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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 April 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 avril 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to draw to your attention that members of this assembly are now in an awkward position when it comes to dealing with moving amendments to Bill 74. As you know, the government has time-allocated very tightly when we're having to table our amendments, which is 12 o'clock today. The difficulty we have is that legislative counsel is under-resourced and lacks the ability to be able to turn those amendments in time to meet that 12 o'clock deadline. I realize it's an order of the House, but my point is—you cannot obstruct a member from doing his or her job, is the definition of what our privileges are. I'm not, at this point, filing a point of privilege, but I'm saying it is an issue because now, as a result of legislative counsel being under-resourced—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. I understand this is a matter before a standing committee of the Legislature, and it would be perhaps a valid point of order there. But we would expect to hear back from the committee in due course when it has a chance to deal with this and any other issues before it.

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 3, 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Parsa: Good morning, Speaker, to you and good morning to all of my colleagues in the House here. It's a pleasure to rise this morning to speak in favour of Bill 87, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019. I should note that I will be splitting my time with the member for Thornhill.

The issues that this bill addresses have been plaguing this province and its residents for far too long. Over a period of 15 years, the previous government made an

absolute mess of the energy file. Their misguided ideological policies destroyed our electricity system and forced families and businesses to pay ridiculous amounts for their hydro bills.

The stories that we were hearing from every corner of this province were absolutely heartbreaking. Businesses were experiencing such dire circumstances that they were forced to close their doors. Families from all over Ontario were forced to choose between heating and eating. And what did the previous government do when they heard these stories? They just simply turned a blind eye. For years, the cost of hydro kept going up and Ontarians continued to struggle. And what did the previous government do? Nothing. They put their head in the sand and ignored what was going on.

Then, miraculously, one year before an election, they came up with a magical fix to 15 years of wilful negligence and mismanagement. They called this magical solution the Fair Hydro Plan—I have many different names for it—and it was supposed to fix everything by reducing hydro rates for everyone. All of a sudden, after gouging Ontarians for over a decade, the previous government came up with a way to reduce hydro rates.

Do you know how they proposed to reduce those hydro rates, Speaker? The Fair Hydro Plan proposed to lower rates for the short term by increasing the gross public debt to refinance paying for those lower rates. In short, they were borrowing from lenders and taxpayers to subsidize the lower rates in the short term, but because of the refinancing structure, Ontarians would be paying through the nose once the time period for the refinancing was complete.

Do you know what the Financial Accountability Officer had to say about this, Speaker? In their May 2017 report on the fiscal impact of the Fair Hydro Plan, the FAO estimated that the Fair Hydro Plan will cost the province \$45 billion while providing an overall savings to electricity taxpayers of only \$24 billion. The overall result of this magical Fair Hydro Plan would be a net cost to Ontarians of \$24 billion.

So, over 15 years, they made a mess of the hydro file and made hydro rates unaffordable for Ontarians, and then they had the audacity to say they were fixing it with a scheme that would make rates even more expensive in the future—absolutely shameful.

Luckily, voters saw through the previous government's scheme and elected our government to restore transparency and fairness to the province's electricity system. And with the way things were, we hit the ground running to deliver much-needed relief to Ontarians.

We began by cancelling the provincial cap-and-trade carbon tax, thanks to the incredible Minister of the Environment, and as a result removed the cost burden to Ontario's businesses and job creators. By ending this cash grab scheme, we reduced the price of gasoline by 4.3 cents a litre and reduced the average household's natural gas bill by about \$80 a year.

Speaker, we're fighting to put money back into the pockets of Ontario drivers, homeowners and small businesses. Currently, we're continuing that fight by using every tool at our disposal to protect Ontarians from the ridiculous federal carbon tax. If you've been to the gas pumps recently and noticed a jump in the gas prices, take note that this is the federal government hard at work, taking more money out of your pockets and out of the pockets of all Ontarians. The federal carbon tax is not only going to hurt you at the pumps, but it will also increase the cost of everything you purchase to feed your family and heat your home. It's just another federal Liberal cash grab, and it's shameful.

We've demonstrated time and time again that this government will always fight for the Ontario taxpayer. We demonstrated this when we cancelled cap-and-trade. We demonstrated this when we repealed the Green Energy Act and saved Ontario electricity customers \$790 million. We demonstrated this when we passed the Hydro One Accountability Act, which reduced and capped the ludicrous compensation packages that Hydro One executives were receiving.

Speaker, I can go on and on about what we've done, but let's talk about what we're going to do and will continue to do for Ontarians.

With Bill 87, this government and the tireless Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines—

Interjection: Great guy.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Yes, great guy.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Parsa: He's working hard already, yes, and putting forward a plan to continue to fix what the previous government made a mess of. This bill, in its entirety, will replace the adjustment refinancing structure with a more transparent, on-bill rebate; modernize the Ontario Energy Board; and make changes to all the inefficient and costly conservation programs.

0910

Let's start by talking about the global adjustment refinancing. So why are we refinancing the global adjustment? In August 2018, the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry recommended that the government adopt the Auditor General's proposed accounting treatment for global adjustment refinancing under the Fair Hydro Plan. Under the proposed legislative amendments, the government would directly fund rate relief under the existing framework while working to implement a single, transparent, on-bill rebate to replace global adjustment refinancing in November 2019. Under this new on-bill rebate structure, the government would continue to fund a portion of electricity system costs, but not specifically targeted at the global adjustment. This rate relief structure will improve accountability and transparency while

aligning with the recommendations of the Auditor General and the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry.

Further, this amendment would require the OEB to hold the average residential electricity bill increase to the rate of inflation, beginning May 1. This will ensure that Ontarians continue to receive relief until the new electricity bill mitigation structure comes into effect. Once again, we're ensuring that Ontarians continue receiving the relief they need while we implement a more transparent, accountable and efficient approach to the way things are done in this province.

Speaker, dealing with the global adjustment refinancing is something we have to do, and through this bill we're doing just that. With that said, we're also taking a holistic approach to solving the hydro mess that the Liberal government left behind. That's why we're proposing a plan to modernize the OEB. Now, for those that don't know, the Ontario Energy Board is the province's independent regulator for the energy sector. This independent regulatory body makes decisions and provides advice to the government in order to contribute to a sustainable and reliable energy sector. They also establish rates and prices that are reasonable to consumers and allow utilities to invest in the system; encourage high performance from natural gas and electricity utilities; and protect consumer interests, investigate complaints, and apply penalties where appropriate.

That's a fairly long list of important duties and responsibilities, Speaker, and one would think that such an important independent regulatory body would be respected and managed with the utmost care and consideration. Yet for 15 years, the Ontario Energy Board was neglected and mismanaged by the previous government. As a result, the OEB became an inefficient and outdated body that contributed to the waste and inefficiencies in the electricity sector. The regulator is now notorious for delaying key electricity projects and for decisions that have led to uncertainty and waste in our electricity sector.

Information provided to us by the Electricity Distributors Association has painted quite a negative picture. One medium-sized local distribution company spent the equivalent of almost 1,000 business days on its 2016 cost of service rate application. Another local distribution company's application and interim responses to the OEB totalled almost 3,500 pages of evidence. For several local distribution companies, the cost of preparing recent rate applications increased by over 200%, and in some cases 300%, because of the increased reporting requirements.

Well, Speaker, I'm here to tell you that we're changing all of that. Under Bill 87, we're proposing changes to the way the OEB is operated and governed so that Ontarians have a fast, dependable regulatory environment that is governed by a fair, transparent and trusted regulator. Under the proposed plan, we're going to improve the governance structure of the OEB by separating its management, administration and arbitration roles. Clear roles and responsibilities will be assigned to each segment of the new structure to ensure that predictable outcomes are delivered to all energy stakeholders in an efficient and timely manner.

Speaker, the government recognizes the importance of the OEB's role as an energy regulator. That's why we're proposing to restore trust and accountability by ensuring that the OEB's arbitration and regulatory decisions are made, and seen to be made, independently and impartially.

I should also point out that, unlike the previous government, we don't just do things to benefit a select group. The changes that we are proposing were brought forward by the OEB's modernization review panel, stakeholders and regulatory experts. Over 45 organizations and individuals were consulted, and 60 written submissions from stakeholders from across the energy sector were received. We made sure that we consulted with sector experts to ensure that the right plan was put in place.

I should also point out that this is just the first step in the OEB modernization process. Under the new governance structure, there will be an onus on the OEB to continuously work to improve its internal policies, operations and overall performance.

If passed, the proposed plan under this bill will ensure that the modernizing of the OEB will lead to more efficient and predictable regulatory approvals, more inclusive and transparent consultations, and reduced regulatory burden and costs, which will ultimately benefit Ontario consumers and businesses alike.

Speaker, for the remaining portion of my time, I would like to talk about the conservation changes that the government is proposing under Bill 87. This government was elected on June 7 with a clear mandate to clean up the hydro mess, increase transparency in our electricity system, and make life more affordable for Ontarians. We campaigned on these promises, and we're working hard every single day to deliver on these promises. That's why, under Bill 87, we're proposing to take immediate action to streamline all electricity conservation programs. We're proposing to centralize the government's approach to conservation and energy efficiency by targeting specific programs that benefit those who need them the most.

The proposed plan will not only benefit those that need it most, but we will also save taxpayers \$442 million by reducing the costs and duplication in the inefficient programs that were introduced by the previous government. Specifically, we will be targeting the low-impact, high-cost conservation programs that are underperforming. Some of these programs include the current 2015-to-2020 conservation and demand management framework, the conservation-first framework, and the Industrial Accelerator Program. Madam Speaker, these programs simply make no sense in terms of cost and benefit. They are programs that are entirely based on ideology rather than results.

Do you know how we know this, Madam Speaker? By centralizing our approach, we're meeting 94% of conservation goals and finding \$442 million in savings in the electricity system. Furthermore, Ontario is one of the cleanest energy jurisdictions in the world. Over 95% of our electricity is produced GHG-free, making our province's electricity system cleaner than jurisdictions like California and Germany. That's how we know our government's conservation changes are only eliminating

wasteful spending and mismanagement without sacrificing conservation goals.

Speaker, in the excitement I mentioned all the efficiencies we're creating and all the savings we're finding, but I forgot to mention, in detail, the savings that Ontarians will experience. This government has committed to reducing electricity bills by an additional 12% for families, farms and small businesses.

0920

Medium- to large-sized businesses would see an overall reduction in rates as early as this year, and large-sized businesses are expected to see a reduction between 0.8% and 1.1% over two years.

You see, Madam Speaker, a per cent here and a per cent there, and before you know it, we've found \$442 million in savings.

But I should note that all the work that went into bills such as this one was no easy task. The Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, along with his two hard-working parliamentary assistants—one of them my very dear colleague from Markham–Stouffville—had their work cut out for them when they assumed the responsibilities of this portfolio. The state of affairs in the energy sector was an absolute mess. So the minister got to work right away to make sure that Ontarians did not have to suffer through yet another year in which they had to choose between heating and eating. One can only imagine what a difficult task it has been, sorting through 15 years of waste and mismanagement.

It's sometimes very easy to forget the dire situation that Ontarians were experiencing prior to the 2018 election. During the winter months prior to the election, I was hearing horror stories about Ontarians and their hydro connections, and their disconnections, on a daily basis. If the members in this House recall, there were people out there who were getting their electricity and gas shut off on them in the middle of winter, mainly because they couldn't afford to pay the mind-boggling hydro bills they were receiving.

I remember that even on the campaign trail, business owners were running out of their stores just to show us the bills that they were getting, and how they could not afford to pay for them. They clearly stated that what they were being charged was ludicrous, and that businesses could not afford to stay open for long if this were to continue. I was constantly in shock at how bad the situation had become in this province.

Ontario was once the engine of Canada's economy, a shining beacon in North America, and yet the previous government was turning electricity off on people in the middle of winter. In what realm of imagination did anybody in the province and the previous government think that this was okay? It was nothing short of wilful negligence, and it was shameful.

The government's job is to make sure that residents in this province have access to affordable necessities like electricity, so that they can live their lives accordingly. The government's job is to make sure that people are not getting their power turned off in the middle of winter. That

previous government only decided to clue in to this responsibility during the last year of their mandate, once 15 years of mismanagement had already taken their toll on people.

I can only imagine what the minister must have thought when he received his initial briefings on the energy portfolio. Quite frankly, I wouldn't even know where to begin.

But that's all in the past. Our government listened to the people, and now we're here taking the necessary steps to fix the hydro mess and help the people of this province. Through this bill and others like it, we will continue to restore responsibility, accountability and transparency in a system that has lost sight of these concepts.

Through this bill, our government is working to create a responsible energy system—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Questions and comments? I recognize the member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good morning, Speaker. Yes, it's a pleasure to stand in the House this morning.

I must say, I do agree with the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill: The Wynne Liberals sold their souls in an outrageous bid to try to buy votes as they neared the end of their mandate. The Wynne Liberals nearly bankrupted this province.

The Wynne Liberals said they would never sell our public hydro system. The Premier stood there and said to this House, "I have no intention of selling Hydro One." A few weeks later, after somebody whispered in her ear down on Bay Street, "There's money to be made. We can buy tickets to your fundraisers," all of a sudden hydro was on the selling block.

The Wynne Liberals proved they couldn't be trusted. They sold hydro, even though I think there are 444 municipalities in Ontario and 80% or 84% or 88% of them passed resolutions and gave them to the government that said, "Don't do this. Don't sell our public hydro system." It wasn't a Liberal asset to sell; it was an Ontario asset, a public asset. It shouldn't have been sold.

If you look at the history books, there's a wonderful book called *Public Power* written by Howard Hampton, a name you may be familiar with. He talks about the referendums that were held in the early days when they were generating electricity at Niagara Falls and linking up communities across Ontario on the electrical grid. People were asked by referendum, "Do you want this to be a public asset or do you want it to go into private hands?" Time after time after time, the public said, "Keep it public. Don't sell it." Yet even though, tag team, Conservatives and New Democrats told the Liberals not to do it—they paid the price—they didn't listen. They sold it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A reminder to all members that we do not refer to members by their names. We use their riding name.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: What did I say?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The Wynne government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I have made my statement. This is a clear rule of the House.

Continuing with questions and comments.

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Bonne matinée à tous. Merci au député d'Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill et aussi à mon bon ami de Windsor—Tecumseh pour ses commentaires cette matinée. Je suis fière de me lever aujourd'hui et parler au sujet du projet de loi 87, Loi de 2019 pour réparer le gâchis dans le secteur de l'électricité.

Madame la Présidente, nous prenons des mesures pour réduire les coûts et les duplications en rationalisant le « patchwork » et les programmes inefficaces de conservation de l'énergie en Ontario. En centralisant notre approche, nous atteignons 94 % des objectifs de conservation et nous réalisons des économies de 442 millions de dollars sur le système d'électricité.

Nous avons besoin d'une approche de la conservation et de l'efficacité énergétique centrée sur les initiatives les plus rentables et les programmes ciblés destinés à ceux qui en ont le plus besoin, y compris les familles à faible revenu, les petites, moyennes et grandes entreprises et les populations indigènes en Ontario. Les programmes qui sont moins efficaces pour améliorer le rendement énergétique et répondre aux besoins des systèmes vont être progressivement supprimés. Cette réduction des coûts entraînera des économies immédiates pour les entreprises et profitera à long terme à tous les contribuables.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments.

M. Gilles Bisson: Madame la Présidente, on est d'accord avec le gouvernement sur un point : ce que le gouvernement précédent a fait avec toute la question de l'hydro, franchement, n'a pas servi le bien-être de la province de l'Ontario. Si tu es petit entrepreneur, si tu es une entreprise, moyenne ou grande, ou si tu es citoyen, tu as payé jusqu'à 200 % de plus pour ton électricité. C'est une des raisons que le monde est en grande colère contre ce gouvernement précédent, ce qui est arrivé dans les dernières élections. Si le gouvernement précédent se trouve dans la situation où il est—comme c'est là, leur nombre ici dans cette Assemblée—c'est une grosse partie du problème.

Ce qu'ils ont fait qui était vraiment problématique, et que le gouvernement ne répare pas, c'est qu'ils ont su dans la dernière année qu'ils avaient besoin de faire descendre le prix de l'électricité. Donc, ils ont fait une promesse : « On va baisser le prix de 25 %. » Mais ce qu'ils ont fait, c'est qu'ils ont pris la carte de crédit d'OPG et ils ont dit : « Vous autres »—pas OPG, mais l'organisation hydro—« allez emprunter tout l'argent », qui aurait pu être jusqu'à environ 60 milliards ou 65 milliards de dollars, et ils ont essayé de cacher cet argent hors des livres de la province de l'Ontario. Le gouvernement, dans ce projet de loi, ne répare rien quand ça vient à la réduction du prix de l'électricité, mais ce qu'il fait, et ce qui est une bonne affaire, c'est qu'il va retransférer ces coûts directement à la province. Ça, c'est bon pour deux raisons : un, c'est transparent, parce qu'on a besoin de savoir, nous, les contribuables, où l'argent est dépensé et où il est rentré; et

deuxièmement, ce qui est aussi important dans toute cette affaire-là, c'est que c'est moins cher d'emprunter de l'argent par l'intermédiaire de la province, donc on va sauver un peu d'argent, au moins, sur ce bord-là.

0930

Mais quand ça vient à réparer le problème que le gouvernement précédent a fait avec l'électricité, ce projet de loi ne fait aucunement rien pour nous faire arriver dans cette direction. On attend encore pour le gouvernement de faire quelque chose dans cette direction. Nous, les néo-démocrates, allons continuer à pousser.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} Gila Martow: On sait que le député de Timmins, bien sûr, a raison que les libéraux ont causé du gaspillage et de l'inefficacité dans l'ensemble de l'électricité et partout dans le gouvernement. Le secteur de l'énergie est un exemple. Nous autres, le caucus conservateur ici à Queen's Park, avons été élus pour le nettoyer, et on sait qu'on devrait travailler tous ensemble ici à Queen's Park pour le faire. On a besoin de réparer le désordre hydroélectrique laissé par le gouvernement précédent, et nous devons réduire le coût des intérêts pour l'électricité. Les problèmes sont complexes, on le sait, et ce projet de loi est un bon début.

