of use? The delivery charges—and I'm looking across to my friend who was looking for suggestions, because those are very easy fixes that we could apply. Eliminating time of use would save substantial money for individuals across this province.

The delivery charges: I heard somebody earlier using the example of, why is it that we can buy a quart of milk in downtown Toronto for the same price that we buy it at in northern Ontario? We're all in one Ontario, right? We

all give; we all participate in the same economies that we have here. I know the minister understands the point that I'm going to be raising, which is that there are many communities in his area that are paying higher delivery charges because of the distance they are away from the grid, from where the power is being produced, because of the transmission lines that get there. But we are all participating in the same economy. Why can't we equalize those for everyone across the province? That would substantially change the cost of hydro and the consumption that people are taking into their homes.

Here's something—and I know this government is going to find it radical, because I've been accused of being a radical by this government. Why not buy back one of our biggest assets that we had, that generated revenues for all of our services, for our schools, for our programs that we need to deliver? We're arguing, we are fighting back and forth, tooth and nail, over a lot of questions: Where do we find the dollars that we need for our families, our education system, for our kids who are affected by autism and need services? Well, there's one of the tools that we could have. Yes, have that long-term vision, not that four-year vision of, “What can I do today, over the course of the next year or two, so that it looks like a nice shiny object and in four years from now I'll be able to knock on the doors and say, ‘This is what I've done?’”

Let's really challenge ourselves and look at having that long-term vision of fixing the mess that we have with our hydro system. You know, those are the challenging questions that we need to put to ourselves each and every day in this House—having that foresight, having the vision of really fixing the mess that is here with the hydro system. Wouldn't it be a fantastic idea to return that once-gem that we had as an asset and get the revenues that come in from it? Put those revenues towards our schools. Put those revenues towards our health care system. Put those revenues towards the infrastructure, our roads, instead of letting it go to the private sector where profit is being absorbed, and those dollars are not coming back into the pockets.

1630

Again, I'm looking down at our pages, and I'm hoping that by the time you get into these seats we will have wised up to what we need to do in order to change our path, as far as what we're doing in this province in regard to getting rid of our assets. Unfortunately, with this government, I see more privatization that is happening, which means less of those dollars are going to go into your classrooms, less of those dollars are going to go into the recreation facilities that you use, less of those dollars are going to be going into the infrastructure that you need to either drive on or walk into. Less and less is going to go to it, and more and more of those dollars are going to go to profit.

I'm hoping, in the time that I'm here, that I can substantially make a difference and change the path of this government. One of these days, the roles will be reversed, where I will be on the other side of the House. I will have to be listening to the opposition and not just making a decision based on what I think is exactly best but opening

up my mind in regard to what we need to do in order to really advance the benefits that we need in this province.

The other thing that I want to touch on is that, guess what? In northern Ontario, we have a lot of other—here's another suggestion: Let's look at what our neighbouring jurisdictions are doing in their areas and what it is that they're doing differently than us. How are they benefiting?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Public power.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, public power, but they are also taking advantage of what they have as their resources, which are hydroelectric dams. Across northern Ontario, we could look at making investments into the existing infrastructure, the existing dams, and there's a lot of—I love talking to the pages. I want to talk to you guys, because you're the ones who are going to be making these changes.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, I know.

We have new technology that is coming out that is available, which operates a lot of these dams. They're improved turbines. As this turbine technology improves, we can actually capture more energy. Did you know that in northern Ontario, we still have dams that are just letting the water flow over top of them? We're not capturing and we're not taking that energy—much, much cheaper—and that could be passed on to the consumers.

Just last week, we had the Ontario Waterpower Association here. Paul Norris was here, talking about a lot of projects that are available to this government if they want to take in those ideas.

Again, that's at least five ideas that I gave to this government, which—I always hear from them, “We don't hear any ideas. We only hear complaints. We only hear stones being thrown across the way.” But these are very simple things that we can do that will make a significant impact on changing hydro rates for consumers in Ontario.

But do you know what's missing? I'll tell you what's missing: the will to say, “I'm going to look at the long-term vision of not what is going to get me re-elected in four years but what it is going to take to get this province as an attractive jurisdiction once again, in order to attract investment, in order to attract businesses and to get better control in regard to the resources so we can pass on the savings to our consumers, to all Ontarians.”

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

Mr. Ross Romano: I am quite enthusiastic to be able to speak at this time. I love my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin, my neighbour. But I've got a real difficulty with the opening part of his statement. He referred to the NDP's plan to reduce hydro, and I was immediately taken back. I was thinking, “Wow, the NDP plan. I remember the NDP plan during the election. They talked about it and touted it so much.”

You'll remember, Mr. Speaker, that the Fair Hydro Plan was to reduce bills by 25%. The way they came up with the 25% was, it was 16% on the backs of taxpayers and Ontarians—that, nobody knew. It was hidden from ratepayers, to the tune of \$4 billion of extra fees. We won't

talk about that. Then there was 1%—they found some other reductions, and then there was 8%, which was waiving the provincial portion of the sales tax.

So what's really funny, again, is when my friend speaks about the NDP's plan, because you'll remember—and you can actually find this at www.ontariondp.ca/hydro—where they were going to just take the Fair Hydro Plan 25% and then negotiate with their good friend and coalition member Justin Trudeau to also waive the other 5% of the GST portion of the tax. It was literally the Fair Hydro Plan 25% and then, “We're going to ask our friend Justin, our good buddy, to waive the other 5% to come up with 30%.” That's how the NDP plan—again, I refer to that website. Feel free to take a look at it for yourself. The website really shows that plan. It was the Fair Hydro Plan-plus. Well, maybe I should say, actually, it's the Fair Hydro Plan-minus.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from St. Catharines—no, Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Right. Thank you, Speaker. Much appreciated. Thank you, my friend.

We had the complaint that the NDP wasn't providing solutions, and my friend stood up and, my gosh, he had a whole bunch of solutions, and they were really good ones.

One of the things that was cut was the business refrigeration incentive. That wasn't for middle-class homeowners, but it was to help small businesses cut their refrigeration demand. That's not in this bill. They cut back on high-performance new construction, and that makes no sense in terms of actually reducing power needs and greenhouse gas emissions and reducing demand for peak power.

This government cut out the heating and cooling incentive—again, cutting out the cooling incentive support for homeowners to get the most energy-efficient air conditioner. That reduces our ability to avoid peak demand. It increases our reliance on the most expensive power in the system. So Speaker, they want to make sure that the world is safe for investors, but not for ordinary working people who are trying to deal with their heating and cooling bills.

There are lots of suggestions out there that have been left out of this bill. All this bill really is is a recycled Liberal plan that has been relabelled. It's kind of lazy, when you think about it, with all of these things that could have been done to help average working people. Instead, they've just relabelled a bill and thrown it back out. What good is that?

I think the solution is clear: It's not to give away jobs and tax breaks to their wealthy friends. It's to put solutions in the bill that actually help working people pay their bills. But this government has proven time and time again that they're not for working people. They're for their friends in the corporate sector.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise and add a few comments. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin, from the NDP, was speaking in this debate, and we also

just heard from the member for Niagara Centre with his comments.

Basically, they don't really have a plan other than that we should borrow more money and subsidize people's energy bills and subsidize people's conservation. I would suggest that the members in this House really understand, as people do at home, where real conservation comes from. Real conservation comes from lowering your heat in the winter and keeping your house a little warmer in the summer—a little colder in the winter, adjusting your clothing. It wasn't that long ago—I think most of us when we were kids didn't even have air conditioning. We all have to, a little bit, do our part also to lower our rates.

We want to fix the hydro mess. We're all in agreement here. In the old days, we used to have three parties, Mr. Speaker—I'm sure you'll remember—and we rotated around. There would always be one party that was in disagreement with the other two, often, and we would bounce off each other. It kind of made the debate a little more lively some days, instead of just the two of us going back and forth—not that I miss having the third party here joining our debates. But it did sort of add something to the fun here.