On a un débat ici en français. On a plusieurs maintenant, de tous les côtés à Queen's Park, qui parlent français, et on essaie de parler en français. Je pense que c'est ennuyant pour les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes d'entendre tout le temps la traduction de l'anglais au français. Je pense que ça me laisse assez de temps, après le débat de ce matin, pour parler un petit peu en anglais aussi.

Mais on sait que c'est un très, très grand problème partout dans la province de l'Ontario. Les résidents de l'Ontario ne devraient pas avoir à choisir entre chauffer et manger. Ce n'est pas seulement des mots, madame la Présidente; c'est vraiment un très, très grand problème. On a des communautés où ils n'ont pas de gaz naturel; ils ont seulement l'électricité pour chauffer leur maison, et on a des hivers—on a juste fini un hiver très, très, très froid.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank my colleagues, both from across as well as the member from Thornhill, for their inclusion.

Madam Speaker, there are certain things that impact every single person in this province, and this file is definitely one of those. I can tell you, during the campaign, when we were going around, this is something that came up on a regular basis. At door after door, people were telling us about the high electricity prices and how it was absolutely unaffordable. It was a harder hit on older families, with seniors living in them, and also a lot of students. It was hitting them much, much harder.

But just as importantly, it was our businesses that were hurting as a result of these expensive, bloated and high hydro prices. Something has to be done. Madam Speaker,

as you know, as parliamentary assistant in the ministry responsible for helping small businesses, I travelled around the province, talking to small businesses. Even after the election was done, this is something that came up on a regular basis. People kept bringing this up and saying, "You've got to do something about this. Something has to be done."

It's hard for people to fathom, watching and listening to the compensation that is being paid to the people who are sitting on the board while their electricity prices are going up every month. They're paying these expensive, expensive bills and seeing very little in return. That's why our government promised during the campaign to get on this, to fix this problem, and I'm incredibly proud of the minister in charge. Again, his parliamentary assistants, who have assisted him in putting this bill together—I thank them all for this great work. Ontarians will thank you in the long-term for the work you've done.

I appreciate, again, the inclusion of all of the members in this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm happy to stand and continue debate on the government's Fixing the Hydro Mess bill—a bill that, as we've pointed out, continues the Liberal tradition of having the title of the bill be the exact opposite of what the bill actually does. They've taken over where the Liberals have left off, but they did at least stick a new label on it. This government is very good at sticking labels on things. It gives a mechanism, Speaker, for a permanent subsidy of hydro bills through the tax base. Right now, that runs us at about \$2.5 billion a year; \$2.5 billion a year that people in Ontario are borrowing to reduce hydro bills.

Given the deficit that we have in Ontario, you would have thought that the Conservatives, who said they had a plan to reduce hydro bills and deal with structural issues, would have put in place those structural changes so that we wouldn't be borrowing a lot of money. We all know it's critical to keep hydro bills affordable, but we also know that it's irresponsible to be borrowing billions of dollars a year to keep those bills low.

What they've decided to do is borrow \$2.5 billion a year. They say they're fiscally conservative. Conservatives voted against the Fair Hydro Plan when the Liberals brought it forward. Tories were denouncing the borrowing of money to subsidize hydro rates. Interestingly, since the legislation says nothing about when this borrowing will end, and since we've heard nothing from the minister, it sounds like this is an ongoing plan to borrow \$2.5 billion. So the Conservatives' solution to the hydro problems seems to be simply to reiterate and relabel Liberal policies: Liberal, Tory, same old story.

Speaker, this bill could have been used to roll back the Liberal mess in the hydro area. It could have actually made a big difference. On top of the fact that it continues borrowing to subsidize hydro rates—and many Conservative voters who are fiscal conservatives don't like the idea of running deficits to subsidize something—it's going to be rewriting the laws around the Ontario Energy Board.

The Ontario Energy Board have not stood up for those who pay for electricity against the investors' rights with regard to the huge tax gift that the Liberals gave Hydro One when they privatized that corporation. When people brought allegations of perjury on the part of utilities to the Ontario Energy Board with regard to rate hearings, the Ontario Energy Board would not hear those allegations and would not even investigate. This was a board that looked out for the interests of the government, and of private investors, ahead of the people of Ontario.

Why do we have a hydro mess, Speaker? The other day, my friend from Toronto—Danforth in his lead gave a great history of the mess, and I'm going to talk about that for a moment. He explained that at the beginning of the 20th century, industrialists understood that the bulk purchase of power through a non-profit, publicly owned corporation—which was renewable power because in Ontario we have a substantial gift of renewable power—would make a huge difference to Ontario's ability to attract and hold industry.

Up until about 1910, we depended very heavily on coal. Not only were we dependent on and vulnerable to events outside our borders, but we were shipping money out of the province constantly to buy those fossil fuels. These industrialists weren't socialists, but they understood that a publicly owned company that was not marking up the cost of power, using renewable energy that didn't have to be imported, was a good thing for Ontario. That was the basis for us building industry here in this province. Business people understood it then, and a lot of them understand it now.

Last week, the government talked about the stable, solid electricity system we had—the affordable one—which we did have until Mike Harris was elected. With that election came this whole commitment to market operation of the electricity system, abandoning everything that allowed us to industrialize and looking at selling off and privatizing the electricity system. He leased Bruce nuclear. That was a big loss for the publicly owned system. He was setting things up to sell off Ontario Power Generation, so he took all the debt off the books that was sitting on those nuclear power plants, and he put it in the debt. If anyone will remember the debt retirement charge that used to be on their hydro bills, that was nuclear debt. He didn't think the plants would sell without taking the debt away, so not only was he selling things off, but he was increasing hydro rates for all other forms of generation by moving the numbers around.

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Ernie Eves tried to privatize Hydro One. He was blocked in court and realized it was a bit too late for him with an election coming to follow through. Then came Dalton McGuinty, who was elected on a platform of stopping privatization. As you're well aware, Speaker, Dalton McGuinty wrote the rules so that virtually everything that was developed in terms of power from the time he was elected until the time the Liberals were defeated was privately owned. There were a few exceptions, but just about everything was privately owned at that time.

We had an expansion of interest on the part of private power developers in increasing the amount of generation

in Ontario. Then we had a situation where we had an ongoing expansion of generation that we didn't need and couldn't afford. That was a huge problem for us. Kathleen Wynne made it very clear that she wasn't going to sell off Hydro One and ridiculed our party's leader when she talked about clear indications that they were going to sell it off. As my friend has mentioned, she stood in the House and said, "Absolutely not," and then she sold it off, which led to her political demise. I think that most people understand that the reason the Liberals have seven members here in the House is because of that betrayal.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member. Stop the clock.

Just for clarification's sake: Any sitting member who's in the House needs to be referred to by their title or their riding. If you're referencing a former government—I was mistaken before—you can reference the name in that case. But a sitting member needs to have their riding or their title, please.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you, Speaker. My apologies.

The mess courtesy of Mike Harris, Ernie Eves, Dalton McGuinty and a member who currently sits in the House is set to continue today under this government with this very cynical and ineffective bill, a bill that does not actually take the steps necessary to clean up that mess, a bill that fails to address the main issue, which is privatization and a lack of public control.

What about other cost drivers? Does the bill use conservation to drive down the need for new generation? Conservation is the cheapest option before us, but in fact, conservation is being cut back. This flies in the face of what other countries around the world are doing. The things you need to do to actually stabilize the system and fix the mess have been ignored.

They like the Liberal policy, they like privatization, they like borrowing money to try to make things work, and that's what they've continued to do. What the Liberals were doing with their Fair Hydro Plan was that they were borrowing tens of billions of dollars and hiding it, keeping it off the books, so that they could say, "We've solved the problem, and we haven't increased the deficit." They were not being straightforward with the people of Ontario.

The Conservatives have said, "No, we will borrow the money, and we'll assume billions of dollars of debt in interest payments." It's a plan that's expensive and short-term-focused, and it's Liberal legislation that's being introduced by the Conservatives. At least they're being honest about where they're getting the money from.

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

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

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

They want to make sure that the world is safe for investors and not for ordinary working people who are trying to deal with their heating and cooling bills. There's a larger picture here. Energy efficiency is the lowest-cost resource for dealing with our electricity needs. It has been set aside by this government.

To give you a sense of some of the costs, the system operator in 2018, as was pointed out yesterday, said that conservation costs two cents a kilowatt hour—it's cheap; wind power was seven cents a kilowatt hour; natural gas was eight cents a kilowatt hour; and new nuclear was 12 cents a kilowatt hour. That's the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO. So if you want to reduce costs, you go to conservation first. You don't cut conservation. That's exactly what this government is doing: cutting conservation.

What could the government have done to clean up this mess? Is there an alternative to borrowing \$2 billion or \$2.5 billion a year to keep bills low? As my friend pointed out yesterday, in 2017, the NDP came forward with a plan for reducing electricity rates called Pay Less. Own More. It was a good plan. It didn't require borrowing tens of billions of dollars, which was the Liberal strategy and is now the Conservative strategy. It looked at changing a variety of measures that are in place now that could reduce people's costs.

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

In addition, one of the things that was pointed out at the time was to end mandatory time-of-use billing. Seniors, stay-at-home moms, small business people who are having to run, in the summer, their air conditioning, and in the winter they've got their lights on—they're trying to deal with the effects of the cold, and they get charged more because they don't have a choice. They have to run it then. The IESO calculated that most people who are now on time-of-use could save about 10% by going back to the flat rate.

There are some people who benefit from time-of-use, but it would help a huge number of people in Ontario if they had a voluntary option. That's another thing the government could do.

Yesterday, we heard people from the government side asking for suggestions: "Why is the opposition always

criticizing and never offering suggestions?" I find that interesting, because I've listened to most of the speakers on this side, and there have been a lot of suggestions that have come forward.

We should re-establish the transparent, independent public oversight of Hydro One, as our friend from Toronto–Danforth brought up the other day, by bringing back the authority of the Auditor General, the Financial Accountability Officer, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Ombudsman and the Integrity Commissioner, so that ordinary people could be protected by public oversight.

The sell-off of Hydro One by the Liberals is something that could be reversed using the profits from the part that has already been sold off. As we bring it back, we'd bring back hundreds of millions of dollars that we can use to pay off debts for purchasing our hydro system back.

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

We could cap private profit margins. Right now, companies that want to increase rates to cover costs for new investments get to claim the costs of borrowing plus a 5.5% return on equity. We've pointed out that if interest is at 3% or 4%, you're talking an 8% or 9% return. In contrast, in Manitoba, their public utility has allowed 3% on top of borrowing—much less.

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We can limit profits and make things more affordable for people. There is no reason for us to make this business more profitable than it has to be. When you're producing electricity into a market that's stable, there's no reason for us to be increasing the profits of investors.

Burying this problem is not solving it. It's not as sneaky as the Liberals were; it's much more upfront, but it's just as bad. The results are the same.

We need to end the privatization of our hydro system. We need to take advantage of the fact that many of the old gas-fired power plants had contracts that were signed 20 or 30 years ago, and those contracts are going to expire. We have an opportunity to end those contracts, reduce our hydro costs, and instead of paying 10, 20 or 30 cents a kilowatt hour for gas-fired power, spend two cents, three cents, for energy conservation. We need to be approaching things this way, but it's not even contemplated by this government.

When you're paying what you're paying with your hydro bills now, and the costs of batteries and solar power are dropping so sharply, it's clear that in the next 10 to 15 years, we will be facing a very different world, and we need to adapt and be ready for it. But this government has cancelled green energy contracts. They have no environmental plan. Here, when they say they're fixing the hydro mess, they're completely ignoring conservation, which is

not only the cheapest way forward but the best way forward for the planet.

With respect to the changing market for electricity, it has been pointed out that in February, the Calgary Herald reported that in 2017, wind energy in Alberta was contracted out at 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour, and at the end of 2018, the Alberta government signed contracts with solar power producers for solar power at 4.8 cents per kilowatt hour. There is a huge shift in where power will be produced and at what cost.

It was Ontario's advantage at the beginning of the 20th century to have large volumes of inexpensive power. That made us competitive. If we lose that because other jurisdictions are going with technologies that provide power at a third of what we're charging, we will not be able to retain industry. It's as simple as that. We will also fall behind the rest of the industrialized world in terms of conservation and environmental technology.

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

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

As I mentioned, this government likes to stick labels on things rather than fix them. Not concentrating on the cheapest energy source we have—conservation—really speaks to a lack of understanding of what it's going to take to deal with hydro problems in this province.

In the end, we have a bill that allows diversion of tax money to reduce hydro bills, something that fiscal conservatives are basically against; a bill that allows massive borrowing to reduce hydro bills, something that will not change the fundamental problems that we have with the system. That's not just an extraordinary waste of an opportunity, but it is a complete waste of our time in this House, time we could be using to address actual problems and issues.

We should all vote against this bill. The government should go back to the drawing board and come forward with a bill that actually addresses the real issues, not lip-synch failed Liberal policies.

We have all kinds of conservation programs that are being cut by this government. Out of \$1.128 billion, they're cutting a third of those programs: \$442 million. What kind of a way forward is that for us as a province?

We should be investing in environmental technologies. We should be looking at conservation and cheaper sources of energy. We should not be throwing money hand over fist at a failed Liberal policy that has now been adopted by this government.

We're falling behind, Speaker. If we want to be competitive in the future, we have to use technologies that will make us competitive. Throwing money at things that this government—they're constantly criticizing the Liberal government for throwing money at things. What is this?

Throwing \$2.5 billion a year at a problem and not fixing anything.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I am privileged for this opportunity to rise today and speak on Bill 87, fixing the hydro mess. Bill 87, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, is an important piece of legislation. After the previous government neglected their duty to Ontario, they left behind a large mess. Our government is dedicated to working to clean up the hydro mess, increasing transparency in our electricity system and making life more affordable for all Ontarians.

Madam Speaker, we made a promise when we got elected to make the province affordable. According to our mandate, that's exactly what we are doing. We are delivering on our promise by proposing legislation that ensures everyone in Ontario will see the true cost of electricity directly on their hydro bills. We're taking action to reduce costs and duplication by streamlining the patchwork of inefficient electricity conservation programs in Ontario. By centralizing our approach, we are meeting 94% of conservation goals and finding \$442 million in savings in the electricity system.

We need an approach to conservation and energy efficiency that focuses on the most cost-effective initiatives and targeted programs to those who need it the most, including low-income families, small, medium and large businesses, and First Nations. Our government is reducing costs for industrial and commercial electricity customers in Ontario. That's money back in the pockets of the families and businesses that pay their electricity bills every month. Madam Speaker, this is another step we are taking to make Ontario open for business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: It's always an honour to rise and speak to the legislation in the House, but I have to say that sometimes there is some frustration when we say that we are engaging in debate, but we're not listening to what the members are actually saying. With that as the context, I want to thank the member from Niagara Centre for talking about the root causes of the issues that are not going to be addressed by this bill.

The root causes of the issues that would in fact clean up the hydro mess would be if we made sure that we did not leave the door open for privatization and if we made sure that there was public control. I think we spend a lot of time in the House relabelling, as the member said previously—sort of packaging ideas in a way that seems great and having slogans to support us—but we're not doing the work that would address the root causes of the problem at hand. That, to me, is quite worrisome because we're not just dealing in this bill and legislation with hydro, but we're talking about opportunities to do more than that. We're talking about opportunities to literally do better.

In this legislation, when we have members who are saying it's an actual problem that we're setting aside energy-efficient programs—that's a real problem. Rather than us actually going back to the drawing board and just

making the amendments that need to be made so we can do the right thing, so we can protect the world we live in and we can do that in a way that's more cost-efficient, we stand up and read from scripts and decide that we're just going to keep on making more labels.

I do hope that sometime very, very soon we decide to listen to each other and do the right thing to address the root causes of the issues at hand.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It's great to rise to add my comments to Bill 87, and to the member from Niagara Centre's comments. When we all ran, we all knocked on doors. I will tell you, the number one issue I heard was, "My energy costs; how much it costs to heat my house." This was the main focus of many of the people who ran for the election: how to clean up this mess. That's why I actually love the title of this bill. It's cleaning up and fixing the hydro mess. It's there.

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Let me mention Anthony Haines, who's the CEO of Toronto Hydro, and what he said about this bill. He said, "Toronto Hydro believes in the value of a strong and independent regulator, and supports the government taking steps to reduce red tape in a way that results in greater operational efficiencies for the utility and its customers." The key part of that is "its customers." Those are our constituents. Those are members in our riding. People need to have a break. We all agree. That's something I think we can all agree in this House about.

Our government right now is taking action to reduce the cost of duplication by streamlining the patchwork of inefficient electricity conservation programs in Ontario. We have to get to the bottom of this to solve the problem. We can't just touch the surface. We need to dig deep and find a solution. People can't afford to heat their homes. That's a fact. People can't afford it. In northern Ontario, heating is not a luxury. It's never been. In southern Ontario, it's not a luxury. We need to get to the bottom of this and solve the problem so our future—I'm trying to think of the kids in my riding when their parents are struggling in paying hydro bills or feeding them. That's not a fair choice for parents. We can do better, and I'm really proud that this government has taken the first steps to make this happen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This bill, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act—nice title. But when you actually look at the content of the bill, it's anything but fixing the hydro mess; in fact, it's actually making things worse. The member from Niagara Centre did an excellent job of outlining how the content of the bill is actually making the hydro mess messier.

But I just wanted to take a step back and remind everybody in the House of the different actions that this government took leading up to this bill, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act. We all know very well that the Premier started very early on in meddling in the Hydro One affair. This

government blew \$200 million in Hydro One payouts and golden handshakes. In fact, we had a business, Avista, who pulled out of a deal because of this government's meddling, and that actually ended up costing the people of Ontario hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Hydro One compensation package increased to a whopping \$1.5 million. By comparison, the CEO in Québec makes about \$800,000. That's base salary and bonuses included.

So all of this is happening while the people of Ontario are still paying skyrocketing bills for their hydro. It's very shameful, because government likes to say that they acknowledge that people are choosing between heating and eating, but at the same time, they're spending a lot of money. It's just not going to the people of Ontario in the forms of support and services. It's going to their friends, like the people they're appointing to the board of Hydro One. We know that the former principal secretary—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Niagara Centre for his remarks.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'd like to thank the member from Brampton West—who I had lunch with in the Speaker's office and got to know the other day—and the members from Kitchener Centre, Etobicoke–Lakeshore and Parkdale–High Park for their comments.

Speaker, it's clear that this bill is just a relabelled Liberal spending plan. That's basically what it is. It's \$250 billion that they're still spending, and that's the highlight of the plan. There really is not much else there, except a misunderstanding of how to move forward with our hydro system so that it makes us competitive in the long-term by taking advantage of cheaper forms of power. This government is not doing that. They're actually cutting, as I mentioned, conservation, which is by far the cheapest way to move forward. It's what every other country in the world is doing. They're looking at solar power, wind power, and environmental technologies so that they can be more competitive in the long term, not throwing \$250 billion at a problem in the short term. So clearly, that's what we need to be doing.

This government started off by cancelling green contracts, and they're just continuing down the road of ignoring the environment. We keep pointing it out. In every portfolio that they come forward with a bill, it ignores the environment, whether it's what they tried with schedule 10 in Bill 66 or this failure here with our hydro system—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Burch: —getting rid of the Environmental Commissioner. It's just, over and over and over again, a lack of understanding of climate change and how we move forward. It's really disappointing for future generations.

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

I recognize the minister.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Madam Speaker, we wish to continue the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate. I recognize the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's very nice to see you in the chair, as always, on Thursdays.

We're discussing Bill 87, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019, brought forward by the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. Of course, I'm not sure what the discussion was when they decided what they were going to give—sort of, the easy title. We often have a nickname title and then the more complicated, serious title for many of the bills. I don't think it took them too long to come up with "Fixing the Hydro Mess Act." It is a mess. In the last election, it was probably the topic we heard about most often at the doors. It's certainly one of the topics I heard about very often in my riding of Thornhill. People were very concerned with how fast the electricity rates went up because of previous Liberal government policies. People understood that it wasn't just about the bill for their home; it was the cost to businesses and what that translated into in terms of our economy, in terms of heating our hospitals.

We're now also very concerned about how the carbon tax is going to affect our economy, the federal carbon tax that the federal Liberals have just brought in—it's kind of an April Fool's Day joke that's not that funny—and how that is going to affect the operating costs, the bottom line, of many of our hospitals and businesses and even schools.

After 15 long years, we know that the Liberal government got very complacent and maybe even a little bit tired. That resulted in a lot of waste and inefficiencies throughout all aspects of government. The energy sector is an example of that waste, and I think that it's time that we all work together to clean it up.

We cancelled the wasteful renewable energy projects that our system never needed, and we repealed the Green Energy Act to ensure that the previous government's waste didn't continue.

Now we're taking another step towards cleaning up this hydro mess by modernizing the Ontario Energy Board.

The Electricity Distributors Association is asking for OEB modernization. They have submitted thousands of pages—realize all the lengthy delays for approvals. There's uncertainty around costs, and rate and regulatory matters. When we talk about red tape, this is a prime example of red tape adding to the inefficiencies and raising the cost of doing business in Ontario. It's time, and this is an opportunity for all of us to work together and see it happen. We know that the NDP has said that we're not delivering on our promise to Ontario this past winter, when it was cold, of reducing electricity rates. But I think that it's our first step. This is a big step. It's a good start. We need to get the input costs down by cutting down on the red tape and the inefficiencies, and making sure that we can deliver power for a modern OEB.

There are principles of conservation that we need to plug into—in terms of how those communities can tap into

things like natural gas. I think that here in Toronto, we don't realize how many communities rely on only electricity for heating their homes. Our government is working very hard to bring natural gas to many of those communities, and it's a lot less expensive. I know that my father had propane, and it was switched to natural gas 20 years ago, and it made a huge difference back then. I can just imagine the difference that it would make now to switch from electricity to natural gas to heat a home or run a business. There's no doubt that under this minister's leadership the OEB will once again become a competent competitor, and that gets us to increase our efficiencies and cut that red tape that's been such a burden to our economy for so many years.

But that's not all that we're doing. We know that the Liberal government thought that the answer was always to raise taxes and just spend money. We don't feel that way. We are fiscal Conservatives. We understand there are a lot of ways we can focus here in Ontario on cleaning up the hydro mess while respecting the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Auditor General had a lot to say about reducing electricity consumption and investing during a time of surplus. It would have been nice, Madam Speaker. We're listening to the Auditor General very carefully on all her suggestions. It has also been said many programs were so inefficient that the programs cost \$2 for every \$1 they tried to save. Well, that's not how you save money. We realize that. We're committed to keeping money in the pockets of hard-working Ontarians and ensuring that people don't have to make those tough choices. We've heard it so often, people having to choose between food on the table and heating their home, but it's a reality for many people here in Ontario. Heating and electricity are not luxury items. They're an absolute necessity.

I want to mention a quote from Brian Bentz, the president and CEO of Alectra: "A modern and progressive Ontario Energy Board will provide guidance to the industry as we introduce new technologies to the grid and provide new solutions to our customers. We look forward to working with the government, the OEB and other market participants as we work towards a new regulatory environment in Ontario." I think that's the key word: "a new regulatory environment." There's the old line, "There's a new sheriff in town." Well, there's certainly a new sheriff in town, and this sheriff is focusing on reducing red tape, having efficiencies, opening Ontario for business and spreading the word, and I think that we're doing a good job of exactly that.

Up in my riding, we used to have PowerStream. We used to pay our electricity bills to a company called PowerStream, and now it's Alectra. People wouldn't have even noticed, except that all of a sudden they got an envelope, or a bill if they did it online, that said "Alectra." Alectra is actually a combination of four electricity distributors—PowerStream in Thornhill is just one of them—and the profits go back into the communities. I think that's what I want to just spend a little time addressing. A lot of these electricity distribution companies are actually owned by the communities they're servicing, and

any profits often go back into the community. They don't necessarily go to dividends; they go to profits in the community to pay for things like infrastructure in those communities.

I would invite people to learn a little bit more about the electricity distribution in their system to understand how it works and which areas are serviced by which company. In the case of Alectra, the municipalities are Vaughan, Markham, Barrie, Mississauga, Brampton, Guelph, Hamilton and St. Catharines. As well, OMERS Infrastructure is the shareholder of the utility. The utility rates are set by the Ontario Energy Board, and included in these rates is a regulated rate of return that allows the utility to earn a profit on its investment. I think that when those profits are invested into the community, they cut down on the need for raising property taxes. People have to realize—we all have to realize here—that there's only one taxpayer, and they're paying their expenses, plus they're paying for so many different levels of government.

I look forward to working with all members of the House to fix this hydro mess, ensuring that we get those efficiencies and reduce red tape.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30 today.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome some guests to the House today who joined us for the Special Services at Home press conference this morning. We have mom Sue Bassett, who is mom of Treva, 14, and Tracy Lamourie joining us at Queen's Park today. Thank you so much.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I want to say the beautiful school in Burlington, école Sainte-Philippe, is here today—I'm meeting them on the staircase—and my friend Barry Strader is here as well.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce my great riding assistant Ryan Ladner, who's here today.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm pleased to introduce two friends, Nadirah Nazeer and Shan Natarajan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'd like to welcome Clarkson Secondary School here, from the riding of Mississauga-Lakeshore.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I want to introduce Kevin Vuong, an intelligence officer who's with us today who has been in the Royal Canadian Navy for many years. Thank you, Kevin, for your service to our country.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I also want to welcome Kevin Vuong. He's here with a group of students and staff from Youth Fusion. I'll be giving a statement on it later this afternoon.

We have Lyndsay Daudier, executive director; Patrick Lamontagne, the southern Ontario program manager;

Anne-Claude Michellod, the officer manager; Shiloh Bell, social media intern; Joanna Weselak, who works in Toronto at Kipling Collegiate Institute; Maryam Mohamedali, who works in Toronto at George Harvey Collegiate Institute; Simoon Moshi, who works in Ajax with Durham District School Board; Maria Khan, who's from Oshawa at the Village Union Public School; Mary Anne Garcia, also from Oshawa with the Durham District School Board at Village Union Public School; and Deepikka Ananthamanokaran, who works in Oshawa at the Village Union Public School and St. Joseph elementary.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to introduce two people from my riding, Richard and Lisa Doyle. They are here on behalf of the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound as they won an opportunity to have lunch with him here at the Legislature. It was actually their parents who won it and they have given it to them.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome Art Buckland from my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Art is a former trustee at the Upper Canada District School Board. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's my pleasure this morning to introduce Mike Gibbons, who's the LA for the MPP from Windsor-Tecumseh. There's a Hamilton connection: He's with his mother, Joanne Gibbons, who's a resident of Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the member for Ottawa-Vanier.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Je demande l'assentiment unanime de la Chambre pour me permettre de poser la question au nom de la députée de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

I'm asking for unanimous consent to be able to ask a question on behalf of the MPP for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa-Vanier is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to ask a question on behalf of the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. Agreed? I heard a no.

I believe we've introduced all our guests.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to call the attention of the House to what I'm about to say. The member for Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has given me notice of his intention to rise and raise a point of privilege with regard to a petition presented yesterday by the member for Toronto-St. Paul's. I received this notice a few minutes ago.

In his notice, the member asserts that by stating "I'm proud to rise on behalf of the former pages serving from February 19 to March 7 in group SP19-1," and "I proudly sign this petition on behalf of the former pages serving from February 19 to March 7 in group SP19-1," the member for Toronto-St. Paul's intentionally misled the House as to who signed the petition that was presented.

I am now prepared to rule on the matter without hearing further from the member, as standing order 21(b) permits me to do.

Let me say from the outset that I too was concerned when hearing that our legislative pages were referenced during a proceeding yesterday. It is my sincere hope that no member would use these fine young students to make a political point.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats; I'm not finished.

However, our pages are residents of the province of Ontario and they enjoy all the rights of civic engagement once their time with us has been completed. While the member for St. Paul's did not state that the signatories to this petition were in fact former pages, as alleged by the member for Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, I can confirm that the name of a former page from SP19-1 does appear on the petition that was presented yesterday. For this reason, I find that a prima facie case of contempt has not been made.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Point of order: the member for Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Yes, I heard about this this morning, about the MPP here having this petition, and I wanted to make a couple of points because I think everybody in the House needs to be aware of this—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I've ruled on the matter, and I thank the member for Oakville.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have ruled on the matter. The House will come to order.

Interjections.

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

The member for Markham–Stouffville on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Calandra: On a point of privilege, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You haven't given us notice of raising a point of privilege. You have to give us prior notice in writing.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, good morning. My question is to the Premier. Today, students across Ontario will be walking out of their classrooms for a very simple reason: They want the Premier to know that they are going to fight for their future.

The future the Premier has planned for them means fewer classes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Davenport. Stop the clock. The government

side will come to order. The point of privilege has been addressed. The ruling has been made. Let's move on.

I apologize to the member for Davenport.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Sault Ste. Marie will come to order.

Start the clock. Once again, the member for Davenport.

1040

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The future the Premier has planned for them means fewer classes in the arts, fewer classes in the skilled trades, fired teachers and larger classrooms, and that is not something they're going to accept lying down.

What does the Premier have to say to students who are already tired of being told to expect less for their future?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: This isn't about class sizes, I'll tell you; this is about the union bosses telling the teachers and the students what to do. Our teachers have a responsibility to the parents and they have a responsibility to the students to make sure that they stay in the classrooms and teach the students. We know that the grade 6 students—50% of them—are failing math. Maybe they should keep them in the classroom to teach them more math. Maybe the teachers should focus on learning math themselves, because we know one third of those teachers can't pass the same grade 6 math test that they're giving the students.

We saw what happened under the Liberals. We saw what happened with the big union bosses when they—I guess, there are no Liberals in here.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will take his seat. We can't make reference to the absence of members.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Once again, I'll remind all members, we don't make reference to the absence of members when they're not in the House, for obvious reasons.

Start the clock. The Premier has a few more seconds to wind up.

Hon. Doug Ford: Our focus as government—through you Mr. Speaker—is making sure that we aren't on the lowest tier in the entire country when it comes to grade 6 math students. Grade 6 math students should be at the top tier, not 50% failing math.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm going to continue with my question to the Premier.

It is not just students raising concerns. School boards are warning the Premier that his plan will have disastrous consequences for our students and their futures. Boards in Peel, Toronto, Hastings and Prince Edward have written to the government. Today, the Limestone board in Kingston and Frontenac warns that increasing the average high school class size will have “dramatic and harmful effects on students and staff.” They say as many as 80 teachers could lose their jobs in that board alone.

Why is this Premier ignoring these warnings?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, through you, Mr. Speaker: As I said earlier, it's not about class sizes, because we will have the lowest class size in the entire country. If you look at B.C., it has 30 to a class. Quebec has 32. If you look at Alberta, Saskatchewan, PEI, they have no cap. We're proposing 28. We will still be the lowest in high school anywhere in the entire country.

Our focus is to make sure we focus on literacy, on math, the skills that are going to help these students—the students up there, the students back there—to actually get a job when they come out. Use the math skills—not ignore the math skills, not get bullied by a bunch of union bosses at the teachers' union. Let's start focusing on the students and stop using the students as a bunch of pawns, because that's what the union bosses are doing right now. It's absolutely shameful that they're using our students as a bunch of pawns.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, do you know what's shameful? What's shameful is that response from this Premier and the creative math he's using to come up with this fiction about class sizes.

Boards are also noting that the government's plan will not work for their students. Under their new plan, this government says students must complete four mandatory online courses to graduate. But in a letter to the government, the Hastings and Prince Edward school board has said, "We know that in many areas of our school board students are unable to access reliable Internet service and/or transportation to an accessible location." I'm sure this is something that the House leader would have already passed on to the Premier.

How are students supposed to complete online courses if they don't have online access, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: When the students are in the classroom, they're going to learn to make sure that they understand math skills. Every single job you go into, you have to understand—I'll tell you a story, Mr. Speaker. Before I got into politics, I had a university graduate come by. I was interviewing this person. Out of the blue—and I've never done that—I said, "What's seven times seven?" Would you believe they look around for their phone to calculate seven times seven? A person who graduated from university doesn't understand the basic times table? It's unbelievable.

But I have an idea: Through Bill 48, we're actually getting new teachers to make sure they focus on math skills. I have an idea: Why don't we test all the teachers rather than just the new ones on learning how to deliver math?

EDUCATION

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is again to the Premier. This morning, the Minister of Education took to the airwaves and said she was ready to listen to students. Well, students are telling the government clearly they don't want

larger class sizes, they don't want teachers losing jobs, and they don't want to lose courses that teach everything from art to music to skilled trades. Those are actually courses that lead to good jobs and boost our economy, Premier.

If the Premier wants a dialogue, can he start one right now by explaining why he is forcing these cuts on students?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today and talk about what we're doing. We're not going to be giving in to union stunts like we are seeing happening and being fostered by the members opposite. We're not going to be teaching based on ideology and hidden agendas. We are going to be focusing on what we learned during our consultation last fall, and that is that parents, teachers and students alike want to be focusing on the fundamentals that will ensure them a great career pathway forward. That's what we're doing.

It's interesting. There was a reference made to some media I was doing earlier this morning. Well, I met a young man that the Minister of Finance and I spoke to when he was a member of a round table on financial literacy. He thanked me for where we landed with regard to curriculum that resulted from our fulsome consultation last fall. That's an example of listening, that's an example of getting it right, and that's what we're going to continue to do. We're going to continue to listen—

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

Interjections.

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

Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: I can assure you that the students in this province don't need us or the unions to make them angry right now. You're doing a heck of a job of it on your own. Instead of listening to students—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Instead of listening to students, the Ford government has done everything it can to dismiss their concerns. They claim students are playing politics, they claim students aren't listening, even as they dismiss young people speaking out about their concerns for their future.

Instead of ignoring these young people, will the Premier consider the possibility that smaller class sizes, fewer teachers and fewer course options might not be a great idea?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: We're focused on the fact that the education system is broken in Ontario. That is a fact, and because of that, we reached out, we consulted, we listened, and we brought in people to tell us what they really want. In fact, parents think that teachers should be in the classroom today teaching their students, because we all know the education system has failed our students. We can't afford to lose another generation of students who do not know how to do seven by seven, as the Premier mentioned earlier

Let me be very clear. In the past, we know union bosses organized walkouts against the previous Liberal government. I'm concerned that we may be seeing the very same thing right now.

1050

Quite frankly, we're concerned about the issues that really are going to be pertinent to students, and that is math; that is fundamental, basic skills in terms of science, technology—

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

Interjections.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: Just to be clear, it's not teachers who are walking out today; it's students across this province.

I would ask the Premier to give us the exact number of parents or anyone else who asked for larger class sizes and less teachers in our classrooms, because everybody wants to know.

The Ford government has been very quick to criticize students who are standing up for their futures. But I want to quote one student I listened to today. She said, "We're forced into a political arena right now. Our futures are on the line. I wouldn't say we're the ones who are politicizing our classrooms."

These students are fighting for a good education and a bright future, and I'd say that's pretty darn resilient of them.

Instead of dismissing their voices along with teachers, parents and school board voices, why won't the Premier listen?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I just would like to remind the member opposite that last June, we were elected with an overwhelming mandate to fix the education system in Ontario. We need to fix Ontario. We're going to start with our classrooms, and we're going to make sure that we have great learning environments. That means that we're going to make sure that teachers are focusing on the basics and the fundamentals.