I would say that we're all in agreement that the hydro system is a mess. It's not just a mess for the consumers. It's a mess for business. It's a mess for innovation. It's a mess for the future prosperity of our province. It's not enough to just talk about trying to buy back something or trying to subsidize something. It's about really trying to figure out how to find those efficiencies and making it all much more transparent so that people can look at their bills and really understand what they're paying for and how to conserve. We're here to set an example, so I would suggest that maybe we can do more and use less paper and adjust the temperature and our clothing accordingly, as well, Mr. Speaker. Wouldn't that be fun?

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to agree with the government on one thing, and that is, the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan was a bad plan. They said, "Whoops, we messed up the hydro system. Everybody is paying more than they used to before," almost 200%. They said, "Let's grab a credit card, off-book the cost and let's charge off 25%," of your hydro bill and mine so that we can get a reduction on our hydro bill by the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan, moving the cost off book and putting it on a credit card. That's what they did.

The Tories, who come before us with this plan, have now called it the fair Conservative hydro plan, because essentially all they're doing is they're taking it from off-book and bringing it back on the books. That's a good thing. They should never have done it off book. Government should never try to hide what it is that it's doing when it comes to expenditure. The government is right to move it back to the books. It should come from the Consolidated Revenue Fund and it should be reported as such.

But let's not kid ourselves. You're doing exactly what the Liberals did. This doesn't fix the problem with hydro.

It doesn't fix the issues around time-of-use pricing. It doesn't fix the problem with differences in prices between rural and urban parts in Ontario. You're not fixing any of the issues that have to be dealt with. Essentially what we've got here is like a used car salesman. He has the old Plymouth—you know, the old red Liberal Plymouth—and he says, "Oh, you know what? We're going to have to sell this car because it's not doing so well anymore. Tell you what. We'll take the red Plymouth and we'll make it a blue Plymouth and we'll sell it off as something new." We're still buying the same old Plymouth.

I'm just saying to you guys, you're not doing anything here that's earth-shattering. All you're doing is you're off-booking what was a government expenditure that they tried to hide off the books when they were the Liberals and now you're bringing it on the books and you've adopted the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? No, it's back to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for final comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the members from Sault Ste. Marie, Niagara Centre, Thornhill and Timmins.

Let's agree on two things. What the Liberals did was really one heck of a mess. Let's agree on a second thing: It's not going to be easy to fix it, but it's got to be fixed. There's got to be a long-term vision in order to repair this. I look at the pages and I say that they really didn't listen to what I had to offer, because the respondents didn't talk about the ideas that I had. They didn't talk about eliminating the time of use. They didn't talk about that because that would be a good thing.

You didn't hear them talk about the delivery charges, equalizing—we're all in Ontario. Whether you're in Kenora, Rainy River, Dryden, Ottawa, Toronto, Windsor, Timmins, Gogama, Elliot Lake, Manitoulin Island, we're all in Ontario. We're all working; we're all participating in the same economy that we're trying to move forward. Why aren't we paying the same delivery charges? They didn't talk about that because that's a good idea. That would make it a lot fairer.

They didn't talk about the hydroelectric dams that we have available in northern Ontario. We're purposely letting water spill over our dams instead of making the investments that we need in order to capture that power, which our neighbouring provinces, Manitoba and Quebec, are doing because it's public and it's much cheaper. They didn't talk about that because that's a good idea.

So what am I going to do? You're not listening. I'm going to continue raising those ideas each and every day, trying to offer constructive discussions in order to move it. That's the frustrating part, when those ideas—and you keep hearing from this government that we're not offering a plan. Where we do have a plan, which is a long-term vision goal of returning the hydro system back into public hands—that would save a lot of money for Ontarians.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm pleased to rise and speak on Bill 87 today, the so-called Fixing the Hydro Mess Act. This bill puts a new coat of paint on the Liberal's Fair Hydro Plan. I actually call it the unfair hydro plan because it leaves us paying for billions of dollars of debt to subsidize electricity bills. I can assure you in this House that tweaking the Liberals' hydro plan will not fix the hydro mess. This bill continues to borrow over \$3 billion a year to subsidize electricity prices by 25%. It does nothing to actually fix the structural problems facing our electricity system.

The Conservatives, when in opposition, railed against the Liberals' unfair hydro plan, and rightfully so. According to the Financial Accountability Officer, the plan will cost Ontario around \$45 billion over the next two decades and could cost between \$69 billion and \$93 billion when you factor in borrowing costs. I joined the current finance minister when he was in opposition railing against this plan, so I'm hoping that when we see his budget on April 11, he'll put an end to it, but it doesn't appear so by looking at Bill 87. Putting a new coat of paint on that plan will not fix the hydro plan.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A new Plymouth.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, a new Plymouth; you're right. The member is right.

By doubling down on the Liberals' hydro subsidy, this bill supports a plan that is responsible for ballooning Ontario's deficit and will ultimately drive money away from health care, education and other public services.

To make matters worse, Speaker, across-the-board subsidies on hydro bills disproportionately benefit the wealthy in our society because they use the most electricity, according to reports from the Financial Accountability Officer. Hydro subsidies should be targeted to low-income consumers and to rural and remote consumers who need the help the most.

This bill also eliminates conservation programs designed to help people and businesses save money by saving energy. You would think that Conservatives would support programs that actually conserve, especially when conservation programs are the lowest-cost solution to our energy challenges, but I guess not these Conservatives.

According to the IESO, conservation costs about 1.7 cents per kilowatt hour. By comparison, our largest source of electricity generation in the province—nuclear power—costs about 8.8 cents a kilowatt hour, and that's expected to double over the next decade to finance the cost of rebuilding Darlington.

Scaling back conservation programs not only hits you in the pocketbook; it also threatens job losses from small and medium-sized businesses and communities all across Ontario—small businesses in the building and trades sector, in HVAC and insulation, in cooling and heating companies. As a matter of fact, according to Efficiency Canada, energy efficiency projects across the province generate around 14,000 jobs every year.

If this government was serious about fixing the hydro mess, they would hit the pause button on all the Liberals'

hydro projects, including the multi-billion dollar Darlington rebuild, until an independent, non-partisan public review of the costs of all sources of new power generation is conducted.

I've read reports that Ontario can purchase Quebec water power for five cents a kilowatt hour, Ontario wind power for 8.6 cents a kilowatt hour, solar for 15 cents a kilowatt hour, and rebuilt nuclear will cost 16.5 cents a kilowatt hour—not to mention, as the member previously mentioned, that we could generate more power from Ontario's original source of low-cost renewable power, Ontario water power.

When most people renovate their homes, they get a lot of cost estimates and then they make the best decision on value for dollar. The previous Liberal government refused to do that. I'm asking this government to conduct an independent, public review of all costs of power generation so we can make the most informed decisions about how to fix the hydro mess.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also deeply concerned that if we don't do that, the people of Ontario could be left holding the bag for multiple billions of dollars in stranded assets by doubling down on centralized, inflexible generation at a time when most of the world is looking to move to decentralized, low-cost, affordable sources of power.

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So if this bill doubles down on the Liberals' hydro shell game, then it will ultimately lead to skyrocketing power prices in the next decade.

I call on the government to reconsider Bill 87.

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

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'm very happy to speak to this piece of legislation because I think it's very important to note that this was another one of our key priorities during the election time—fixing the hydro mess. That's exactly what we're going to do with this piece of legislation, because for 15 years, the members opposite, propped up by the opposition party, increased hydro policies driven on failed ideology—that killed businesses across this province, increased hydro costs that drove businesses out of this province. So I'm very happy to be speaking to this.

This started right after the election, when the Minister of Energy cancelled over \$700 million of projects to put more money into the pockets of Ontarians, when we reformed the Hydro One board to ensure that there wasn't a \$10-million man there, to put more money into the pockets of hard-working people. And that's exactly what we need to do. We need to have a system that's in place that's going to bring relief to families. Families shouldn't have to choose between heating and eating—and that's exactly what this hydro reform is going to do.

As a result of these changes, we're going to see the true cost of electricity reflected on these bills, and we'll keep working for Ontarians so that when we go back to the doors and when we go back to the people of Ontario to seek re-election, they can be assured that we worked on this piece of legislation, we worked on the file, and we

committed to fixing hydro. That's exactly what this piece of legislation will do.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's a real pleasure to speak here regarding this bill and to respond to the member from Guelph.

I wanted to follow up on a point he mentioned quite briefly about the board appointments under this legislation. Because when we talk about costs, one of the things we should talk about is the veritable gravy train that this government is setting up in plum appointments for what are mostly failed Conservative candidates or former Conservative staff, in some cases. It looks like there are going to be, at the end of the day, quite a few more positions that could be filled by those Conservative folks appointed to these bodies.

Now, I sit on the government agencies committee, and let me tell you, again, a veritable bevy of plum appointments are being filled by former Conservative candidates. It's a wave; it's a tsunami of Conservative appointments coming through, many of them, again, failed Conservative candidates, or staff maybe who are looking for something new to do. In fact, 95% of the appointments have been Conservative Party members, donors, etc., and we've never really seen them. That's why this is so important, because we never see them. Every time there's an opportunity and we request to see these appointees before the committee, it times out and the government agencies committee members from the opposite side, from the government side, will refuse repeatedly to extend the time so that we can actually review these appointments—important appointments like, say, the one for Jenni Byrne, who we've all been hearing a little bit about. I know Jenni. I've sat on some panels with her before. I would have loved to speak to Jenni Byrne about what expertise she brings and what her view is. But no, unfortunately, we can't do that.

The devil of this governance structure will be very much in the details and in terms of whether or not this government will allow the opposition and the public to review these appointees.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? We are going to hear from the member from Don Valley North.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise up and speak on Bill 87, An Act to amend various statutes related to energy. This bill will address energy conservation, modernizing the Ontario Energy Board and how we as a government finance the bad energy policies brought in by the former Liberal government.

Speaker, when I campaigned to become the MPP for Don Valley North last year, one of the biggest concerns from residents was the high cost of electricity. Our government was elected to clean up the hydro mess. One aspect in which we will try to address this factor is the various electricity rebate programs that ended up costing the taxpayers. Our government will be eliminating those programs which don't make sense. We will focus on programs that actually work. Those programs now will be the

responsibility of the Independent Electricity System Operator. By centralizing the programs, this allows our local distribution companies to work together, but not against each other, as we have seen before. This change will result in savings of \$440 million.

Speaker, we know fixing the hydro mess will take time, but passing Bill 87 will start the process to make things right with Ontario hydro costs.

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

M. Guy Bourgoin: Il me fait plaisir de me lever pour parler du projet de loi sur le gâchis dans le secteur de l'électricité. Ça va sans dire que le confrère de Guelph a parlé de la province du Québec. Je peux vous dire que dans ma famille j'ai beaucoup de personnes qui demeurent au Québec, puis quand ils ont entendu « le déjeuner de chien », si je peux utiliser le terme, de ce qui se passe avec l'hydro en Ontario, ils disent : « Qu'est-ce que vous faites là à vendre vos perles de la province? Pourquoi c'est privatisé? » Au Québec, je peux vous dire que ça n'arriverait jamais. Il n'y a aucun gouvernement qui toucherait à ça. Mais, nous, on est plus intelligents que n'importe quelle autre juridiction : on vend au privé une perle qu'on a qui pourrait générer de l'argent pour la province. C'est quasiment impensable.

On en parlait, justement—mon confrère en a parlé avec les jeunes. D'où est-ce qu'on pense vendre des affaires de même quand ça génère de l'argent pour la province—des millions pour la province—qu'on pourrait utiliser dans la santé, dans l'éducation? Le gouvernement se fait critiquer sur l'éducation, sur l'autisme. On se fait critiquer sur ça, puis on a des millions qu'on pourrait générer des ressources qu'on a, puis on vend ça au privé. Eh! on est intelligents, nous autres. On n'a rien qu'à regarder de l'autre bord de la juridiction. Il me semble que, Hydro-Québec, ils l'ont figuré, la province, parce que ça génère de l'argent, puis la province réduit les coûts d'électricité pour que tout le monde en bénéficie. Il me semble que ce n'est pas dur à comprendre, ça. Mais, non, on vend la perle rare. On a tendance à regarder ça tellement vite pour vendre ça. Pourquoi? Parce qu'il y a de l'argent à faire au privé. On pense plus à nos amis qu'aux personnes qui payent les taxes.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I certainly appreciate the honourable colleagues who participated in the debate today. My friend from Mushkegowuk—James Bay just reminded me of what a disastrous policy it was to privatize Hydro One in Ontario, as well. I just want to come back to reminding the members in this House and the public that just because a piece of paper says you're fixing the hydro mess, it doesn't actually mean you're fixing the hydro mess, because I can guarantee that putting lipstick on a pig doesn't make it any more beautiful. That's exactly what this is doing. It essentially has doubled down on the Liberals' unfair hydro plan.

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I want to remind the members opposite that the current Minister of Finance, in particular, when he was in opposition, criticized this plan over and over and over again. I share his criticism of this plan, because it was completely fiscally irresponsible to spend \$40 billion over the next two decades to subsidize electricity prices for what, in many respects, was a failed, politically motivated way to shift the voters' attention from the mess that was created.

If we are going to fix this mess, I think we have to fix it with sensible economic policy. That starts by having Ontario's first independent, non-partisan public review of the costs of all sources of power generation so we can make an intelligent and informed decision about the best sources of power, moving forward, that keep our grid affordable and clean for all Ontarians. I hope that is something that everybody in this House can agree needs to happen.

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Before we continue with debate, I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

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

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

FIXING THE HYDRO MESS ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 POUR RÉPARER LE GÂCHIS
DANS LE SECTEUR DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now we return to further debate.

Mr. Doug Downey: I am so excited to be part of this fixing of the hydro mess. Just because the opposition says that we're not fixing the hydro mess doesn't mean we're not fixing the hydro mess. We, in fact, are fixing the hydro mess.

I want to put into context a little bit—I want to put it into context what we're talking about. When we tell the public, Mr. Speaker, that we're saving \$4 billion—I just want to put it in context—in terms of seconds, that is 128 years. That is a lot; \$4 billion is a lot. And we're saving the \$4 billion.

We're going to talk about the \$40 billion to \$90 billion plus that the Liberals were throwing out the window. I can't even deal with that yet.

I want to set the stage a little bit. I will use some acronyms—I heard a great podcast the other day, Mr. Speaker—and it's called the PUMA principle; it says please use more acronyms. This is a great file to practise that. We're going to talk about the OEB, the IESO, OPG and all that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take us back to February 2016. This really sets the stage for what the Liberals did and why they did it. It's cringe-worthy, absolutely, Mr. Speaker; it's cringe-worthy. February 26, 2016: The Liberals did some polling. Mr. Herle did some polling, and this is what he found: 80% of Ontarians agreed that the cost of electricity was unreasonably high; 69% of Ontarians believed that the cost of electricity hurt the Ontario economy and jobs—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Because it did.

Mr. Doug Downey: Because it did—61% of Ontarians agreed the cost of electricity was a real financial hardship, because it was.

Mr. Speaker, this was their pollster. This was not a push poll. This wasn't something that somebody in opposition came up with. This was the baseline that the Liberals started with. It kind of scared them, I think. They started to do things that a responsible government otherwise wouldn't do. Their own advisers told them, "Don't do it." They did it anyway. More than one of their advisers said, "Don't do it." They did it anyway.

I'm just going to jump to the fall of that year, when they decided they had to do something. They didn't know what to do, but they had to do something, because that polling was devastating.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Facing an election.