I am so proud that we passed Bill 48 yesterday. Every new teacher coming out of teachers' college to register will have to pass a math test. That's going to give confidence to our parents. That's going to give confidence to our employers.

We're seriously considering all of our other options, because we want to make sure that the people in the classroom have the best skills, to ensure that students are learning the proper things.

But I want to be perfectly clear today: No one—not one person in this province—gets to veto our education plans, because last year, we listened to 72,000 people. No matter—

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

Next question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last month, the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston raised serious concerns about possible illegal

lobbying being carried out by some of the Premier's closest advisers. The member for Essex passed these concerns on to the Ontario Provincial Police. We have now learned that they have referred this matter to their anti-rackets squad.

Will the Premier pledge today that he and his office will work with the police and any other officials conducting the investigation?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: There's no illegal lobbying going on. It's very simple. No one can influence our team. No one can buy our team. Very simply, if you want to talk to the government, call me on my cellphone. You hand it out anyway.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Premier—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, thank you. Thank you for that applause. Much appreciated.

Premier, we've seen in the past where Premiers have destroyed documents within their office. We've seen that show before. Will you instruct your staff that all emails, text messages and any relevant records are to be maintained while the OPP do their work? Will you promise that no records will be destroyed in your office?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask the Premier to reply, again I'll remind members to make their comments through the chair, not directly across the floor of the House.

The Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the question. It's pretty clear that the Premier is the most accessible Premier this province has ever seen. I think, of the 14 million people who live in Ontario, there are many millions who actually do have his cellphone number—much to the chagrin of his staff, I must say. The Premier is very loyal to that smartphone and gets back to as many people as he possibly can.

The Integrity Commissioner of Ontario has ruled on the claims that have been made—or is looking into the claims that have been made.

I can tell you that, without a doubt, there are other matters that the member from Timmins should probably be asking about. We are trying to create jobs in northern Ontario. I know that's something that the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines is working extremely hard on. I'm surprised the member from Timmins wouldn't ask a very important question for the members of his riding on that topic.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary. Nope, that's it; that's both questions. I apologize.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll do a third.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize; I erred. Next question.

EDUCATION

Mrs. Gila Martow: Today is a sad day for Ontario students and Ontario parents. Teachers' unions across On-

tario are encouraging a student walkout across the province instead of encouraging students to advance their education in subjects like math. Union bosses are clearly pushing their political agendas and trying to use our students as bargaining chips.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has committed to working in good faith with teachers' unions as we work to improve Ontario's education system. Can the minister tell us what the government expects of those responsible for representing the voice of our teachers?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to thank the member from Thornhill for her question, because I know you care about getting the classrooms back on track. Thank you so much for that.

But, Speaker, I have to share with you today, the teachers' unions who are encouraging these walkouts are disrupting and distracting students across this province. While unions use the classroom to push their ideas and push their political agenda, our government is getting to work and focusing on the real challenge facing our educational system, because it's broken. For instance, half of our grade 6 students, as the Premier mentioned before, are failing to meet provincial math standards. That's where our focus is: preparing students for the future, to improve their career pathways by focusing on STEM and math curriculum. That's why we needed to make a change and make math education compulsory in the Ontario teachers' college. That is why we are exploring making math skills minimum standards for teacher certification and re-certification in the future.

Teachers' unions are abandoning the classroom to focus on cheap stunts. That's not—

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'd like to thank the minister. Mr. Speaker, I remain concerned about the safety and security of our students who are being encouraged to leave class. I've heard that some teachers might even abandon the classroom to join or assist the protests. Does the minister consider it acceptable for teachers to leave their positions in the classrooms to participate in these protests?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the question. This is a very serious situation. I do not consider that acceptable behaviour from our teachers. No, I do not think it's acceptable. Our government believes that schools should be non-partisan, where students learn the knowledge they need to succeed. It should be non-partisan inside and outside of the classroom.

Unfortunately, the fact is that teachers' unions are encouraging their members to put their textbooks down and carry on political agendas that are union-driven. Speaker, we want to bargain in good faith. We want to work with our teachers to ensure our students are receiving the best possible education, but unfortunately, union bosses are distracting teachers from this goal. This is unethical. It's wrong. It's manipulative. Students deserve better. Parents deserve better.

I want to remind parents that the Ontario College of Teachers exists to enforce instances of teacher misconduct—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. Last night, a recording of the Premier surfaced in which, when asked about job losses of providers of autism therapy, he claims, "There's never been one employee been laid off in the—front-line employee that has been laid off in the province"—I'd love to fix it, but it's the Premier's grammar.

But that doesn't jive with the 19 staff laid off across northern Ontario in child and community resources or the 17 autism workers laid off by the McGivney centre in Windsor. Is the Premier still willing to claim that there have been no job losses because of his callous changes to the Ontario Autism Program?

1100

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I'm glad that's proof in the pudding. I'm at my office until midnight every night, talking to families with children with autism. I think that was at about 10:30 last night, actually listening to people. As we say, we are listening to the parents. We're listening to stakeholders right across the province. We're doubling the amount of money that the NDP cut with the Liberals, at \$235 million. We're putting over \$600 million towards this program, making sure that we get everyone involved and listen to the parents, listen to the stakeholders, making sure we take care of the children

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Maybe he should listen to his own recording that claims that there were no layoffs in the province of Ontario since he has taken office, because if those jobs that I already mentioned don't count, what about the 17 therapists who were laid off at ABA Connections in Ottawa, or the nine workers who were laid off at KidsAbility in Kitchener? That's not even counting the 10,000 teaching jobs that are on the chopping block, or the nurses who have been laid off across the province.

So I will ask again. Premier, think about your answer. Does the Premier still stand behind his words that no front-line workers have been laid off under your Conservative government?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: We're making sure no one is being laid off. We're doing extreme measures to make sure—I know that the opposition actually mentioned about teachers. I'll give you some facts about teachers, Mr. Speaker. Under the Liberals, there were 13,000 new teachers hired, and guess what? Enrolment dropped 109,000 people. So we have 13,000 more teachers being hired when enrolment dropped 109,000.

We're actually protecting the front-line teachers. Even though they're trying to attack us, we're still protecting them, because the people who are directing them, the big union bosses, like Sam Hammond, who has been there—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry. I apologize to the Premier. I have to cut you off.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Okay. I could barely hear the Premier because of the cacophony coming from the other side of the House.

Interjection.

Hon. Todd Smith: Did you hear that, Speaker? Unacceptable. That's unacceptable.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I was talking; I didn't hear it. I can hear you now, and I'd ask you to come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask the House to come to order. Once again, I could barely hear the Premier's answer. The opposition must come to order.

Interjection.

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

The Premier still has a few seconds, if he chooses to use them to wind up his response.

Hon. Doug Ford: No, I'm fine, Mr. Speaker.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday represented an important milestone for police and community safety in Ontario: The Ontario Police College held a march-past and review ceremony. This ceremony represents the culmination of weeks of training for police recruits before they return to police services across Ontario and commence their careers as police officers.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario's police officers are true everyday heroes, and these recruits are Ontario's next generation of heroes. They are making an honourable contribution to keep us safe, stand up for victims and hold criminals accountable for their actions.

Can the Premier please tell this House how our government is supporting and respecting the front-line men and women in uniform who courageously serve to keep us safe?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: what a great day—a great ceremony yesterday. I was joined by our incredible minister of safety services and correctional services—as a matter of fact, that's a tongue twister. By 12 o'clock, you can call the minister the Solicitor General, because we're changing you to Solicitor General. At 12 o'clock today, we'll have a new Solicitor General with the same great ideas.

Nothing was better than going there and watching 479 recruits—it was incredible—from 34 regions across this province, ready to serve. You saw the glow in their eyes, the enthusiasm in their faces. They're going to focus on dedication, dedication to not only each other and their peers, but dedication to the communities they serve, because we're strong believers in community policing.

They're showing true leadership amongst all 479. I mentioned to them, "Show leadership again in your community and teamwork"—focusing as a team, watching

each other's backs and watching the community they serve. It was just the best ceremony—

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I thank the Premier for never—and I repeat, never—wavering in his support for our men and women in uniform.

Ontario is home to some of the finest police officers anywhere in the world. It is an honour to be part of a government that recognizes their contribution to our communities and is willing to stand up for front-line police officers.

Mr. Speaker, our communities are most safe when the police, the people and their government are empowered to work together. Could the Premier please share more about our government's commitment to supporting the police and public safety in Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: That's one of our priorities, because you don't have a community unless you have a safe community.

Each one of these young officers—the dedication they're committing to for the rest of their lives, giving back to communities, not only in policing, not just upholding the law, but getting involved in the community in and out of uniform. It is absolutely critical.

I had an opportunity to speak to a lot of the 479. I had an opportunity to speak to a lot of police chiefs. The appreciation they have toward this government is over the top. All I heard is, "Thank you. Keep going. We appreciate your support," no matter if it's guns and gangs, or the new OPP stations we opened up across the province, or proper communications we gave them to make sure they're safe, day in and day out.

But I want to thank them. I want to thank all the police officers across this great province for their support and for their service back to the community. They're absolutely outstanding people.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Toronto Star reported details of yet another insider who has received a handout from the Ford government. Former Conservative MP Ken Hughes has been hired to advise on this pressing provincial priority: beer and wine in corner stores. He'll receive \$1,000 a day for his efforts, up to \$200,000, plus expenses.

Not only that, but Ontarians could be on the hook for up to \$100 million for breaking a negotiated contract.

Can the Premier explain why the people of Ontario should foot the bill for yet another high-priced Conservative consultant and friend of the Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for the question. Our government is committed to improving alcohol choice and convenience for Ontario consumers, something they have long asked for and something Premier Ford promised during the election that we won so overwhelmingly on the 7th of June.

Mr. Hughes has been appointed to provide advice on how our government can fulfill that promise while expanding business opportunities.

Throughout Ontario, you have to consider that we have the lowest density of retail outlets selling beer, wine, cider and spirits. Quebec has 8,000 retail locations where you can buy beverage alcohol; Ontario has 3,000. So we look forward to changing this trend, bringing more choice and more convenience to Ontario's beverage alcohol consumers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Back to the Premier: As the Premier knows, this is hardly the first time one of his friends has been handed a high-paying gig at public expense. Former PC Party president Rueben Devlin has a \$348,000 contract advising the Premier on dismantling our public health care system. The Premier's former tour director is taking home \$350,000 a year in Washington—more than the actual ambassador—and Jenni Byrne was handed a lucrative job at the Ontario Energy Board with no background in energy. That's just a small sample.

If the province is short of money for students, seniors, hospitals, schools and mental health, how can this Premier find so much money to pay his Conservative friends?

1110

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much for the question. Again, our government is committed to improving choice and convenience. So, because the Premier had never met Mr. Hughes in the past, let me tell you a little bit about him. Let me tell you, Premier—

Hon. Doug Ford: I'd like to know about him.

Hon. Victor Fedeli:—that Mr. Hughes is going to lead discussions with key members of the industry, including the producers, public health, safety organizations, municipalities, restaurants and bars. He brings extensive entrepreneurial and public sector experience that will give him this valuable insight.

He's a former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Minister of Energy in Alberta. He was an MP, as well. He served as chair of the board of Alberta Health Services. He brings lots of experience—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I have to ask the member for Waterloo to come to order, and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to come to order.

Next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Parm Gill: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. It has been four days since the federal Trudeau carbon tax has been imposed on our province. We know the carbon tax will increase the cost to heat your home, fuel your car and feed your family. Yesterday, I was pleased to have both the Minister of Health and the Minister of the Environment in my riding of Milton to speak about impacts of the federal carbon tax on our hospitals. Can the minister please share

with this House how the Trudeau carbon tax will impact the institutions that provide essential and life-saving services to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member from Milton for welcoming the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and I yesterday. The federal carbon tax is going to hurt our health care system. Let me just give you a few numbers here, and I think the members opposite from the NDP should care about these because some of them are in cities I know they care about. The Hamilton Health Sciences corporation will pay an additional \$2.1 million a year by 2022; London Health Sciences Centre, an additional \$1.9 million a year; the Ottawa Hospital, an additional \$1 million a year. The list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker.

The federal carbon tax, this year, will cost Ontario hospitals almost \$11 million, and that will go to \$27 million by 2022. That's a \$27-million health care cut by Justin Trudeau. That \$27 million is 104,000 MRI operating hours for 157,000 patients. That's 3,300 pacemaker implants.

Our plan proves—

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

Mr. Parm Gill: It's clear that this carbon tax is going to place unnecessary pressure on our hospitals, and I'm proud to be part of a team that continues to fight against it for the people of our great province. We were elected to put the interests of the people first, to make life more affordable in Ontario and to end hallway health care. Meanwhile, the Trudeau carbon tax will make it harder for businesses to stay open and is a burden on institutions, such as our hospitals. Could the minister please inform the members of this Legislature how the federal carbon tax redirects focus from what really matters to Ontarians?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. It was a pleasure to be in your riding yesterday. But there is no doubt that the federal carbon tax is going to have a direct negative impact on hospitals and make life more unaffordable for Ontarians.

Hospitals in Ontario are already under enormous pressure. Diverting resources to cover rising heating costs instead of on reducing wait times and ending hallway health care is simply not acceptable. Hospitals should be able to focus their resources on providing the quality, patient-centred care that Ontarians expect and deserve, and not have to deal with unnecessary rising operational costs.

Our government is committed to ensuring our money is being directed to front-line services where it belongs, to improve patient experience and provide better and connected care. We will continue to fight the federal government's carbon tax on the people of Ontario.

EDUCATION

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Minister of Education. Waterloo Catholic District School Board

issued surplus notices to teachers this week, signalling layoffs are on the horizon. The school board said that the \$2.7 million cut from their budget is because of the minister's cancellation of the local priorities fund. This puts 73 jobs in jeopardy. Without this money, these educational workers likely won't have jobs come September.

I'm wondering, Minister, knowing that our kids' education and education jobs are on the line, why is the government eliminating the local priorities fund?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Let's be perfectly clear. The surplus notices that are going out at this time from board to board across Ontario are routine. They're absolutely routine. The fact of the matter is, we're making sure that we are prioritizing how we invest in our classrooms, in our teachers and, most importantly, in the education that Ontario students deserve. Again, Speaker, we've inherited a system that absolutely crumbled under the previous Liberal administration, and unfortunately people are taking advantage of that and manipulating the situation.

But the fact of the matter is, we're going to continue to focus on getting it right in the classroom, because Ontario students deserve the proper fundamentals that ensure success for their careers down the road. We're going to focus on getting it right and making sure the investments are looking at making sure students learn math, because it's unacceptable having over 50% of grade 6 students in Ontario failing math at—

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Even more jobs will be lost if the government moves forward with bigger class sizes. The Waterloo Catholic board estimates that the class size changes that will cram more students into overcrowded classes mean that there could be 80 fewer teachers in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. Talking about potential job cuts at Waterloo Catholic schools is not fearmongering, which I was accused of yesterday, Mr. Speaker. These job cuts directly affect students, especially marginalized and underserved students.

I am so proud of the students who are standing up for their education and walking out of the schools today. That is true leadership, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, students at schools around the corner are walking out today. Will you go to listen to their concerns?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I'm always listening to parents, to students and to teachers. The fact of the matter is, when we're talking about class sizes, I have to remind the member opposite that she is doing nothing more than fearmongering. Again, I'll pass over to the member opposite the CBC fact-check from March 25 that showed, even with increasing the mature class sizes by six students, we're still going to have some of the smallest class sizes across Canada.

So, really and truly, the whole party across the House here needs to get it right, because the fact of the matter is, we are investing in our students, we're investing in our teachers, and we're listening to parents because they are concerned that the Liberal government has absolutely

destroyed the future of a generation because of their failed ideologies, and their failed experiments, if you will. But we're going to get it right and the fact of the matter is that, people, students in particular, should be in the classroom today, and if any teacher walks out—

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

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and minister responsible for women's issues. Recently, the North Bay Nugget released a staggering article titled, "Domestic Abuse Escalating in the Northeast." The article highlights that the OPP reported that the rates of domestic abuse in northern Ontario increased by 150%. Sadly, we know that victims of domestic abuse are often women. This is an alarming trend that we are seeing across Ontario, including in the region of Peel. Speaker, I can confidently say that our government finds these numbers appalling and unacceptable.

Can the minister explain to this House the steps our government for the people is taking to make Ontario safer for women and girls across this province?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to thank the member for her question. This government is going to continue to build on our historic investment of \$174.5 million in funding for violence against women services. That's why we're also tapping into a network of community partners, including about 900 member organizations, agencies and partners, to help stop violence against women and improve services for survivors.

1120

Sex trafficking, as we all know, is Ontario's dirty little secret. I want to assure all members of this Assembly and every person in the province of Ontario that our government takes that issue particularly seriously and we're going to continue to build on the strong work of the Minister of Labour, Laurie Scott. That is why we are doing a number of different things: Not only are we talking to those 900 member organizations, but we've created a multi-ministerial task table, we do have consultations ongoing with the member from Mississauga Centre and the member from Cambridge; and in addition to that, I'm working with the federal government so that we can bring more attention to this issue and more funding.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I would like to thank the minister for her tireless efforts in combatting violence against women and girls across this province and for standing up for our vulnerable women each and every day.

Northern Ontario is home to many Indigenous communities. Sadly, Indigenous women continue to experience significantly greater rates of violence in Ontario. Indigenous women are three times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women, and they are two and a half times more likely to experience spousal violence. These statistics are not only heartbreaking, but they are intolerable.

Can the minister please explain what our government is doing to work with our Indigenous communities to combat this disturbing trend?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I had an opportunity, while at the United Nations, to work with some Indigenous partners from across Canada to talk about some of the work that we're doing here in the province of Ontario. By working together with our Indigenous partners, we are developing and delivering policies and programs that put an end to violence against Indigenous women.

The ministry supports Indigenous-led public education, prevention campaigns and community-based services, such as the Family Well-Being Program, which supports Indigenous families and communities in addressing the effects of intergenerational violence and trauma and reducing interactions with child protective services; and Kanawayhitowin, "Taking Care of Each Other's Spirit," which raises awareness about the signs of domestic violence so that people close to an at-risk woman or abusive partner know what to do to help.

But I appeal not just to women in this Assembly and across the province to support Indigenous women who are at risk of violence—I encourage all strong men across this province, including in this chamber, to take a strong stance against violence against women, in particular, Indigenous women who are at greater risk of violence within their own home.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Dr. Mackie, the chief medical officer of health at the Middlesex-London Health Unit is sounding the alarm about opioid deaths in the London area. There have been 16 overdoses in the past week alone. He says, "It's the worst it's ever been...." Why is this government reducing supports to overdose prevention sites when this crisis is growing worse every day?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. I share your concern and Dr. Mackie's concern. We are in the midst of a public health crisis with respect to the opioid situation. We are addressing that with the sites that have already been approved. We announced them last Friday. There are 15 sites that have been approved—with three new ones, I might add: one in St. Catharines, one in Thunder Bay and one in Parkdale.

We are increasing the number of sites in areas where there is particular need. We are still accepting applications and are reviewing them. There are more sites to be appointed. We do take it seriously and we are acting on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is back to the Minister of Health. Today's London Free Press lays out the toll this crisis is taking throughout southwestern Ontario: three dead in Brant county, one dead in Oxford and 16 overdoses in London. This is a crisis that is killing people every day.

At a time when we should be looking at every possible way to save lives and confront this crisis, why is the Ford

government cutting funding and closing prevention sites in Ontario?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, Mr. Speaker, through you: In actual fact, the funding continues. The sites will remain open—the 15 sites that have been approved. We announced last October that we were encouraging people to get into treatment. The sites that have been approved, first of all, are in appropriate locations. They also provide the wraparound services that are necessary, and they involve the communities in the decisions with respect to those locations.

We want to make sure that we prevent deaths. Of course we want to do that. But we also want to make sure, for those people who want to enter treatment, that those wrap-around services are available. When someone chooses to accept treatment, action needs to be taken immediately because these are people who often don't have homes—they sure don't have cellphones—and the opportunity presents itself only once.

So we want to make sure that these sites remain open, but also, in the bigger picture on our mental health and addictions strategy, that we have the detox beds that are necessary, that we have the community mental health and addictions services that are necessary. The consumption and treatment services are one—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Interjection: That's a great minister.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Indeed, he is.

Our government was afforded a mandate by the people of Ontario to make life more affordable to them. As we continue to work tirelessly to keep this promise, affordability is being threatened by the federal Liberals and their carbon tax—a carbon tax that they would have you believe will leave Ontarians in a better financial position.

But how does that work, Speaker? My constituents simply do not believe that any tax of any kind leaves anyone better off. This tax has already raised gas prices by 4.4 cents a litre, and we know that heating costs and grocery bills are next to rise.

Can the minister tell this House what we're doing to ensure we're reducing emissions while making life more affordable for Ontarians?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill: I know he does a fantastic job of representing his constituents.

Interjection.

Hon. Rod Phillips: I'm blocking his shot right now, which probably doesn't help.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, the federal carbon tax is going to attack the affordability of everyday goods for everyday Ontarians. It's \$648, the price in 2022 for an

average family—a \$648 additional charge for that federal carbon tax.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we are leading the charge. Along with my caucus colleagues, we have been going riding by riding, speaking about the impacts of this carbon tax. Mr. Speaker, it's not just in Ontario. Premier Ford has been leading the charge across this country, and I'm pleased to say that just yesterday the province of Manitoba—another provincial Premier who sees the wisdom of challenging this federal carbon tax in court because it's unconstitutional, it's unfair, it's a bad tax, and we don't need it to fight climate change.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I know that businesses in my riding of Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill are deeply concerned about how this federal carbon tax will impact our economy. We know we can expect farmers, truckers, hospitals, universities and colleges, families and seniors to all feel the impact of this job-killing, regressive carbon tax.

Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that works to find solutions that won't cost the hard-working people of Ontario. Our government recognizes that we must play a part in fighting climate change, but we also know that there is more than one way to fight climate change.

I know the minister has been speaking with many people about this carbon tax lately. Can he tell this House what he has heard and share some of these concerns with us?

Hon. Rod Phillips: People across Ontario have been very interested in our made-in-Ontario plan. They appreciate that we will hit the federal carbon targets for a 30% reduction by 2030, but without a carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, we were at Algonquin College when we talked about students paying \$20 million more because of the carbon tax.

We were in Woodstock with the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier, talking to farmers about increased costs on the farms: a seven-cent increase in diesel fuel—unacceptable.

We spoke to drivers in Etobicoke on Monday about that 4.5-cent increase that will go up to an 11-cent increase in gasoline.

I was with the minister for seniors, speaking with a family, talking about the impact for people on fixed incomes of a carbon tax—unfair, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday we were talking in Milton about the impact on hospitals: \$27 million, Mr. Speaker. That's a \$27-million health care cut by Justin Trudeau.

The CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce says it's an income redistribution scheme that's going to make us uncompetitive.

Mr. Speaker, we'll keep talking to Ontarians, keep talking about our plan and keep fighting this carbon tax.

1130

POVERTY

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

The government has released its 2018 Poverty Reduction Strategy report, and it was astonishing to find that the entire report is only nine pages long and contains no specific plans or frameworks to address poverty.

Poverty is a systemic issue that impacts Black and Indigenous communities that deal with systemic anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, as well as people with disabilities and mental health and addictions challenges.

Can the minister explain why she cut promised and desperately needed OW and ODSP increases and cancelled the Basic Income Pilot when she has no plan to deal with the systems that push people into and keep them in poverty?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to thank the member opposite for bringing poverty reduction to the floor of the assembly today.

As many Ontarians know, one in seven of our neighbours is living in poverty today, and we have to do more in order to support that. That's why we increased social assistance rates across the board: 1.5% for ODSP, 1.5% for Ontario Works. That's why we had a 100-day plan to turn social assistance around in this province, so the one million people who are relying on social assistance—either ODSP or Ontario Works—will have a hand up, so that those who can work will get a job and those who can't work will have greater wraparound supports. That's why I'm working with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to ensure that we have better employment supports for people. That's why I'm working with the Minister of Health so that we can provide better mental health supports. That's why we're working with the Minister of Education to support more affordable child care.

We believe there's a better way forward than simply doing what the previous Liberal administration did, which put one in seven people into poverty in this province. We can end—

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Poverty has deepened under this government.

In the report, the minister again touts her line that the best social program is a job. Yet this government is doing everything in its power to undermine the quality of work available to people looking to get out of poverty, like changing the law so people earn less from working overtime, or freezing the minimum wage that would have put more money back into the homes of Ontarians who need it most.

Why did this government go against all the evidence and cancel a minimum wage increase that would have pulled many Ontarians out of poverty?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: This is disappointing rhetoric from the New Democrats, who do not believe that people should be working in the province of Ontario.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade has told this House consistently that there are 200,000 vacant jobs out there. Wouldn't it be great if the social assistance program actually transitioned people who could work into

good-paying jobs across this province? Wouldn't it be great if we understood that the best social program is a job? Wouldn't it be—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjection.

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

I've stopped the clock. I apologize to the minister. I could not hear what she was saying once the standing ovation erupted on the government side.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: And I have the loudest voice here, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I can normally hear you, but I couldn't at that point. That's why I interrupted you.

Next question. Restart the clock. The member for Scarborough–Rouge Park.

TUITION

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Speaker, students in my riding consistently have said to me that the cost of post-secondary education skyrocketed under the previous Liberal government. Since 2006, undergraduate tuition for Ontarians has risen from an average of \$5,000 to \$9,000. Students and families are frustrated that the previous Liberal government, propped up by the NDP, allowed fees to increase, making university and college more unaffordable for families and students.

Can the minister please tell us what steps our government is taking to provide students and families relief?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park for the question. Students and families make great sacrifices to pursue post-secondary education and, for them, every dollar counts. Ontario's government for the people is lowering tuition fees and giving students the power to choose the services they support on campuses.

Lowering tuition fees keeps money in the pockets of students. We will restore financial sustainability to OSAP to ensure that the program is sustainable and supports the students who need it most for years to come.

We are bringing predictability and transparency to the fees students pay by creating a province-wide Student Choice Initiative.

Reducing tuition and increasing the affordability of college and university will help Ontario students get the education and training needed for the good-paying jobs in our modern economy.

Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the minister for that response. Speaker, our government was elected on a promise to put more money back into the pockets of the people. I am proud that our government is taking action to

reduce the costs of post-secondary education by reducing tuition and ancillary fees.

For years, students have been faced with skyrocketing ancillary fees that paid for services they often didn't need or use. These ancillary fees can be as high as \$2,000, and the previous Liberal government did nothing to stop them from increasing year over year.

Can the minister tell us what more our government is doing to provide real relief from college and university fees for students and their families?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: The Student Choice Initiative is about providing students and families the opportunity to save money. Students are making substantial financial decisions by choosing to attend university or college. Our government is treating students like adults by giving them the opportunity to save money, and increasing transparency so that they know where their money is going. In fact, a student in the member's riding, studying nursing at the University of Toronto, will save \$940 next year, thanks to our government's changes.

The Student Choice Initiative, coupled with a first-of-its-kind 10% reduction in tuition, represents real savings for families, and is another step in our government fulfilling its promise to put money back into people's pockets.

Thank you again.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. I received a complaint, Premier, recently from a constituent, Ms. Pooja Singh, who lives in Winona, north of the QEW. She recently purchased her home based on the province's promise that frequent, all-day, two-way GO rail service was just around the corner. Then two weeks ago, Ms. Singh learned that she would have to keep waiting. She writes: "We are left regretting the purchase of our home because we can imagine the long commutes in rush hour traffic in store for us" to Toronto.

The previous Liberal government kept delaying frequent, all-day, two-way GO to Hamilton. Why are the Premier and the current minister delaying it even more?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Steve Clark: On behalf of the Minister of Transportation, I'm pleased to respond to the member.

I think the minister has been very clear in this House, on behalf of our government, on behalf of Premier Ford, that we're very committed to transit, to increasing opportunities in this province.

I think the minister, who has toured—quite frankly, I think, from a ministry perspective, Minister Yurek and his parliamentary assistant, Miss Surma, have been very open and accessible to the people of Ontario. With all due respect to the member, I believe that Minister Yurek has been responsive and receptive.

If the member would like to pass along that constituent's concerns, I'd be more than happy to present it.

But I think it's pretty disingenuous from the opposition, who supported—

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton is growing fast, Minister, with realtors touting the province's promise of frequent all-day, two-way GO rail in their sale brochures. If there are plans to build more homes, then there must be a plan to get these new residents to and from their places of work. But if there is a plan, the minister is keeping it secret from the people of Hamilton.

1140

Will the Premier and the minister commit to funding frequent all-day, two-way GO rail to Hamilton and give Hamiltonians like Mrs. Singh a precise date when this will happen sooner than 2031?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, there's a party opposite who, for 15 years, supported the previous government who got nothing done in terms of transit.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Steve Clark: They can howl all they want, Speaker, but the facts are the facts. Our government, our Premier and our minister are going to build transit in this province. I think they've been clear. In fact, the member opposite should talk about the fact that the minister was in Hamilton last week to talk about the LRT, the fact that the minister has made a commitment to the people of Hamilton.

Quite frankly, the minister has been so accessible. I'm telling you, between him and the Premier, they've been so accessible to Ontario's 444 municipalities to talk about their transit needs. Our Minister of Infrastructure has been so accessible when it comes to the infrastructure needs of our 444 municipalities.

There's a party that supported the previous government and got nothing done and racked up a huge deficit that's saddling the people—

Interjections.

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

Next question?

TAXATION

Mr. Stephen Lecce: This question is to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. On Monday gas prices went up five cents a litre as a result of the Liberal carbon tax, but we know that this price is only going to increase over time. This isn't surprising though, Speaker, because the Prime Minister has said that record-high gas prices are "exactly what we want." But this isn't what Canadians want, and this Premier and this government will not sit idle as the Trudeau carbon tax cripples Canadian household budgets.

The Liberal carbon tax is not an environmental plan because if it was, Speaker, the Prime Minister would not have negotiated massive exemptions for Canada's largest

emitters. They will be able to pollute for free while families, seniors and small business owners get hit with the full force of the tax.

To the minister: Will you commit today to stand with taxpayers and stand up against this tax grab?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I know I speak for all the members of our government when I can say yes, we will stand with taxpayers. The story that the federal government has been talking about, that you need a carbon tax to fight climate change, is disingenuous. Our made-in-Ontario plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That's an unparliamentary comment. I'm going to ask the minister to withdraw, and conclude his response.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Withdrawn.

A carbon tax is unnecessary to fight climate change. We know that our made-in-Ontario plan will meet the targets that the federal government set. What we don't understand is why the federal government isn't interested in talking about that. They're interested in raising taxes. They're interested in making life more difficult. They're interested in making life harder for families, harder for job creators.

Mr. Speaker, now there are six provinces, including NDP Alberta and Liberal PEI, that are fighting the climate plan. They've lost the confidence of the people, Mr. Speaker, in terms of their climate plan. They should listen to the provinces, listen—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes question period.

TARTAN DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha has informed me that he has a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to let the House know that on Saturday, April 6, it's national Tartan Day, a day to celebrate the 4.6 million Canadians of Scottish descent. I would encourage everyone to come out on Saturday. Let your inner Scot out and lang may yer lum reek.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe the member for Sault Ste. Marie has a point of order, I gather.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a point of order. Following your ruling at the start of question period this morning, the member from Toronto–St. Paul's referred to us on this side of the room as "effing a-bleeps." If the audio doesn't capture it, I'm sure the video will; I know it will. It was very, very clear. I believe we all deserve an apology. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I didn't hear it.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Children, Community and Social Services on a point of order.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Just to follow up from the member from Peterborough, obviously April 6 is important for those of us who are Scottish. I'd just like to point out that the most beautiful tartan is the one the Minister of Finance is wearing today, the loud MacLeod tartan.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Oakville on a point of order.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I just want to state for the record that my daughter, who served as a parliamentary page in the last Parliament—in a non-partisan way, I might add—did not sign the petition by the member from St. Paul's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjections.

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

It was not a valid point of order. I've already ruled on that matter.

president of the OFL. Welcome to Queen's Park for today's debate.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to welcome the students from St. Francis Xavier, grades 4 and 5, to Queen's Park.

Also, I would like to welcome Ahmad Gaied, leader of the OFL, and also Mohammed Hashim. Welcome to Queen's Park as well.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I'd like to also take this opportunity to greet all the guests today in the members' gallery and give a special shout-out to Mr. Mohammed Hashim for always doing such amazing work for the community, and Mr. Neethan Shan, as well, for his outstanding work, and to all the other members who are here today.

VISITORS

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

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to welcome Chloe Weston and Sasha McCormick from grade 8 from Northlea Elementary and Middle School. They're here to witness the decorum in question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills has a point of order.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome a pharmacist, Mena Bashta, one of our brilliant Ontario pharmacists. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to welcome a whole group of people here from Youth Fusion. It's a mentoring program, getting our kids working in robotics and all the STEM fields. I just want to welcome Kevin Vuong, Lyndsay Daudier, Joanna Weselak, Maryam Mohamedali, Simoon Moshi, Maria Khan, Mary Anne Garcia, and Deepikka Ananthamanokaran. Welcome once again.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I would like to welcome members of community who have come for the debate on my bill. These are folks who are either currently sitting in the gallery or will be momentarily. Welcome Atqiya Fariha, Arif Zia, Ahmad Gaied, Evonne Joseph, Faizah Islam, Junaid Sohail, Karen Rodman, Kazi Aditi Zahir, Maliha Khan, Mohammed Hashim, Muhsanah Arefin, Neethan Shan, Noor Baig, Sumaiya Halim Mumu, Syeda Samira Rahman, Sanaa Ali-Mohammed, Samiya Abdi, Tariq Syed, Zartasha Zainab, Omar Ha-Redeye, Hana Tariq, as well as my partner, David McGown, and my team members Ahmer Khan and Ohana Oliveira. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I look over and also would like to welcome Ahmad Gaied, who is the executive vice-

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, you will know, as do most of us who drive vehicles, that the price of gas in the last 30 days has gone up about 30 cents a litre. In Timmins, we were paying about 98 cents a litre about a month ago. The price of gas now is up to \$1.30. It is frustrating drivers beyond anything that you can imagine. It's almost palpable. The price differential between southern and northern Ontario is as much as 20 cents a litre. This government's response is to blame the feds and the carbon tax.

Yes, I agree the carbon tax is going to add four and a half cents to the price of gas, but you're responsible for the other 26 cents by which, quite frankly, it has gone up as a result of price gouging on the part of gas companies. We have a bill before this House in committee now that would allow us to deal with gas price regulation so that gas companies don't do what they're doing now. How do you explain 98-cent gas 30 days ago and \$1.30 today other than the carbon tax, which was four and a half cents? The rest of it is the gas companies that are gouging us at the pumps.

Mr. Speaker, this government has got to do the right thing. If they want to blame the feds for a carbon tax and do that fight in order to help Mr. Scheer in the next election, we get it. They are doing the politics of it. But there's a reality that we all have to deal with, and that is, gas companies are gouging us at the pump. There's a bill before committee now that will help us deal with it. I call on the government to do the right thing and call that bill.

YOUTH FUSION

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to welcome today a whole group of mentors and staff from Youth Fusion. In French it's Fusion Jeunesse. It's a job-creating charity program, a non-profit, that industry supports and the private and public sectors support.

It's so fantastic to hear the student mentors talk about how they're going into our schools and meeting with kids—new immigrant children, marginalized kids, children with autism—and helping them on projects in

robotics, artificial intelligence, even video game projects, which I'm sure the kids really love, and helping them to improve their math skills, which is something we keep talking about on the government side of the House.