Mr. Doug Downey: They were facing an election. They were coming up. They were moving into election mode, Mr. Speaker. The chief of staff, Andrew Teliszewsky, asked the ministry to look at GA refinancing. That was really the start of it, and the idea was shifting costs from the ratepayers of the day to ratepayers in the future.

So my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin is talking to the pages and saying, "You may actually be up here one day having a debate." And I just want you to remember when you're up here that it was the Liberal government before us that put electricity on your backs, because that's exactly—

Interjection.

Mr. Doug Downey: We agree. We agree that this was exactly what they were doing.

I'm going to quote from the report, Mr. Speaker. It was "a request that left the public servants 'shocked.'" How often are public servants verbalizing that they're shocked? You know something is afoot when that happens—and not one or two public servants, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to name them all, but I will mention a couple: "Mr. Orsini said the public service would not have recommended or supported the GA refinancing plan and Mr. Imbrogno thought it was a 'bad idea.' Treasury Board gave a 'board judgment' of 'do not approve' given the risks."

There are a couple of red flags on this, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Red flags all over the place.

Mr. Doug Downey: Red flags all over the place.

The concerns about the GA refinancing came—again, timelines matter. Whenever I prepare for litigation or for a case and I'm trying to understand something, I usually put the dates of things and when they happened. It gives you a bit of clarity.

On March 1—I'm going to flip to it so I don't get it wrong in Hansard and have to correct it. We want to be accurate.

Mr. Speaker, it's unbelievable. On March 1, this cabinet submission went to Treasury Board. The cabinet submission, on March 1, 2017, went to Treasury Board first. I presume in the morning; I'm not sure. The same report went to cabinet in the afternoon, or at least after Treasury Board. So the same report, same day: March 1, 2017.

This cabinet briefing note said some interesting things. I'll give credit to the Liberal government: They actually sought outside input. They didn't really ask the Auditor General much and they certainly didn't consult with the FAO; they didn't consult with a lot of people. But they consulted with some outside experts, and experts no less than former Supreme Court Judge Ian Binnie. And former Supreme Court Judge Ian Binnie had this to provide, in a legal opinion. He concluded that “the current proposal is at a moderately high risk of being a tax,” which means it's at a moderately high risk of not working for the purposes that they wanted. They wanted to get this thing off-books, and we will talk about that in a second.

This is what it said: “By shifting costs to the 20-30 year customers, the government may in reality be disproportionately back-end loading the GA with the effect that the 20-30 year consumers will be subsidizing the 1-20 year consumers.” Now think about that for a second. People 20 and 30 years down the road—it's not even the pages, Mr. Speaker; it's the pages' kids who are going to be paying this.

Mrs. Robin Martin: That's not fair.

Mr. Doug Downey: It isn't fair. “In short, the bigger the reduction in charges to current consumers, the greater the constitutional risk.” So not only is it bad policy; it's bad law.

This went, on March 1, 2017, to Treasury Board and then it went to cabinet, and they approved it anyway. Just in the face of—and that's not the only advice in here, Mr. Speaker. It talks about their inability in the future to control rates, and it would lower costs in the short term but result in substantial debt and higher electricity prices in the future.

Based on this portion of the proposal, electricity prices would increase by 10% above the actual cost of electricity over the recovery period, peaking at 13%. Again, that's a lot of numbers, but it means that our kids and our kids' kids are going to be paying for the electricity that we're consuming today.

Now, if that was something that we found out in hindsight, that would be bad enough. But there was testimony at the select committee from the former Premier, who said she knew she was doing that. So she did it; she did it on purpose; and presumably she'd do it again. Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely shameful—absolutely shameful. There is no justification for it.

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We are fixing this. We're saving taxpayers money. We're saving consumers money over time—and it's going to take time. It's a little bit like losing weight: You don't put weight on overnight, and you don't take it off overnight. You have to do it in a responsible and fair amount of time. We've started that journey. We've started the journey of shedding the pounds that the Liberals have put on us for 15 years—the weight on the backs of the consumers. It's going to take some time, but we're going to do it responsibly.

I want to go to the member from Guelph's suggestion, because he's not making up these numbers. It actually says that the refinancing plan would have cost Ontarians at least \$45 billion, and as much as \$93 billion, when they enacted this plan—\$93 billion, Mr. Speaker. Now, remember, when I started off, \$4 billion was 128 years of seconds. I can't even do the math on the other. It's unbelievable. They just wanted to pass this cost on. Really, I haven't seen yet any sense of remorse or any sense of regret or any sense of, “Maybe we shouldn't have done it.” What I've seen, Mr. Speaker, is, “We had to do something, and we thought that was the thing.”

Everybody loves a good jigsaw puzzle. You know those things you get where you have to try and get the balls in the holes, or you try to untangle the ropes? That's what they did. They made this mechanism that was so complicated and so hard to manage that, on the advice of their experts—I just talked about Justice Ian Binnie, but they had accounting experts as well who were quite concerned with this. But it wasn't even just their outside experts. They had OPG, they had IESO, and they had others in there—the OEB. They had all of these people, and they said, “How we're going to do this is, we're going to create this construct that, if it works, it will get it off the books.” It didn't accomplish anything else, but it didn't even accomplish that, because when they went to do financing, there was concern that they wouldn't be able to get financing, so they underwrote it. That's like you going to get a mortgage and me signing on. The government didn't avoid any liability at all. The only thing it accomplished was to move it off-book so that it wouldn't hit and dislodge their promise to balance the budget, which, ironically, they didn't balance anyway. So they went through all of this and didn't even accomplish that. It boggles the mind, the resources that went into this.

If you don't believe me, Mr. Speaker, that there was concern at IESO and OPG and others, they went through an unprecedented process to create indemnity agreements for the people involved. The people that were involved within IESO and OPG and others got legal protection if they went forward with this risky scheme, because damn the torpedoes, Mr. Speaker, they were going anyway. I'll tell you, I asked one of the witnesses how odd that was, and they had never seen it before. This was very, very peculiar. We're in uncharted territory, quite frankly, and it's very concerning.

I want to move to the most important part of this. The most important part of this is what I heard when I knocked

on doors, because people smelled a rat. People knew something was up. They didn't know what. I have to be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, until I took the time to dig into this—and fortunately, I had colleagues who understood parts of this—until I really got into it, I didn't fully understand it either. I can tell you, the average person at the door that I went to knew something wasn't right. They weren't comfortable. Even though their rates went down, they knew instinctively that it wasn't working. I talked to so many people at the doors that were so concerned about their hydro.

I've been involved in campaigns for a very long time, since 1993, Mr. Speaker. I've knocked on doors all across this country, from Newfoundland to Nova Scotia to BC, and I'll tell you, I've never seen the reaction that I got when I talked about hydro. It was one of two things: either immediate anger and frustration, or they physically slumped with the weight on their shoulders. They physically just went, "Yeah, it's hydro." Every door I hit—it was every single door. If they didn't go, "Hi, how are you? I would love to have your vote," and that kind of thing, and if you wanted to spark a conversation, just say, "Do you want to talk about hydro?" and you got one of those two reactions, Mr. Speaker. It's a shame.

I can tell you now, when I go out to fall fairs and when I go out and I'm meeting my local businesses and I'm talking to the people at the doors—my colleague from Whitby knocks on doors every second weekend, Mr. Speaker, and he will tell you that when he knocks on those doors, people are happy that we're here and they're happy that we're fixing this. They know it's going to take a bit of time, but they know that we're on the right track and they know that we have experience at the helm in the minister. He has been down this road before.

That's why I'm so excited to be part of this. I can tell you, when I look back at the things that we've done so far, over 200 initiatives in the first nine months—over 200 initiatives, Mr. Speaker, and we're just getting started. This is going to be a big one, because this is one that really bothers people. We will get it straightened out. It will take a little bit of time.

I want to talk about the OEB for a moment because the time delays that it takes to get decisions out of the OEB—and I was told that there is one instance where it took 1,000 business days to prepare materials for the OEB. Think about that for a second. A thousand business days: That's three years. That's a lot. That's a lot of resources, and then you put it into the system—

Mr. Roman Baber: No weekends and holidays.