We hear that there are mentors from industry who also are involved. It's a program that started in Montreal in 2009 and it's been here now for three years. I really applaud everybody and would encourage everybody to find out more about Youth Fusion. I'm going to be posting on social media. They have Twitter accounts; they have Facebook accounts. Get in touch with the staff and say that you want to support, you want to get involved, you want to donate, you want your children's school to get involved and you want to encourage our children to be job-ready for the next wave of jobs that are coming with this government for the people.

ONTARIO TECH UNIVERSITY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to tell you about a big change for a great university in Oshawa. The University of Ontario Institute of Technology, or UOIT, opened its doors in 2003, but through the years, while UOIT has succeeded in establishing a reputation for excellence and innovation, it has been a challenge to establish their brand. So on March 27, UOIT introduced their new brand, to stand out in the academic landscape. It has kept the blue, but now has a new bright spark of orange.

More than the new look, we have a new name. UOIT is now Ontario Tech University. Ontario Tech invites future students to discover what president and vice-chancellor Steven Murphy has called "the best-kept secret in Canadian higher education."

The University of Ontario Institute of Technology will keep its long name for official business, but like Caltech is short for California Institute of Technology, we now have Ontario Tech.

Ontario Tech's first, historic all-faculty convocation was in June of 2007 and now Ontario Tech has over 10,000 students, 16,000 alumni, seven faculties, 56 undergraduate programs, 37 graduate programs and 20 college-to-university programs. Ontario Tech extends the reach of their research and teaching and prepares graduates to excel in a global, knowledge-driven economy.

I know Ontario Tech will continue to take on the future challenges we face as a society and find solutions to meet and exceed tomorrow's needs. Congratulations on the new name, Ontario Tech, and we wish you and all of your students a bright and awesome future.

CRAFT BREWERS

Ms. Christine Hogarth: One of the interesting things I've learned as I've met with some of the people in Etobicoke-Lakeshore is that we have a strong craft brewing community. We actually have five craft brewers—soon to be six—right in Etobicoke-Lakeshore. In fact, Mr. Speaker, at your recent craft-beer-tasting reception we had three competing brewers based right out

of Etobicoke-Lakeshore here representing my community, which is wonderful.

I'm sure you'll remember that the Premier and the Minister of Finance joined me last August at another Etobicoke brewer, Cool Beer, to announce Ontario's buck-a-beer challenge.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, this Saturday, you too can have the opportunity to experience some of the many brewers for yourself. The people from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and across Toronto will be participating in Etobicoke Beer Run, an eight-kilometre run across south Etobicoke, stopping at some of our riding's amazing craft brewers. Participants will start at Big Rock Brewery, making stops at Great Lakes Brewery, Indie Alehouse and the Black Oak Brewing Co. before finishing at Von Bugle brewery, all without leaving Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Proceeds from participation in this event will go to support the Canadian Mental Health Association, which is a great organization, supporting an important cause. I want to wish the best of luck to all the runners and congratulate in advance all those who are successful finishing the race.

The success of Etobicoke brewing companies and this community is a great example of how Ontario is open for business and open for jobs. I just want to encourage others in this House and those watching, if you want to take a trip to Etobicoke-Lakeshore and visit our breweries, please come. They're open every day.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I rise today in support of the thousands of students across Ontario who are walking out of their classrooms at this very moment. These students are sending a very clear message that they will not remain silent as our public education system is callously gutted.

I stand in solidarity with my nieces Emilee, Mabel and Lily, and in support of all the students in Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas and all the students and their parents across Ontario who clearly see that this government for the people does not care.

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To all of the students out there today, thank you for standing up for high-quality public education. You deserve so much better than a government that takes away from you. Your education does not belong to one government or to one Premier.

To this Conservative government that says that you, the students, are being manipulated by your teachers, that you couldn't possibly have done this on your own, I say it would be a big mistake to underestimate you, the students. You are the people who are standing up for what's right.

Thank you for your phenomenal leadership, your passion and your determination. You are truly the leaders of today.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. John Fraser: Across Ontario, April is Be a Donor Month in support of organ and tissue donation awareness.

Today, there are over 1,500 people awaiting a life-saving transplant here in Ontario, and I'm encouraging all Ontarians to consider registering consent for organ and tissue donation. One donor can save up to eight lives and enhance the lives of up to 75 more through tissue donation. Interestingly, the oldest donor is 90 years old, so it's never too late. It takes less than two minutes to register as an organ and tissue donor online at beadonor.ca.

This Sunday, April 7, is Green Shirt Day across Canada in honour of the Logan Boulet effect. Logan Boulet, as we all know, unfortunately died in the Humboldt bus crash last year. He was an organ donor and he saved six lives. His donation inspired over 100,000 organ donation registrations across Canada. On Monday, April 8, we'll all be asked to wear green in support of Logan and organ donation across the country.

I'd like to thank the Trillium Gift of Life Network for the great work that you do—we're very proud of you—and for your continued advocacy in supporting organ and tissue donation in Ontario.

CAREGIVERS

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Back in November, I had the chance to table my first private member's bill, the Caregiver Recognition Act in Ontario. I was tremendously pleased that on second reading, this bill received unanimous support across party lines.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing that this bill would do is to establish the first Tuesday in April as Caregiver Recognition Day in Ontario. While the bill is still making its way through the legislative process, I wanted to take an opportunity today in this first week of April to recognize caregivers and the incredibly important contribution that they make.

There are around eight million caregivers here in Canada, and it's estimated that the economic contribution that those caregivers give to our health care system is valued at \$30 billion across the country. Caregivers are so vitally important to our health care and our social services. We need to take a moment as legislators to recognize the enormous emotional, physical and financial burdens that are placed on caregivers every day and consider how we can best support them.

I look forward to the next phases of getting my private member's bill passed into legislation so that we can work to improve the experience and lives of caregivers across our province.

EDUCATION FUNDING SUBVENTIONS DESTINÉES À L'ÉDUCATION

Mr. John Vanthof: Today, hundreds of students across my riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane are joining thousands of students across the province in protesting changes that are being made by the Ford government. On behalf of them and rural students across the province, they have

some special concerns, because in small secondary schools, by raising the class size, what's going to result is something called class stacking. There won't be enough students, so you'll put grade 9 academic and grade 9 applied in one class, and you still might not have enough so you'll throw in a grade 10. What's going to happen then? The quality of education will go down. Both students and parents will notice that and want to go to a bigger school. Then what will happen is the shop teacher will go and we will lose schools across rural Ontario.

Another issue that's really tough for rural Ontario is when they talk about e-learning for credits. Well, the school bus can come and pick the student up at home and then bring him back home, but you know what doesn't follow the student in rural Ontario? Affordable broadband. How can you say e-learning when there are students who have no access?

Et, pour les étudiants francophones, vous vous battez non seulement pour l'éducation mais aussi pour votre culture.

And we will stand with you.

BUSINESS AWARDS GALA

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about the Outstanding Business Achievement Awards held by the Flamborough Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday night in my riding. Each year, the Flamborough chamber hosts the OBA awards gala to honour and celebrate the very best in community service and business excellence in the communities that make up Flamborough.

Some of the award winners this year include Amy Robson, who was named entrepreneur of the year. Amy, along with her husband, Chris Haworth, own and operate the West Avenue Cider House in Freelon, whose cider won best cider in Ontario from 2014 to 2016. The Summerset Orchards, where the cider house is located, has over 6,000 trees growing over 100 different varieties of apples and pears.

The winner of this year's small business award was M & M Products Quality Home Appliances. Their story is quite remarkable. A business started by Mitt Misner and run out of the family home; then, his son Ward took over and, today, they celebrate 50 years of serving the community. They've had some difficulties over the years, but, like most Ontario business owners, they persevered, and today, the business moves out of the family home to a new location in Waterdown.

Mr. Speaker, in my role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, along with our government, we are focusing on ensuring Ontario is open for business once again.

I look forward to building a stronger relationship with the Flamborough Chamber of Commerce.

SIKH COMMUNITY

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: It is an honour to speak on Sikh heritage in the auspicious month of April, which provides

a chance to understand the history and the significant role the Sikh community has played in Ontario and Canada, and for us to become even more of a proud, multicultural country.

Mr. Speaker, we believe there are three duties that a Sikh must carry out: naam japna, which is keeping God in mind at all times; kirat karna, which means earning an honest living; and vand chakna, which means sharing one's earnings with others. This can be summed up in three words: pray, work and give.

The history and contributions of Sikh Canadians and the journey it has been from the days when those early Sikh pioneers arrived in Canada to the present day, where this nation stands tall as a leader for equality, diversity and compassion. The Sikh community has made immeasurable contributions to building our province and this proud country in all possible ways.

The history of Sikhs in Canada is a story of compassion, hard work, persistence and progress. Therefore, I invite the entire House to join in the annual Khalsa Day Parade to celebrate the birthday of Khalsa on April 28 in Toronto. Please bring families and friends to participate in and enjoy this open public celebration.

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

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PETITIONS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition signed by residents of York South–Weston. Affordable housing is an important issue in my riding.

“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.”

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

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

I've affixed my signature to this petition. I'm giving it to page Greyson to give to the table.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition here entitled “Disabilities Do Not End at 18 Years of Age. The Time for Urgent Action Is Now!”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on their 18th birthday, children living with developmental disabilities are cut off childhood support and services and put on two- to five-year-long wait-lists for adult support and services. There are approximately 14,000 people with developmental disabilities on the Passport wait-list in Ontario;

“Whereas there are approximately 15,000 people living with developmental disabilities on wait-lists for supported housing in Ontario, forcing people with developmental disabilities to wait decades;

“Whereas families are falling apart due to the lack of supports and services for adults with disabilities, due to enormous financial, physical and emotional stress;

“Whereas ODSP forces vulnerable adults with disabilities to live in poverty;

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

“(1) To take immediate action by passing Noah and Gregory's Law which will ensure people with developmental disabilities and their families can live quality lives by ensuring government support;

“(2) To immediately address and fund solutions for the supported housing crisis in Ontario;

“(3) To increase monthly ODSP for people with disabilities, enabling them to live quality lives.”

I support this petition and will affix my name, and I'm going to give it to page Gwen to take to the table.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

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

“Whereas certain commercial operations known as ‘puppy/kitten mills’ have been reported to keep animals in precarious conditions in breach of provincial animal welfare laws; and

“Whereas dog/cat breeding in accordance with the law is a legitimate economic activity; and

“Whereas it is the duty of any government to ensure the laws of Canada and Ontario are respected and that the health and well-being of innocent animals is protected;

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

“That the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services work proactively with all amateur and professional dog/cat breeders, as well as consumers, with the intent to tackle confirmed animal cruelty cases in puppy/kitten mills and to educate all stakeholders about animal welfare standards.”

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Ben.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired; and

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion” by next year; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges and there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

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

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

I agree 100%. I’m going to sign this and give it to Nicholas to bring up to the table.

HPV VACCINE

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

“Whereas human papilloma virus (HPV) causes cervical, vulvar, anal, penile, and head and neck cancer. Cervical cancer is almost exclusively caused by HPV; and

“Whereas in Canada, approximately 1,500 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year, and 400 women die annually from it; and

“Whereas over 85% of people will acquire at least one HPV infection in their lifetime. The virus is spread through any form of sexual contact and the rate of transmission per sexual encounter is approximately 40%, putting any Canadian who is sexually active at risk; and

“Whereas as of 2016, grade 7 students in the province of Ontario can receive the nonavalent HPV vaccine through public health vaccination programs offered in schools. However, between 2007 and 2016, only female youth were eligible for government-funded vaccination, and only the quadrivalent vaccine was provided. Thus, any females who completed grade 8 before 2007 and any males who completed grade 7 before 2016 were not funded to receive the vaccine, and are at high risk of developing HPV-related cancer; and

“Whereas the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) wishes Canada to become the first country in the world to eradicate cervical cancer through vaccination, screening, and early treatment;

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

“(1) Include the nonavalent HPV vaccine in OHIP+ coverage, allowing all males under the age of 24 who were not provided the funded vaccine in schools before 2016 to get vaccinated;

“(2) Offer the nonavalent HPV vaccine free of charge to all males under age 26 and all females under age 45, through public-health-sponsored vaccination programs.”

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Saniya.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’d like to read this petition on behalf of all Ontarians. We’re getting signatures on this very important issue:

“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 needs 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 to provide an average of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

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TUITION

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I have a petition entitled “Support our Students: Stop Cuts to OSAP!”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition and will provide it to page Mirren to bring to the Clerk.

TAXATION

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have another petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government for the people campaigned on a commitment to make Ontario open for business; and

“Whereas Ontario faces serious economic competition from the United States due to recent policy changes by the American government; and

“Whereas business investment in Ontario is necessary for the future growth and strength of our province;

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

“Reduce the small business tax rate in order to support our small business owners, to encourage entrepreneurship, and to foster a competitive business environment.”

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Arthur.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition and will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Saad to deliver to the table.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Harris: I have a petition here I’d like to read.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and pass it off to page Ben to bring to the table.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, I hope you can hear me over the noise of those students demonstrating on the front lawn.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on their 18th birthday, children living with developmental disabilities are cut off childhood support and services and put on two- to five-year-long wait-lists for adult support and services. There are approximately 14,000 people with developmental disabilities on the Passport wait-list in Ontario;

“Whereas there are approximately 15,000 people living with developmental disabilities on wait-lists for supported housing in Ontario, forcing people with developmental disabilities to wait decades;

“Whereas families are falling apart due to the lack of supports and services for adults with disabilities, due to enormous financial, physical and emotional stress;

“Whereas ODSP forces vulnerable adults with disabilities to live in poverty;

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

“(1) To take immediate action by passing Noah and Gregory’s Law which will ensure people with developmental disabilities and their families can live quality lives by ensuring government support;

“(2) To immediately address and fund solutions for the supported housing crisis in Ontario;

“(3) To increase monthly ODSP for people with disabilities, enabling them to live quality lives.”

I fully support this petition, Speaker. I’m going to sign it and give it to Elizabeth to bring down to the table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

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

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

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It is with a great deal of hope that I stand in the House today to ask my fellow parliamentarians to vote with me to take a strong stand against hate and against Islamophobia in Ontario and in Canada.

A little over two years ago, on January 29, 2017, a shooter walked into the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City shortly after the conclusion of evening prayers at about 8 p.m., and murdered six worshippers and injured 19 others. Ibrahima Barry, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, Abdelkrim Hassane and Azzedine Soufiane lost their lives that night. Communities across Canada, but especially Muslim communities, were and continue to be traumatized by this act of hate-filled terrorism.

Just three weeks ago, another shooter attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in a horrific killing spree that he documented live to social media, murdering 50 innocent men, women and children in cold blood as they prayed, as he was welcomed with “Es salaam aleikum”—“peace be with you.” Let us take a moment to sit with that. He was welcomed with “Es salaam aleikum”; he answered with death. In the hate-filled rant that he left behind, he named the Quebec shooter as an inspiration.

In the days following, here in Ontario, a father said to his four-year-old daughter that it was time to go to the mosque for prayers. She answered, “But, Daddy, I’m afraid to go to the mosque. Isn’t that where they kill Muslims?” Can you imagine how deep the trauma has settled, how long it will sit—the pain, the fear, the questions?

It is no longer possible for anyone anywhere to deny the link between hate and violence and divisive, caustic political rhetoric. It is a link that, as human beings and as legislators, we cannot afford to deny any longer. It is time to act.

Canada prides itself as a welcoming home for diverse communities, and in that pride and in that diversity, we have forgotten that hate can gain a foothold. For too long, we have been oblivious and have allowed hate to grow in this country. We have passed legislation that purports to protect our collective public safety but that names some of us as “other.” Some have protected hate speech under the guise of free speech. We have weakened hate laws so that they are difficult to prosecute. We have minimized the dangers of extremist right-wing groups, and we have justified giving public platforms to hatemongers. We have been slow to quash anti-immigrant bigotry. No one can deny any longer where that leads.

Hate kills. It kills in synagogues and churches and mosques and gurdwaras. It kills on the street and it kills in nightclubs. It kills whether it is called “anti-Semitism” or “anti-Black racism” or “Islamophobia” or “anti-Sikh racism” or “misogyny” or “homophobia,” and we need to confront and eliminate all of it. All of it is odious, and all of it twists us into a society that we do not want to be.

But here’s the thing: We have to eliminate each part of it specifically, because each form of hate manifests differently. It has the same effect: It diminishes lives. It triggers trauma, it induces fear and mistrust, and it makes all of us smaller. But it manifests specifically, and so we have to name it, and we have to confront it specifically as well. Hate kills, but it also robs us, as a society, of the richness and wealth that we could reap and that we could be.

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As a recent Canadian Labour Congress report shows, Islamophobia robs our companies of talent. It prevents people from getting jobs and from being promoted. It means that organizations do not benefit from the diversity that allows them to flourish. It means that women who are visibly Muslim are often underemployed or precariously employed. It means that women and girls endure microaggressions and fear of more serious attacks and harassment on a daily basis. It means that Muslims are told that they are lesser Canadians. It means that Muslims are told they do not belong.

And let us be clear: That is exactly what the hate-mongers want.

The peddlers of hate want Muslims and Jews and Black people and Sikhs and other racialized people to feel unwelcome—to go back where they came from. We need to recognize the profound ignorance that underlies that sentiment, both because of the obvious fact that where racialized people come from is more often Toronto or

Ottawa or Kingston or Kitchener-Waterloo than anywhere outside the province or the country, but also because the peddlers of hate are themselves the descendants of settlers to this country, descendants of people who also came looking for a haven from political discord or poverty back home—people who relied on the goodness of Indigenous peoples to take them in, to teach them to survive on the land and in the winter. Unless we are First Nations, Inuit or Métis, we are all relative newcomers.

Let us think for a moment about what that means.

Just last week, we debated a bill by the member for Oakville North–Burlington to designate March as Hellenic Heritage Month. As the member noted, Greeks in Canada are justly celebrated for their enormous contributions to Canadian life, but it was not always this way. One hundred years ago, we saw anti-Greek riots that devastated businesses and upended lives. Those riots weren't an accident, and although they were triggered by a misunderstanding, the ground had long been set for them by a series of attitudes perpetuated in government and academia by bigoted officials who believed that only western and northern European immigrants could fit in, that only Anglo-Saxons deserved to belong in Canada.

Canada has had to apologize to a long and growing list of communities for racist and bigoted official actions and legislation—a list that includes Indigenous people and the Japanese, Chinese, Sikh, Jewish, Black and queer communities. We've had to apologize for residential schools and for turning away ships of desperate refugees. We've had to apologize for head taxes, for razing communities to the ground and for firing people from their government jobs. We've had to apologize for ignoring people's human rights and their health care.

But even as the list of apologies grows, we find ourselves creating the circumstances for future government apologies. And I ask you today: Let us stop. Let us be better.

I was gratified, when I spoke at the Toronto city hall vigil for the victims of the Christchurch attacks, to see that every speaker—from every party at every level of government and from every organization—used the word “Islamophobia” to describe anti-Muslim hate and bigotry. We need to use the right words if we are to combat what is happening. The Ontario Human Rights Commission defines Islamophobia as “stereotypes, bias or acts of hostility towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia leads to viewing Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic and societal level.”

Let us recognize that Islamophobia is not only harmful to Muslims, but that it hurts all of us in Ontario. It diminishes us as a society. It takes us further away from what we say we care about and want to be. It makes us hypocrites. We cannot stand up at vigils and decry Islamophobia if we do not work to confront it and to eradicate it from our society.

So let us recognize January 29 as an annual Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia. To do so will allow us to do three things.

First, we will appropriately commemorate the memory of six individuals who died simply for being who they were. It will give us time to sit each year with the horror of that moment.

Second, it will give us an opportunity to reflect on what we, as a society, can do as government legislators, as organizations and as individuals to eradicate Islamophobia from our midst. It will allow us to reflect on how Islamophobia manifests in any given year, and what we can do about it. It will allow Muslim communities to advocate for what they need, to ensure they feel that they belong in Ontario and that they are valued and cherished.

Finally, this bill will become a template for other provinces and the federal government, and together we can work to make Canada the country we say we want.

Let us be clear, as well, that fighting hate in any of its manifestations is not and cannot be a partisan exercise. It is up to each and every one of us, regardless of political affiliation, to stand up together to fight the scourge of racism and hate in every way it manifests.

Speaker, I lost extended family in the Holocaust, those family members who did not manage to escape Europe before the Shoah descended upon them.

When I was a child, one of our closest family friends was a Hungarian Canadian named Steve Bleyer, who had survived Auschwitz, along with his brother. Most of their family had been murdered. I can still see the tattoo on Steve's arm. I remember being terrified of everything that tattoo represented, and unable to comprehend how anyone could put a child into a concentration camp simply because of who he was.

Steve was the gentlest man I have ever met, and if he felt bitterness for his experiences, he never showed it. He was grateful for his loving wife, his two gorgeous kids, the life he built in Canada as an architect, and the cottage in the Laurentians that he designed. Later, when he began to do Holocaust education in schools, he always said, “Never again for anyone”—not never again for himself and his community; never again for anyone. It is the only way to build a society that works for everyone who lives within it.

Steve is in my thoughts as I dedicate this bill to the memory of the six men who were murdered in Quebec City, and the 50 men, women and children who were murdered in Christchurch.

Let us come together to eliminate Islamophobia, for the sake of all of us. This must be an issue that unites rather than divides us. I implore my colleagues to vote with me today, and to work with me to ensure that this bill is shepherded through committee and enacted into law. Every Ontarian who cares about social harmony and justice will be watching us closely.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: Madam Speaker, I tell people I am a proud Canadian Muslim and that Canada is my home. My colleagues call me “the Canadian dream.” However, I am really my grandfather's Canadian dream when he came to this great country in 1967.

Now the Canadian dream may in fact be shattered because hate and chaos are dividing Canadians, and we are witnessing what is happening in the world today. Fringe elements within our society have been able to hijack the kindness and strong values that the vast majority of Canadians and Ontarians hold, by stoking various forms of hatred against minority communities. The rise of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia etc. is affecting us right now.

This land was meant to be free. This land was meant to be free for you and me.

On January 29, 2017, this hate spread further into our country. Hate manifested into cold-blooded murder when our Muslim brothers and sisters were gunned down at a mosque in Quebec City, simply for the purpose of a belief. How could this have happened in the land we call free for you and me?

I stand here today in solidarity with all of my parliamentary colleagues who support this non-partisan private member's bill, Bill 83. This act is a reminder that we should not let hatred, bias and prejudice be welcomed in our great province. It is a reminder of how precious life is, and how we need to continuously remember the victims of the horrific attack and to raise awareness on Islamophobia and, most importantly, to combat those who purposely disseminate false and dangerous narratives.

1350

Madam Speaker, we need this day. It is a reminder to all of us that we need to embrace one another with open arms. This country and this province were built on our diversity. It is what makes us stronger and united. We are no different. We are all the same. We all have the same beating red heart, Madam Speaker.

All religions and moral compasses lead to the same path: They all point to peace, love and acceptance. Let us not let our differences divide us. Let us embrace them, and love and respect one another.

I would like to end my speech with a saying of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him: "Kindness is a mark of faith, and whoever is not kind has no faith."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm honoured to rise and speak to this important and very timely piece of legislation, which my colleague the member for Beaches–East York has brought before us to this House today. I want to congratulate her on her very moving remarks in introduction of this bill. I want to thank the member for her leadership in presenting this House with a clear call to action and an important first step to take in the fight against the scourge of Islamophobia.

Just over two years ago, Canadians were horrified to learn of a vicious, hateful terrorist attack that caused the deaths of six men at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City and injured many others.

In the time since then, we have continued to see a steady rise in Islamophobia, and hate crimes against Muslims in Ontario and around the world. Just a few weeks ago, the Muslim community in Christchurch, New Zealand, was

victimised by a horrific act of Islamophobic terrorism that left 50 worshippers at two mosques dead—a heinous act perpetrated by a self-avowed white supremacist.

Unfortunately, we also continue to see dog-whistle politics rise up around the world, as elected people who would rather pander to these hate-fuelled extremists in hopes of securing their votes take a cynical, irresponsible and, frankly, disastrous path rather than rise to the bigger calling that should behoove all elected people: of doing everything we can to heal our fractured humanity. Sadly, we even see some of our leaders afraid to clearly denounce hate and stand up for our friends and our neighbours.

Speaker, our Muslim sisters and brothers deserve so much better than this. They, like everyone, should be able to enter houses of worship without fear. They, like everyone, should be able to walk home at night without fear, whether or not they are wearing clothing or other items that identify their faith, like a hijab. We have to take action—all of us, Speaker—and we have to do it now.

This legislation is a way for the government, the members of the opposition bench and the independent members to take a critical first step in the right direction, to start fighting prejudice, to promote understanding and growth rather than ignorance and division, to show—to actually show—that our diversity is, in fact, our greatest strength, and to push back against the rising tide of Islamophobia and hate.

We can do this, Speaker. All of us together, collectively, in this chamber can do this. We can support anti-racism efforts, empowering the many people and organizations engaged in that work, instead of ignoring, undermining or destroying them. We can start today by voting in favour of this legislation.

If we do this, Speaker, I know that we can begin to build the Ontario that we all strive for: a province where Muslim children and all children know and feel that they belong; a province where no one is denied opportunity because of who they are or where they worship or where they live or when they made Ontario their home; a province where people of every faith and every background live together without discrimination and without fear.

I want to thank again, in closing, the member for Beaches–East York for showing us a way forward. I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate, and I want to close my remarks with a solemn and heartfelt salaam aleikum to all.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to be able to speak in support of Bill 83.

A week ago Sunday, I attended a vigil with many of my constituents to honour those Muslims who lost their lives during the horrific shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand. At the vigil, I said that we must continue to combat Islamophobia and take actions against it, together with all forms of hatred and discrimination. I went on to say that we need to renew our commitment to protect and strengthen our communities to be more tolerant for all faiths and creeds.

The Quran teaches that “the true servants of the Most Merciful are those who behave gently and with humility on earth, and whenever the foolish quarrel with them, they reply with words of peace.” This message for many is familiar because in the gospel of Matthew, it speaks not of revenge and retaliation but of turning the other cheek.

In closing, Speaker, if we choose to look for them, the lessons found within our faiths will bind us together and are far more powerful than those things that seek to divide us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I want to begin by thanking the member for Beaches–East York, Rima Berns-McGown, for bringing this bill forward. She ran on a commitment to advocate for meaningful inclusion, accountable institutions and elimination of all systemic oppression. She is delivering on that commitment for the people of Beaches–East York. The Ontario NDP caucus here at Queen’s Park could not be prouder.

Our Charter of Rights and Freedoms bestows upon every single person in this country the freedom of conscience and religion. As members of this House, we must ensure that these rights are upheld.

In recent years, there has been an uptick in hate crimes all across this country. Whether it be Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia, anti-Black racism or xenophobia, all acts of hatred must be condemned and, most importantly, called out for what they are.

This Legislative Assembly is located in the most multicultural city in the world, but we must remember that even the greatest city in the world is not immune to the rising levels of hate we are seeing all around the globe.

In my riding of York South–Weston, we have had targeted incidents of arson at faith centres, including an Islamic information centre and a Catholic church. Across the city, we have seen mosques and synagogues vandalized, young teens brutally attacked because of their Jewish faith, and Muslim women harassed, intimidated and assaulted for wearing the hijab.

According to Statistics Canada, there was a 67% increase in the number of hate crimes reported to police in Ontario from 2016 to 2017. This increase is, according to Statistics Canada, the most significant increase in the country and was largely as a result of hate crimes targeting Muslim, Black and Jewish populations of this province. Hate crimes targeting Muslims rose 207%; hate crimes targeting Black people rose 84%; and hate crimes targeting Jewish people rose 41%.

Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and anti-Black racism are what they are, and we should not hesitate to call them out as such.

Whether it be in Peterborough, Quebec City or Christchurch, Islamophobia is not and should not be okay.

Following the horrific, terroristic and Islamophobic attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, it is sad that political leaders in this country should have to be shamed into even mentioning the word “Islamophobia.” The people of York South–Weston and the people of this province expect us

to stand up to hate and to call out Islamophobia by its name.

I implore the members of this House to pass this bill, because it is the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

1400

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: It’s a great honour for me to stand here in support of this bill.

On February 23, 2017, I was in this House and all of us who were there then voted in favour of a motion to denounce Islamophobia. That motion that I had the privilege to present moved to reaffirm that diversity has always played an important part in Ontario’s culture and heritage; recognize the significant contributions that Muslims have made, and continue to make, to Ontario’s cultural and social fabric and prosperity; stand against all forms of hatred, hostility, prejudice, racism and intolerance; rebuke the growing tide of anti-Muslim rhetoric and sentiments; denounce hate attacks, threats of violence and hate crimes against people of the Muslim faith; condemn all forms of Islamophobia; and reaffirm our support to address and prevent systemic racism.

I am so pleased to see that Bill 83 continues this good work, and I am very pleased to see that we will again have a standing together, across party lines, to support our commitment to end racism, end Islamophobia, and end discrimination in Ontario.

During my career at the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, I had the opportunity to see the effect of injustice on people. I saw, as I was working with the National Council of Canadian Muslims, the way in which harassment, intense security and denial of human rights affected people. Madam Speaker, discrimination undermines the human dignity of people who are subject to it, but it also diminishes us all. Discrimination can be internalized. It can stop people from seeing themselves as full citizens, from achieving what they are meant to achieve. Discrimination also diminishes the people who engage in it. It prevents them from seeing the potential of other human beings, of hiring them, of welcoming them, of befriending them.

It has profound effects on our society. We suffer economic loss, we suffer social loss, we suffer moral loss when we don’t allow people to achieve their full potential. When injustices go unremedied, we attack the moral fibre of our society, particularly when we all believe in the rule of law.

Discrimination can spread. It is contagious, and we know why discrimination spreads. It spreads because of indifference and because of the silence of others. Today, let’s not be silent; let’s all vote in favour of the bill. We owe it to ourselves and to Ontario to reaffirm our commitment to equality. It is an act of speech to denounce discrimination.

Like all of you, I’ve had the opportunity to attend many remembrance speeches and many remembrance occasions. It is usually when we exercise what in French we call “le devoir de mémoire”: the duty to remember. When

we attend these celebrations, they are symbolic in the best sense of the word. They lift us out of our day-to-day activities, of the humdrum of small politics, so that we speak truly to the dignity of all of us as human beings.

As Days of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia will continue to occur after this bill, it will force all of us to remember with intensity, to acknowledge the violence experienced by the Muslim communities: the killings that are motivated by hatred and that are perpetrated to scare and to scar. Healing takes many years. As we continue every year to remember, we will acknowledge that loss. Action is needed, and every year we will resolve to act, to listen and to continue to fight. We have to acknowledge the violence because it gives families and their victims a voice. Stories must be told. We cannot be a truly multicultural community unless we acknowledge the atrocities that all of us have lived.

In conclusion, il est très important aujourd'hui de voter pour soutenir cette journée de commémoration et de l'observer pour des années à venir. It is our duty to do so, and it is our duty to do so in the spirit of co-operation and community.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I want to start with a message of gratitude to the member from Beaches–East York. We have seen various manifestations of this type of bill before various Parliaments in our country, and some have been better than others, but I want to thank you for your leadership, honestly, from the bottom of my heart—I expressed this to you privately some weeks ago—and for making this bill about the unification of this Parliament. I think that is a very powerful symbol that you have led in the denouncement of hate and the promotion of love in this country.

Speaker, we live in a land of justice and liberty, a country that is a symbol of opportunity to so many people around the world, a nation defined by the values that unite us: freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We are proud to live in this country. We are free to worship, free to love, free to live in security and with opportunity.

However, this freedom is in peril for many Canadians, for many minority communities and racialized communities in this country, and we've seen especially in recent years an escalation in the number of hate crimes that manifest here at home, in my community in Vaughan and across this province. It is with regret that Statistics Canada said in 2017 there was a record high of over 2,000 police-reported hate crimes targeting Muslims in this country. They are being targeted with increased ferocity. Many have faced violence and some have faced death.

We are reminded of the most perverse of these acts: a terrorist act on our soil against Muslims, simply because of their faith, in Quebec City at the Quebec City mosque massacre; then the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting; and now the horrific New Zealand devastation. Madam Speaker, we speak with one voice in this Legislature in denouncement of this hate.

By showing solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters, we emphasize the right of all to worship in safety, the constitutionally protected right of freedom of faith and freedom of conscience. We must stand up for this freedom, an inalienable right. Violence, hate, vitriol against people of any faith, sex, orientation or heritage is simply unacceptable, and it will not be tolerated by any member from this House. We stand in the defence of their security and their rights.

All Canadians are standing up. They are speaking out. I observed this first-hand in a ring of peace that surrounded the Baitul Islam Mosque in Vaughan following that terrible attack in New Zealand. It was quite powerful and emotional to observe Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Jews all come together united, strong and free.

Let us be informed by the words of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him: “Do good actions and deeds as God loves those amongst you who carry their affairs with good intention.” So let us be resolved to combat this hate, to name and to shame it, to work to counter the scourge that prevails in the western world and to stand up for that girl to wear her hijab, to stand up for that student who chooses to worship at their mosque, to stand up for the innocent young children who are bullied simply because they are of faith, because the greatest weapon against violence and hate is to embrace a message of love for all and hatred for none.

My colleagues, this legislation is an example of the higher calling of public service. It is a piece of legislation, by its design, to bring us together, and every one of us has a moral imperative to act today. I'm proud to be part of a government and a Parliament that will do so with unanimity of purpose, standing with the member from Beaches–East York, to send a message that love will triumph over hate, and good over evil.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I want to begin, like so many people have already, with sincere gratitude to the MPP from Beaches–East York, my colleague and my friend. I want to believe that everybody in this House was listening while she was speaking, but my real question in the two minutes that I have to chat with everybody in this debate—I want us to focus on what we actually heard, because sometimes we can listen and accept the words, but don't necessarily accept the action that requires us to show that we really heard what somebody was saying.

Ironically, as I stand here, I can hear young people outside of this House who are fighting for their rights. They look to us in this House, who are in this little bubble, for leadership. When it comes to doing the kind of work that the member from Beaches–East York is asking us to do, naming Islamophobia, fighting against Islamophobia has to include action, not just words. That's what I heard.

1410

I heard her say, “Let us stop. Let us do better.” In order for us to do better, one of the things that I believe is really important for us to do is to take responsibility for our own actions in perpetuating a climate that would allow hate to grow. Hate doesn't grow with individuals in a vacuum.

Hate grows when we, as members of this Legislative Assembly, pass laws that provide an opportunity to other people, that make somebody who practises the Muslim faith feel other, feel like a newcomer no matter how long they've been here, feel othered. That's what I heard from the member from Beaches–East York.

With that, I just want to end with a real commitment, because again, it's not just about the words; it's about following through. So my commitment to this House and to every member, no matter which party you're with, is to help with education. I will speak to anybody in this House about Islamophobia, why it's important to speak out against it, why a particular piece of legislation could perpetuate Islamophobia. I hope that they will be present and ready and able and willing to really listen and hear.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I want to begin by thanking the member from Beaches–East York for introducing this private member's bill to the Legislature. Hate and discrimination must never be tolerated in Ontario.

Tragically on January 29, 2017, Canadians saw what the result of festering hate and discrimination can look like, when a shooter murdered six people and injured 19 others shortly after they finished their evening prayers in Quebec City. We must all, as individuals, communities and governments, do what we can to ensure this kind of violent racism never occurs again.