Mr. Doug Downey: I didn't even do the math on the holidays. But when it takes that long for a submission and then the submission sits—here's what happens in the real world—

Hon. Greg Rickford: Nine thousand pages.

Mr. Doug Downey: Nine thousand pages, Mr. Speaker. Unbelievable.

Here's what happens: When two companies are trying to achieve something, whether it be Ontario Hydro and a small utility or whatever is happening, they set this process

in motion. It doesn't start at the OEB; it starts at a discussion at the community level. It's a public discussion. People are divided on it—sometimes 90-10, sometimes 50-50, sometimes not—but they're engaged in it. Then, three years later, the application goes in.

Here's what happens in the utility, Mr. Speaker, while they're waiting for a decision. The employees know what's going on, so the employees start to get nervous and some of them leave. Some of the really talented employees find another place to go because now they're feeling uncertain. They don't reinvest like they do in capital items, so now we have a three-year—that's just getting the submission that is three years. Until you get the answer back, you could be in a five-year process before you actually get an answer, and the impact on communities in that three- to five-year period for employees and for capital and for reinvestment and for strategic planning and for all those things, even for getting people to sit on your board of directors—the impact is significant in communities.

I have specific examples, but I don't want to taint it with those examples, Mr. Speaker, because we're fixing it for all of Ontario. We have to reset the dial on some of this. I don't hear the opposition getting up and defending the operation of the OEB. That's not a criticism; I just think that there are things that need to be fixed, and I think we all agree on that. We disagree a little bit on the how, but we certainly agree on the what. We need to get electricity prices down. Everybody has to agree on that. It's just the how-we-do-it.

We ran on a campaign and we said that we're going to bring electricity prices down. We identified three things right up front, and we've started on that path. Bill 4 dealt with some of the green energy contracts that were costing Ontarians a ton of money. We didn't need and we don't want those particular contracts.

We're dealing with the conservation piece—that's number 2—and that's in this bill, because a social program shouldn't be on a ratepayer. It shouldn't be in here. So we're taking that out of here and we're putting it over where it should be, and we will make some decisions around that.

I don't know if the previous government put it in there because they didn't know what else to do with it or if they just thought that the public wouldn't notice. Obviously, I can't attribute motive, and I don't have the history on that piece; I don't know. All that I know is that my hydro bills are too high.

1720

I talked about the individuals who knew something was up, but I also talk to businesses, and hydro is a significant concern for businesses. The off-peak hours are obviously attractive to some businesses, but some just can't operate off peak. Some operate 24 hours. In my part of the world, there are several 24-hour businesses: supermarkets; Casino Rama's not too far away; hospitals; police stations. They go on and on, these 24-hour operations that don't have the choice to turn off the lights and turn off the power at night. We need to get costs down across the board.

Businesses are applauding us. They are so happy that we're doing something about their input costs. I won't go into the other input costs, but we're doing things in wages and all sorts of other stuff. But this input cost in particular is a thorn in their craw, and I can't thank the minister enough for bringing this forward.

Bill 87, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act—we're in our top 100 hits already, and this is going to be fantastic. We're going to look back and this is going to be something where we'll say we did it, we did it on purpose and we'd do it again. I can't say I'm any more proud than that, to be part of this government and part of fixing this hydro mess.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say I actually enjoyed that presentation. Some of it I could agree with. The Liberal hydro plan was horrible; we'll both agree on that. One of the things that really led to the demise of the Liberals and that administration, quite frankly, was the privatization of hydro. When they moved on the privatization and accelerated with the Conservatives who started before them, first with Dalton McGuinty privatizing a large part of our generation and signing energy contracts that were far in excess of what they should have been signing, we were paying more to purchase hydro than it was for us to generate it, and we were generating far more than we actually needed, which led to an increase in hydro price. Then the Wynne Liberals come along and they decide, "Oh, well, the way we're going to fix everything is to privatize 51% of Hydro One." Well, that didn't work out so well either.

So the government ended up in this spot—and you're right. The spot was that hydro prices went through the roof. For businesses, for industry and for consumers in residential settings, it was horrible. Our hydro prices went up way beyond what people can afford to pay. Ultimately, the Liberal caucus paid for that and it is part of the reason they are here in the numbers they are today. But what the government did at the time under Kathleen Wynne to fix the problem was to say, "We'll fix it by lowering hydro prices by 25% artificially and borrowing the money off book on a credit card." All that this bill does in a substantive way is to take the money off the credit card and move it onto the provincial books and eventually pay it out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund. In the end, what you've essentially done has not changed the very problem that caused the rates to go up. You have transferred where that money is coming from.

Is that a good thing? Absolutely. Better for it to be transparent and put on Ontario's books than to keep it off book and try to hide it.

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

Interjection.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you so much, Robin.

I'd like to echo what my good friend said, the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte. It's like four MPPs in one. Mr. Speaker, it's like saying four MPPs for the cost of one, by the way.

In today's modernized world, life is directly dependent on hydro, and that's why Bill 87, Fixing the Hydro Mess, is important for us. I said it earlier and I'm saying it again: The previous government neglected their duty to Ontario and left behind a large mess. It is our government that is dedicated to clean up the hydro mess, and that's why we are increasing the transparency in our electricity system and making life more affordable for all Ontarians.

The Financial Accountability Officer estimated the previous government's fair hydro mess would have cost \$4 billion in borrowing costs, and that cost would have been passed on to seniors and businesses. That's why we need an approach to conserve energy, and energy efficiency that focuses on targeted programs. What is the benefit? The benefit is that this would ensure that while we meet our 94% conservation goals, we save \$442 million for our taxpayers. We have to be competitive, and to be competitive, this is what we're doing here. We are reducing costs for industrial and commercial electricity customers through this bill.

Finally, I will say that Bill 87 will allow our government to make the changes Ontario needs and changes the taxpayers of Ontario deserve. This is the right thing to do. I'm thankful to the Minister of Energy, Minister Rickford, for making it a priority, and I'm looking forward to every member supporting us.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte for his comments.

One of the things that we haven't really talked very much about—the member from Guelph touched on it—is conservation. That's strange, because conservation is actually the best way to address the problem that we have in front of us. When you're paying what we're paying for hydro bills now and the cost of batteries and solar power is dropping so sharply, it's clear that in the next 10 to 15 years, we'll be facing a very different world, and we'll need to adapt and be ready for it. I'm not sure this government is making us ready for that with the cancellation of green energy projects, having no real environmental plan and not really paying any attention to conservation in this bill.

With respect to the changing market for electricity, we heard in February—it was reported that in 2017, wind energy in Alberta was contracted out at 3.7 cents a kilowatt hour; at the end of 2018, solar power was 4.8 cents per kilowatt hour. So there's a larger picture here, Speaker, and energy efficiency is the lowest-cost resource for dealing with our electricity needs. Nuclear is 12 cents per kilowatt hour. So it's been set aside.

To give you a sense of some of the costs in Ontario, the system operator, in 2018, said that conservation costs only two cents. So cutting conservation doesn't make a lot of sense. It's actually the lowest cost for addressing this problem, and it's something the government should really be looking at and including in a bill. Any bill that says "fixing the hydro mess" should include efforts to conserve, because it's by far the most efficient way to do that.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to rise before you on a Wednesday to speak to this bill.

First of all, with respect to some of the comments made by my friend from Timmins: He talks about what got us here, but he didn't really tell us what got us to this point—because you have to go prior to the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan. You have to recall what brought it about, and that was the Green Energy Act. It was the Green Energy Act, even according to testimony that we heard at the select committee by some of the former Liberal government members, that caused prices to skyrocket, that eventually had the Liberals look at the price increases and had them enter us into this monstrosity that is the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan.

From what I recall—and I actually had some research on this done—the NDP were very vocal in their support of the Green Energy Act. The NDP voted and subsequently defended the Green Energy Act, which I'm proud to say our government has repealed. In fact, the first step in fixing the hydro mess was the repeal of the Green Energy Act.

Second of all, I want to talk about the money for a minute. By saving \$4 billion of the total, plus \$442 million in regulatory charges and costs or so, we're saving about 10% of the total cost of the plan; \$4.5 billion—that's 10%. And if you were to include the math on the interest on that portion of the plan, you would actually realize that at the end of the plan, you would save considerably more money than just 10% of that. That is an incredible first step to fixing the Ontario unfair hydro plan and the hydro mess.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Returning to the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte for final comments.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the members from Timmins, Mississauga–Malton, Niagara Centre and York Centre—all those together are almost as long as Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte.

I think that these are the most substantive comments I've heard for some time. Everybody had something of real value to add to the discussion. It's very difficult, actually, to talk about how the Liberals got us here. Like I said when I started, you can't lose weight overnight because you don't put it on overnight. We're chipping away at it, but we're moving in a direction that Ontarians are happy about. We're moving in a direction that will actually have us open for business and open for jobs, Mr. Speaker.

We will remove input costs at every level in every way that we can, because that's what people expect of us and that's what they elected us to do. They don't always get caught up in the minutiae of how we're doing it because this is a very complex area. It's very, very complex. Like I said, it's alphabet soup; please use more acronyms. People just trust us to actually get the job done. When others—

Interjection.

Mr. Doug Downey: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I can't say when people aren't here, so I won't talk about that, but I hope that there are some people watching so that they can

see the debate that's happening and how some of the parties are actually united in the need to get input costs down for our citizens and for the people.

We have to find ways to take good ideas and implement them. We've put some excellent ideas on the table. We got royal assent on a couple of excellent pieces earlier today. I just want to invite other ideas as they come forward, all in the interests of the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: It has been a pleasure to listen to the debate this afternoon on Bill 87. What I want to try to add to the debate, because I'm from Ottawa—I'm from Algonquin territory. I'm from a particular place in the province that doesn't always—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I went to Algonquin College.

Mr. Joel Harden: The member from Timmins went to Algonquin College. Good for you; great school.

It doesn't always get a lot of air time in this place. It's a pretty Toronto-centric world in this place sometimes, isn't it? So let me try to bring some eastern Ontario perspective into this debate around cleaning up the hydro mess. I want to corroborate things that my other colleagues have said.

In Ottawa, we have Hydro Ottawa, and Hydro Ottawa, as a public utility, did cushion the blow for a lot of rate-payers. We didn't see the Hydro One massive increases, but there were significant increases. I do want to recall, as the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte did, a particular interaction I had at the door with someone in a social housing building.

I knocked on this door. A woman opened the door. Our campaign didn't just say, "Are you going to vote NDP or not?" and we ran away. I actually said, "What are the issues you care about?" Immediately, the first thing the person told me was, "Hydro prices." And I said, "Let's talk about that." She said, "Well, let's not just talk about it; come into my apartment." It was January, Speaker. I was on the doors long before the writ dropped. I walked into this person's apartment and I could feel the air hitting me in the face. I saw the woman's child on the couch in a toque and in mitts with a blanket over them. And she told me that the heat was on—for real. She told me that the heat was on.

Like a lot of social housing buildings in our city and like a lot of social housing buildings in our province, there was really terrible insulation. A lot of what we could do if we actually had a green new deal in this province is retrofit—create tens of thousands of great jobs building up our infrastructure that our grandparents bequeathed to us, like social housing buildings.

I could feel the air hit me in the face, and I said, "Energy is your issue. I can tell your apartment is porous. What was your energy bill last month?" Without hesitation, she said it was \$324—\$324 a month for a single mom in a unit in the city of Ottawa living on ODSP, making \$1,170 a month. Think of what that does, Speaker. It's an absolutely crippling blow. When my friends on the other side talk about heating or eating, I get it. You're right. I heard it too.

But here's the issue that troubles me, Speaker. I have the great benefit, in Ottawa, of learning from a lot of leaders in the environmental movement in Canada. A lot of them happen to live in downtown Ottawa, people who have done great things for our country. I've tried to sit and learn from them. They've pushed me on the issue of energy—and I agree with what has been said in this building. Energy was the issue that decided the last election. The last government made heinous decisions on energy. The notion that you could invent an accounting scheme to figure out a way to subsidize hydro prices was a terrible, terrible mistake, to subsidize the mom I met at the door in the social housing building—a terrible, terrible, dishonest mistake.

But there are bigger issues behind our energy system that we have to pay attention to that are not addressed by this bill. Let me begin with one: privatization. It's something that many, many members in this House, on our side at least, have risen up and talked about. We set in place a situation in which, since the early part of this century under the previous Conservative government, we got our utilities ready for privatization. We got them dressed up for sale, for auction, and there was a legal case that prevented some aspect of it. But we got things that our grandmothers and grandfathers built.

Speaker, under your party, a legacy from the Conservative Party of this province of which I've very proud: public power. People got together at the turn of the 20th century, industrialists and workers, and they said, "How are we going to make sure that Ontario is the manufacturing hub of the country?" Public power was an essential part of that. That was a 100-year legacy that one government undid in the early part of the century that was stalled thanks to civic action and legal action.

Then we had the Premier of the previous Parliament tell us, leading up to the election—do you remember, colleagues?—"Oh, no, no, we're not going to privatize Hydro One. It's not going to happen." Lo and behold, because that Premier didn't have the courage to go to the wealthiest people of this province and say, "Do you know what? To pay for our promises, we're going to have to ask the wealthiest in this province to pay a little bit more"—that's what we went to the voters with, in our platform. The previous Premier of this province didn't have the courage to do that, so what did she do instead to pay for their election promises, to subsidize hydro prices? Privatize Hydro One. That's what they did.

Our grandmothers and grandfathers went to great pains for decades, building up a legacy of public power that one previous Conservative government in the early part of the century got ready to undo and a Liberal Premier in the previous government started unravelling completely. It was a disgusting betrayal of what decades of people in this province have done.

Interjections.

Mr. Joel Harden: That's why, Speaker, I was very proud in the last election—to deal with the nattering I'm hearing from the other side—to tell that particular tenant I met that day in a social housing building that if an NDP

government comes into power in this province, we will honour that legacy and retake power back into public hands, where it belongs. Because who should benefit from all of the sacrifice, all of the work being done for decades? I'm not just talking about taxpayers; I'm talking about the workers who maintain the system.

That's the segue to the next element of the hydro mess, which has an Ottawa spin that I want to bring to our collective attention today. I'm very proud to have spent years, Speaker, working in the labour movement. I'm very proud to have worked for workers in the public and private sectors. It has come to my attention that if we really want to deal with the hydro mess, I encourage this government to consider immediate action, through amendments to this bill or through the Ministry of Labour, to address a local Ottawa matter. Members of the Society of Energy Professionals—these are the folks who work for Hydro One. If you remember the tornadoes that ripped our city apart, the two tornadoes back in September, they were the people jumping into the fray, building up the emergency infrastructure, rerouting the lines. We had one transmission station that was flattened by a tornado. The members of IFPTE Local 160 jumped into the fray, often in very dangerous situations. They rebuilt our electrical infrastructure.

Members of this particular union have tried to scope in new workers at this workplace. Do you know what they've had to face for two and a half years, Speaker? An employer at Hydro Ottawa, which has been challenging them worker by worker, bringing people down here to Toronto to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to say: "Is this person a manager or not?" It's 110 new potential workers. They're calling 90 witnesses. They've dragged out a certification vote that happened two and a half years ago, and it's still going on.

1740

We have spent, by some estimates—the public and Hydro Ottawa—\$2 million in legal costs to militate a lawsuit—essentially, that's what I think of it as. A union organizes a workplace and scopes new workers into a collective agreement. The employer can test who's in the bargaining unit or not. We would think—think about a hydro mess, the people who maintain our hydro system—that a efficacious process would be that this matter could be resolved within half a year. But, no, Speaker. The people who saved my city, who were there for us to keep the lights on last September, have had a situation where their rights have been trounced by a cavalcade of lawyers who have cost the public taxpayer \$2 million.