After this attack in 2017, Muslims across the country were traumatized. I'm sure many felt afraid of copycat or similar acts of violence at their mosques, community centres, schools or homes. Canadians of any race or religion should never have to live in fear in this country—certainly not in our great province of Ontario.

If this bill passes, the government of Ontario would join many other cities and other levels of government in condemning this disgusting and hateful act of violence. We would demonstrate to the Muslim community that we stand with them, that we will not let a lone extremist drive the agenda in this province, and we'll work to ensure this type of targeted attack never happens again. We will not support or stand by while individuals or organizations spew anti-Islamic hate.

Madam Speaker, as someone who has seen discrimination and lived through ethnic cleansing against some of the people in Sri Lanka, I can say from first-hand experience that there is nothing more horrifying or sickening than violence against someone because of their race or religion. My family and I escaped a brutal genocide, and we were fortunate enough to come to Canada, a country always imagined to be free of this kind of violent, extremist and intolerant behaviour. I am humbled to be able to speak today in support of this bill, proposing a Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia, because hate, racism, intolerance and the resulting violent acts are something I have fought against my entire life.

I strongly urge all of my colleagues here to support this proposed legislation, to stand together with the Muslim community and to pass this legislation to do our small but

important part to ensure this never happens again in Canada and that all forms of Islamophobia are eradicated.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's truly an honour to stand today to contribute to this really important bill, and I would like to thank the member from Beaches–East York for bringing it forward.

Bill 83 honours the horrific shooting that took place on January 29, 2017, at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City. Six innocent worshippers were killed and 19 others injured in an act of hate and terrorism. This bill pays respect to those lives that were lost and to those lives that irrevocably changed that day. This bill creates a day of remembrance and a day of reflection. It creates an opportunity to look to the future and to think about the work that needs to be done to combat hate and Islamophobia in our communities.

In Canada and globally, heinous acts of hate and fear are happening against Muslims, and we must stand together to denounce violence against all people. When the horrific terrorism attack happened in New Zealand, there was a group of civic and cultural organizations in London that came together to condemn the horrific act that took place in Christchurch, New Zealand, against the innocent Muslim worshippers during that Friday prayer in the two mosques on March 15. The attack resulted in 50 victims and 50 people injured. The organizations were joining together with New Zealanders and Muslim communities around the world that were grieving.

In a couple of quotes that they put in their letters, one was from David Heap, co-chair of the London chapter of the Council of Canadians: "We have to call out racism wherever we hear or see it—in the media or in everyday conversations. Stereotyping that promotes hatred against any group has no place in our communities. We have to do better at listening to the most vulnerable among us."

Again, I just want to say thank you to the member for bringing the bill forward. I look forward to its passing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Beaches–East York for her two-minute reply.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you, Speaker. I am so moved by the words of all of you who contributed to this debate today. I'm so very, very grateful for all of the thoughtful things that you've had to say, the powerful words that you've all said; specifically, thank you to the Leader of the Opposition and to the members for Mississauga East–Cooksville, Whitby, Scarborough–Rouge Park, Ottawa–Vanier, King–Vaughan, Kitchener Centre, York South–Weston and London–Fanshawe for your really moving and powerful words.

I want to take a couple of moments to talk a little bit more about trauma and the nature of trauma and why this is so important that we all do this together. Like many other people in this Legislature and in Ontario, I am a child of trauma. As an academic, I've spent years interviewing people who are survivors and are deeply impacted by trauma—some of that work on my own while I was

teaching at the University of Toronto and some of it with the Mosaic Institute.

Science now tells us what humans have always known: that trauma changes us, down to our very DNA, and that it is transmitted intergenerationally. So it's not only the sons and daughters of the survivors of a traumatic event who suffer, but their descendants as well.

I am sure that everyone can understand how horrific it would be to come to a country, to come to Canada, to escape war or privation, only to experience hate and violence in the very place that was meant to be a haven. Trauma is eased and addressed when governments recognize and work to address what caused it. We have a historic opportunity to take an enormous stride here today to ease the specific trauma that Muslims in Ontario and Canada have experienced and to work to address its root causes, so I thank you for helping me pass it today, get it through committee, and enact it.

1420

PROHIBITING HATE-PROMOTING
DEMONSTRATIONS AT QUEEN'S PARK
ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 INTERDISANT
LES MANIFESTATIONS FOMENTANT
LA HAINE À QUEEN'S PARK

Mr. Baber moved second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Roman Baber: Speaker, as I begin debate on my first private member's bill, I'm reminded of some of the remarks that I made to the House during my inaugural address.

I represent the beautiful riding of York Centre, one of the most diverse ridings in the country, with over 17,000 Filipino Canadians, 16,000 Russian Canadians, 15,000 people of the Jewish faith, approximately 9,000 people of Italian origin, one of the largest Vietnamese and Latino communities in the country, Lebanese, Tamils, Indo-Canadians and countless other Canadians who chose and have been blessed to call Canada home. Myself, as a Jewish person who was born in the former Soviet Union, I'm proud to be one of those Canadians.

You see, Madam Speaker, what makes York Centre York Centre is its incredible ethnic cultural diversity—people from every corner of the world living together, working together, loving and caring for each other. York Centre is not just an electoral district. Like so many other districts represented here, York Centre is an idea—an idea that we all belong here; an idea that we all live peacefully side by side; an idea respecting basic human decency and

equality of human life. Right here, between the 401 and Steeles and Bathurst and Jane is an idea called Canada—magnificent Canada. That's why I often say that York Centre is Canada, and Canada is York Centre.

Madam Speaker, I bet that if you asked any member of the House, no matter what party, what their main purpose is for being here, I'm sure that they would all agree that preserving Canada as it is—the tolerant, diverse and loving country, home to a beautiful multicultural and multi-faith mosaic, Canada—preserving this wonder of the world is why we're here. We will always stand up for Canada and its multicultural and multi-faith mosaic.

Now comes our time, colleagues, because we're faced with a sad proposition. Hate and hateful acts in Canada are on the rise. What an unthinkable and distasteful thought, but not one that this House can ignore. Last year, Statistics Canada revealed that police-reported hate crimes rose sharply in 2017, up 47% from the year before. Hate crimes targeting the Jewish community rose by 63%. Hate crimes against the Muslim community are sharply up, by 151%. Hateful acts against Sikh and other religious communities have doubled. That is unacceptable, and that will not stand. We're going to fight this trend step by step, and we're going to stand up for each other and help each other, just like Canadians do. I hope that, with help from my colleagues from all parties, today we will take a step against hatred.

Regretfully, in the past, we have seen instances when the grounds of the Legislative Assembly were used as a platform for hate speech and incitement to violence. Just two Saturdays ago, there was an attempt by a group to come onto the legislative grounds to protest the existence and arrival of Muslims in Canada, simply because they're Muslims. Luckily, the police directed them to go around the precinct. Such conduct cannot be allowed on the legislative grounds. It is simply an extension, or the origin, of such tragic and horrific events as we witnessed last month in New Zealand against the Muslim community.

For the last number of years, we have also heard of disturbing and frightening displays of anti-Semitism, including calls for violence right here on the Legislative grounds, right under my window in the east wing of this building.

The rise and frequency of anti-Semitic acts is alarming. Global anti-Semitism is on the move, and hate against all racial and religious communities is on the rise. We have seen this time and time again, over the last 2,000 years. But anti-Semitism doesn't only move through graffiti or Twitter. It moves through a chill in governments. That's when anti-Semitism thrives: when government refuses to act.

But not our government, Madam Speaker. Our government has been clear: There is no place for hate in Ontario, and that includes Queen's Park. We have to send a message that anyone seeking to promote hate or incite violence, regardless of their religion or belief, is not welcome at Queen's Park.

My bill before the House for second reading today amends the Legislative Assembly Act to prohibit any demonstration, rally or any other activity that, in the opinion

of the Speaker, is likely to promote hatred against any identifiable group, from being permitted on the legislative grounds.

The “legislative precinct grounds” means the area of land in the city of Toronto bounded on the east, south and west by Queen’s Park Crescent and on the north by Wellesley Street West.

When an application for an event is submitted to the Speaker, the Speaker will inform himself or herself and will determine if the event is likely to promote hate. He or she will make that determination based on existing information, and information provided by Ontarians.

Let me be very clear, crystal clear: Myself and all Ontarians cherish the freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is perhaps the most sacred of all freedoms, because it is through freedom of speech and expression that we defend all other freedoms. But freedom of speech does not give anyone the right to engage in hate speech or incite violence.

“Hate-promoting” is a technical term used by section 319 of the Criminal Code of Canada to refer to hate speech, and there is no constitutional protection for hate speech.

In the landmark case on speech named Keegstra, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that while laws against hate speech did violate the freedom of expression, they were saved under section 1 of the charter as being a limitation necessary in a free and democratic society.

In Keegstra, Chief Justice Dickson describes hatred, for the purpose of section 319, as an “emotion of an intense and extreme nature that is clearly associated with vilification and detestation.”

“Hatred,” Justice Dickson wrote, “implies that those individuals are to be despised, scorned, denied respect and made subject to ill-treatment on the basis of group affiliation.”

Hate speech was recently considered in a 2019 downtown Toronto decision. In the case of James Sears and LeRoy St. Germaine, the court considered the application of hate speech to their downtown community newspaper, Your Ward News, a publication that often vilified women and people of Jewish faith. In finding the accused guilty, Justice Blouin wrote the following: “The preeminent concern noted a half century ago, that hate propaganda could contribute to violence, is starkly relevant today. The Toronto van attack in April 2018, the Quebec mosque attack in January 2017, and the Pittsburgh synagogue attack a few months ago, are all present-day displays of extreme hatred of identifiable groups.”

Madam Speaker, the purpose of the bill is more relevant than ever. We have to send a message that anyone seeking to promote hate or violence is not welcome in our House, is not welcome in the people’s House and, by implication, is not welcome to promote hate or violence anywhere in Ontario.

My private member’s bill promotes the safety and dignity of all Ontarians. It stands in defence of all of us and of the mosaic, the multi-faith, pluralistic mosaic that makes Canada Canada.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I am honoured to be able to rise and speak to this legislation, which the member for York Centre has brought before this House today. I want to thank the member for initiating an important discussion on hate speech and what we can all do as parliamentarians to push back against this dangerous and deadly practice.

Madam Speaker, one thing I know we can all agree on in this House is that every Ontarian should be able to live and work without fear of being targeted by hate speech. We also know that hate speech can and does incite violence.

Sadly, in too many parts of the world, people remain afraid to engage in these important discussions, and without them, we cannot make any progress.

In fact, Madam Speaker, around the world, we have seen the tide of hatred rising. According to Statistics Canada, hate crimes have been steadily climbing since 2014, and that’s largely driven by an increase in hate crimes targeting Muslim, Jewish and Black Canadians. Around the world, we’ve also seen the growth of ugly dog-whistle politics. We have seen some leaders afraid to clearly name and denounce hate.

Sadly, our great, loving, multicultural province is not immune. In 2017, which is the most recent year that we have data for, six of the top 10 cities for hate crimes in Canada were in Ontario—six. So I hope we can all agree that this is a problem that hits very close to home, and that it requires serious consideration and action from every member in this House. Ontarians of all backgrounds, of all faiths and identities, deserve so much better than this. We all deserve to be able to enter houses of worship, walk home at night or take a ferry ride to the beach without fear, regardless of the colour of our skin or whether we wear a hijab, a kippah or a turban.

That’s why I want to thank the member from York Centre once again for bringing the issue of hate speech before us today. I know that the member knows, as all members of this House do, that the Speaker and the assembly already have the power to bar hateful demonstrations from the grounds, and that these sorts of demonstrations are already explicitly prohibited in the application to hold a demonstration or rally on assembly grounds.

But I commend the member, nonetheless, for going the extra mile and for bringing the issue of hate speech before the House today, because it is critical that we are all crystal clear about this. What we say and what we do, both here and out in our communities, matters. So if we want to build a province where we name hate, one where we stand up for each other and make sure that all Ontarians are safe and valued, we have to live up to that standard ourselves. The people of this province are smart, and they expect much more than empty gestures or rhetoric that isn’t backed up by concrete actions or policies.

When members of this government call on us to stand up together against hate, it means they need to walk the talk. So when Faith Goldy and her white supremacist

friends are spreading hate, when they're claiming that they have the government's support—whether it's true or not; whether it's here at this Legislature or on a mayoral campaign trail—you can't just stand by. You have to stand up.

What I'm saying, Madam Speaker, and what I believe the member from York Centre is saying, is that members of this House have a responsibility to denounce hate and those who spread it. They have to do it clearly. They have to do it specifically: to name Islamophobia when it happens, to name anti-Black racism when it happens, to name anti-Semitism when it happens, without reservation and without delay. Because all that hate needs to spread is for people, especially people like us, people in positions of power, to say or do nothing.

It also means that members of this House have a responsibility to be careful and thoughtful about the language that they use. It means that we all have a responsibility to put respect and humanity first when we speak, especially when we're creating policy. It's up to us as members of this Legislature to acknowledge that calling people "illegal," especially when they are legally seeking asylum from violence and hate themselves, isn't just disrespectful or crude or irresponsible; it's dangerous and it puts the safety and the dignity of already vulnerable people at risk.

But, Madam Speaker, as my friends and colleagues on all sides of the House know, standing up against hate is not just about what you don't do. To truly eradicate hate from our province, we have to take positive action as well. We have to listen to communities that are the front lines of the battle against discrimination. We have to examine the ways that discrimination is built into the systems of our province, and we have to take concrete steps to tear down these barriers.

As the member for York Centre and the government bring forward this piece of legislation today, I hope they will also be moving swiftly to reverse the cuts to programs, agencies and advocates that fight hate and systemic discrimination. And let me take it one step further: I hope that in committing to take a meaningful stand against hate and against the systems and ignorance that fuel hate, this government takes immediate action to strengthen and fully fund the Anti-Racism Directorate. That way, Ontarians can be sure that the critical work of making our province fair and safe from hate and discrimination is being done. These are all critical steps that we must all take as members of this House, because taking meaningful action to eradicate hate and to tear out systemic discrimination at the roots is all of our responsibilities.

I know we can do this. We can stand together with all Ontarians who fight hate and discrimination instead of standing by while hatred and discrimination are spread. And we can begin to build the Ontario we all want: a province where every single person, no matter who they are, knows that they belong and that they're treated this way; a province where people of every faith, every background and identity are able to live together in peace and in harmony without hate, without discrimination and without fear; a province where children are safe and children feel safe, and hateful words that make them feel otherwise are just not welcome.

I want to thank the member for York Centre once again for giving us the opportunity to have this discussion and to hopefully chart a better way forward, beginning with concrete actions to end hate and systemic discrimination. I certainly look forward to hearing the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I am pleased to rise today to express my support for Bill 84, the Prohibiting Hate-Promoting Demonstrations at Queen's Park Act. I want to thank my colleague and neighbour from York Centre for bringing this important piece of legislation forward. As he knows, I share his concerns about the unfortunate rise of hatred and intolerance in our communities. I know, in particular, that acts of violence and acts of vandalism targeting members of the Jewish community are serious issues in both of our ridings.

Members of the House may recall that I spoke in the fall about a very terrible, disgusting incident in my riding in which several students at a local yeshiva were attacked, right in the heart of my community at Bathurst and Lawrence, simply for being Jewish and for wearing a costume consistent with their religious beliefs. I raised it in the House in a member's statement, but it is just one example of the kinds of incidents that are on the rise in our communities that the member, as well, had mentioned.

I look forward to continuing to work with the member from York Centre and other members in this House to make both of our ridings and, indeed, all of Ontario a safer place for all of us to live.

Speaker, we have long said there is no place for intolerance, no place for anti-Semitism, no place for anti-Islamic sentiment and no place, really, for any other form of hatred in the province of Ontario. And while we have much work to do to eliminate all displays of hatred in this province, the legislation before the House today sends an important message: We will not tolerate the promotion of any form of hate here at Queen's Park, on the grounds of the provincial Legislature, in the precinct of the people's House, because this place, this Legislature, above all others, must be welcoming to all those who want to call Ontario home, and the grounds are the same. Nobody should ever feel unsafe or targeted when they want to come and watch the proceedings in this gallery or engage with their elected representatives. First and foremost, we are here to serve the people, to serve our constituents. They should always—always—feel welcome in this place and on these grounds.

1440

I know, as the member from Kitchener Centre mentioned, that the Speaker of the House does already have discretion to prohibit certain activities from receiving permits and demonstrating on the grounds. But this legislation makes that more explicit, providing an unconditional statutory prohibition, which the Speaker has the discretion to exercise. I think it is, as I said at the outset, an important message that needs to be sent.

So I am very proud to lend my support to this piece of legislation, and I commend the member from York Centre for having brought it forward today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Bill 84 is a bill very much needed in our world today. In a world where hate and chaos divide us, there is a dire need to create peace and harmony.

It is my absolute honour and pleasure to stand in the House today in support of this anti-hate bill brought forward by my friend, my brother and colleague the member for York Centre, because hate does not belong in this province or on the property of this Legislature.

Madam Speaker, the role that my colleagues and I hold in this House is to promote peace and harmony in our great province. Our government is here to serve the people. We are not here to endorse hate. That same principle of peace applies here on the grounds of Queen's Park.

As Canadians, we have rights and freedoms, but with these rights and freedoms, we have reasonable limits. Yes, we have freedom of speech, but that does not include hateful rhetoric. As Ontarians, it is our duty to be at peace with one another. Hate speech is harmful in many ways. It can cause psychological harm, just as hate-motivated violence causes physical harm. Hate speech is talk that attacks an individual or a specific group based on a protected attribute such as the target's religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, colour or country of origin. Some countries, including Canada, consider hate speech to be a crime because it encourages discrimination, intimidation and violence toward the group or individual being targeted. Hateful speech is not welcome here.

There has been a rise in hate, Islamophobia, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in our world, country and province, which is unacceptable. All this hate can lead to tragic events like the