My friends in government, if you want to help people who maintain our public energy system, if you want to fix the hydro mess locally in Ottawa, where I come from, intervene in this matter. Tell Hydro Ottawa that it's time to stop delaying at the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Tell them to respect the people that keep our electrical system going. Fix that hydro mess.

I want to shift to something else, and it's about a matter that the member from Guelph brought up. It's a matter that, I guess, for some folks, I'm not allowed to talk about.

It's about the waste that takes place within our current electrical system, because bequeathed to us here in Ontario is a very centralized nuclear generation system. We're not allowed to talk in this space because there are powerful lobbyists who come into this building. We're not allowed to talk about the waste that gets procured in the course of our energy generation.

What we know for a fact—and we know this thanks to the great work being done by the member for Toronto–Danforth, who has been on this file for years. In 2014, we paid the states of New York and Minnesota, we paid the provinces of Manitoba and Quebec \$1 billion to buy our power, and that's because nuclear power works in one way. It's like Usain Bolt, the world-class sprinter: It's on, and it stays on, right? It's on 100% at times when we need it less, like the summertime, because it's about air conditioning and not furnaces. We generate so much power that there is a surfeit of it, so we look to dump it.

Do you know what I do, Speaker, in areas where I won't profess a lot of expertise? I listen to the experts. I brought up the energy professionals earlier. I'm sympathetic to their cause. I put it on this government's agenda to hopefully consider. I also have been talking to nuclear scientists, people who deal in waste management at home, and they've not only raised this issue of the expensive cost of having a system that works like Usain Bolt all the time and is not distributed and efficacious, they've talked about the fact that we are dealing with—right now, the main source of drinking water where I live comes from the Ottawa River. The government of Canada, in its infinite lack of wisdom, is proceeding with a nuclear waste facility in the town of Rolphton—a decommissioned facility that will be the size of 70 NHL hockey rinks, entombing 50 years of nuclear waste.

Wilf Ruland, a geophysical expert on nuclear waste and a hydrogeologist—one of the world's finest—who lives in Ottawa Centre, has testified before federal committees, which are supposed to be looking after the safety of our water, that in 2015, 16,000 litres of contaminated nuclides leached from this site, before the proposal to entomb it in concrete. He further documented—and this is one particular incident—that from 1997 to 2015, 26,000 litres of radioactive water has leached into the Ottawa River.

Now, the people who apologize for the federal government's waste management policy say, "Oh, well, Joel, don't worry about that, because the nature of the water dilutes the nuclides in the water. You don't have to worry about that." Well, I'm sorry, Speaker, but I foresee an episode of the Simpsons that I don't want to watch. The more I look at this—

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Tell that to Grassy Narrows.

Mr. Joel Harden: Or as my friend just said, what's happened to the great people of Grassy Narrows?

The Algonquin Anishinabeg tribal council has received expert opinions—scientific opinions, legal opinions—and they are imploring the federal government to think about the cost of nuclear leakages into the Ottawa River and what it will do to our society. We are betting all of our future right now.

If I'm understanding the logic of Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, it's all about hydro prices and the governance of the Ontario Energy Board. You are not thinking long-term about how we generate our energy and what the consequences are of our energy generation systems.

I can tell you that where I'm from, Speaker, in the Ottawa Valley, if we're not talking about nuclear waste, we're not honouring the generations that are coming up—the pages who are here today, my children who are seven and 10 at home. When you actually speak to the electrical providers—not lefty environmentalists from Ottawa Centre—talk to the utilities all over this province, and what are they saying? The member from Guelph already said it: We need more distributed energy generation systems, less centralized. We need efficient, efficacious ways in which we generate energy and distribute it across the grid. That's what's happening everywhere else in the world, it would seem, except Canada. I love my country, but sometimes I don't understand its decision-makers.

I understand that we have a legacy of nuclear power, and I don't think we can get away from that legacy tomorrow. We're doubling or tripling down on a centralized model that is wasteful, that is polluting our rivers as a long-term strategy. My friends in government can talk about saving \$4 billion on a 20-year failed "fixing the hydro mess" scheme. Okay, you're saving \$4 billion on a failed hydro mess scheme. What about the imminent threat to our waters? What about the waste we are allowing ourselves to procure by relying on one dominant form of energy generation?

What I would do if I were in government and I was Minister of Energy is that I would hold town halls across this province right now. I wouldn't wait. I would go to the energy workers themselves, I would go to the scientists themselves, I would go to the Indigenous peoples who have been the protectors of our land and water for thousands of years, and I would ask them how we make this more than a conversation about a cost of our energy. Inasmuch as I recognize that's important, inasmuch as I recognize that the high cost of energy was impoverishing people, for sure, we've got to have a bigger vision.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tabled a report last year. I hope members in this House know its findings. It was very clear. We have 11 years to take significant transformative action on climate change. Key among that is thinking about how we deal with our energy. Energy is responsible for about two thirds of emissions around the world. Energy is a big deal when we think about what our strategy is to address climate change—and thinking about this purely in the sense of how much energy will cost the consumer or the composition of the Ontario Energy Board, that's inadequate thinking.

I know conservatives elsewhere in the world—like Chancellor Merkel in Germany, for example—who are thinking bigger, who are demanding more from their politics, who are taking approaches to energy that are intensely local, to bring business and labour and community together through co-operative generation of power. They still have a big problem with coal in Germany.

We've gotten over that here, and I think that was a good decision from previous decision-makers in this place. But Speaker, I would say to you, why are we allowing ourselves to limit our imagination of the hydro mess to an issue over prices and an issue over the composition of the Ontario Energy Board?

Bob Chiarelli used to be the MPP for Ottawa West–Nepean before my friend Jeremy Roberts became MPP of that area in our city. I once saw Bob, and I said to him, “What is a big thing you’ve learned about being Minister of Energy?” He told me candidly, “The amount of money we are wasting in dumping our power elsewhere. We need smarter thinking, Joe.” He knew some of the people I was connected to at Carleton University in the city of Ottawa. “We need smarter thinking.” I agree, we do.

If this government’s serious about fixing the hydro mess, not just at a cost level but at a larger level, please take me up on an offer to hold town halls in my city and across the province. I’ll show up. I would love to talk about what an energy paradigm for our province would look like that would actually be sustainable, that would create tens of thousands of really good jobs and that could be a legacy we could be proud of. This is something that is less an issue of partisan politics for me and more an issue about following the evidence.

Let me go back, though, to where we started. As my friend from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte said—you’re right; it’s our point of agreement—we can’t punish people anymore with our energy system, and the politicians that tried to paid a real price for that. But do you know what we also can’t do? We can’t rely on the advice that previous governments received when it came to figuring out their energy plans.

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I know this government has worked with Al Rosen, probably one of the best forensic accountants in this country. This is what he had to say about the advisers to the previous government. Al said, “You can go to any of the public accounting firms and get them to render an opinion on whatever you want. The ethics have gone all to hell.”

I’ve met actuaries, the smartest mathematicians in our country, who have told me jokes like, “Joel, do you know how we count assumptions for pension plans? Think about two friends walking down a path and seeing a field of livestock. One friend turns to the other and says, ‘How many cows are there?’ And the friend who’s the actuary says, ‘108.’ And the friend says, ‘How did you figure that out?’ ‘Well, I see eight there and about 100 over there.’”

There is a lot that’s being done by very clever mathematical minds to disguise risks that we are seeing, ever-present, right before us. I encourage members to look at the Globe and Mail report, again, called “Bad Books: How Ontario’s New Hydro Accounting Could Cost Taxpayers Billions,” a story that Matthew McClearn from the Globe broke. It documented how people who work in those beautiful, shiny buildings that I see on my walk from Union Station to this building assisted the last government in hiding the real cost of the hydro mess from people.

I agree with my friends: Let’s not do that ever again. Bring it on the books. But let’s have a bigger, more ambitious vision about how we procure energy in this province, how we generate it, how it’s sustainable, and how we will not only help people with their hydro bills but how we’ll have an environment that we can actually bequeath to our kids in the generation to come.

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

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to thank the member. This opportunity that I have to speak to this—I kind of want to just unpack it. There is a lot to unpack here.

One of the things I do want to touch upon is his comments relating to the NDP plan and what they wanted to do regarding hydro. I distinctly remember during the campaign that the hydro plan the NDP put out would have resulted in almost 4,500 jobs lost with their decision to cancel or shut down the Pickering nuclear plant. That’s not what this province needed, and that’s not what’s going to drive the price of hydro down.

Another piece of their platform, which I know the member from Sault Ste. Marie mentioned earlier, was this idea that they were going to get a 5% reduction by going to the federal government and asking for the HST portion to be—

Mr. Ross Romano: It’s impossible.

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Exactly. This plan just absolutely didn’t make sense, and that’s why the voters, that’s why Ontarians rejected their plan. They knew that this government that they elected could get this right. That’s exactly what this piece of legislation is going to do and that’s exactly what this piece of legislation does.

There are \$442 million in savings. That’s going to go directly to helping reduce the cost of hydro across this province. We can’t have families choosing between heating and eating. That’s exactly what the minister who has been working on this file—Minister Rickford has done such a great job coming into government and tackling this file and so many challenging issues, whether it was the Hydro One board or cancelling so many contracts that were just costing the province so much. I’m very happy to speak to that. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, what I enjoy is, sometimes you come in in the afternoons and you hear how individuals speak passionately about their relations in regard to individuals back home. I’m glad the member from Ottawa just brought up this memory because I have that same constituent in my riding. Her name is Pearl Oliver. Pearl sends me these nice, beautiful handwritten letters, and she does it quite often. I always look forward to hearing from Pearl. Hi, Pearl. I hope you’re watching. I hope you’re enjoying your tea. And I hope you don’t mind me talking about you today.

Anyway, Pearl—you wouldn’t believe the stuff that she sends me. It’s quite colourful at times, and even Pearl agrees with this government and ours in regard to what had happened before. I would love to read some of the content

that she sent to me, because those words are not normally found in dictionaries. She was very frustrated.

I'm going to challenge this government. I'm going to challenge all the individuals today, because it seems like we're almost having a very constructive debate here this afternoon. I want you to tell me that eliminating time-of-use is a bad idea. I want you to tell me that equalizing delivery charges for all Ontarians is a bad idea. I want you to tell me that returning Hydro One into public hands is a bad idea. I want you to tell me that investing into hydro-electric dams, as our neighbouring jurisdictions are doing, is a bad idea. I didn't hear that this afternoon. Those are good ideas. Those are sound things that can actually be done by this government.

Here, meet me halfway; okay? You know that privatization might be hard, but that's a long-term vision. Meet me halfway and, let's say, eliminate the time-of-use and equalize the delivery charges. Just that is a step in the right direction.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: Speaker, I want to correct the record on something else that I've been hearing in the last couple of days in connection with our bill. I heard the interim leader, the independent member from Ottawa, say, "The whole reason why we put the cost of the plan off-book was so that we can pin it on the ratepayer." This is a proposition that I take serious issue with, and this is something that I confronted the former Premier on when she appeared before the select committee. Specifically, there is absolutely no reason for the former government to put the cost of the hydro plan off-book if they wanted the ratepayer to repay the plan.

We have a long history in this province of having the ratepayer repay capital costs. We've done that with the adjustment costs on the previous bills. We could have easily financed the plan and collected it from ratepayers. Nonetheless, the previous government decided wilfully to incorporate, through a subsidiary, an unrelated party, and have them borrow at a more expensive price from the capital markets.

To my friend from Ottawa, when he passes by those shiny buildings and hears of what some of the accountants have done there—I've been amazed to find out that one of the accounting advisers to the Liberals in connection with the Fair Hydro Plan would not release an opinion that the plan was legal without an indemnity from the former government. Now, typically it works the other way around: As a client, you seek an indemnity from the professional who gives you advice. With the Liberals, however, the professional would not release the advice unless, as a condition of such advice, the Liberals gave them indemnity. That tells you everything you need to know about the Fair Hydro Plan. It's shameful.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: It gives me great pleasure to add to the conversation today on government Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act. I'd like to start by saying thank you

to our member from Ottawa Centre for a passionate and factual account as to why this bill does not go far enough. As has been said by many of my colleagues, Bill 87 does not fix the hydro mess, contrary to the title. To call it such is to detract from what it does do, which is nothing much different. Like much of what we've seen from this government so far, it doesn't fix the real problems. Hydro costs, however, go through the roof.

To be clear, we want Ontarians to have lower hydro costs, not higher, but this bill doesn't really address that either. It does nothing to put Hydro One back into public hands. We know that the Liberals have privatized, and we know that this government is doing even worse. Hydro One stays private. The bill does nothing to take private profits off of hydro bills.

The peripheral cuts to conservation programs that accompany the bill are also shameful. These are programs that families and businesses depend on to help reduce their carbon footprints and save money. This is another inequitable aspect of this bill.

The bill does nothing to address the high cost of electricity that rural and remote communities face; specifically, First Nations communities in such areas where the costs of electricity delivery are higher. This is, quite frankly, another missed opportunity for the government to make good on what should be a substantial and material commitment to reconciliation and Indigenous communities by focusing supports and subsidies in the area.

What I'm hoping is that this government will listen to some of the amendments that we have suggested and put those into action so we're not going from bad to worse.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I will return to the member from Ottawa Centre for his final comments.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the members from Brampton South, Algoma-Manitoulin, York Centre and Toronto-St. Paul's for their comments.

I think at the end of the day, Speaker, what we try to do as opposition members here is offer this government food for thought, right? If you want to travel forward with a focus on how much prices should be, because like me, you're sensitive to people worrying about heating or eating—fair enough.

If you're willing to limit your imagination to the Ontario Energy Board's composition, fine. I'm not saying it's not an important issue, but we're living in a context of climate change—actually, worse. We're living in a context of climate emergency. My daughter is one of many students around the world who walks out of class on Friday. She calls me up every Thursday and she says, "Dad, you've got to come and gather signatures for me. It's my future." I've had to cancel meetings. I've had to do stuff, because, you know what? This is the youth taking ownership of our future.

This bill has the opportunity to do the same thing, if it proposed an actual communication tour, where you travelled the province, listened to the front-line energy workers, listened to the municipal utilities, listened to the

experts, and asked yourselves honestly, “What kind of energy system do we want? Do we want one that’s wasteful? Do we want one that actually leaves a legacy for kids of waste and poisoned water, or do we want one that remembers what our ancestors gave us?”

Public power, democratic control of our energy system—that’s what we had and it’s what we need back, and when we get it back, that’s when we can make tremendous change.

If my friends want to limit the conversation to energy prices and the composition of the Ontario Energy Board, that’s fine, but I invite you to consider that people are

looking for a government with ambition and there are conservative governments elsewhere in the world that are doing that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I want to compliment members on both sides for a very respectful debate this afternoon. It makes my job a whole lot easier.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I know you’d love to continue, but unfortunately it is now 6 o’clock and I have to call adjournment until tomorrow at 9 o’clock.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
Wayne Gates, Michael Gravelle
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stephen Crawford
Doug Downey, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Kaleed Rasheed
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Chris Glover
Christine Hogarth, Logan Kanapathi
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Dave Smith, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Présidente: Jane McKenna
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Lorne Coe, Michael Coteau
Mike Harris, Faisal Hassan
Jane McKenna, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Toby Barrett, Catherine Fife
Goldie Ghamari, Jim McDonell
Norman Miller, Suze Morrison
Michael Parsa, Peggy Sattler
Kinga Surma
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Will Bouma, Paul Calandra
Lorne Coe, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
John Fraser, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie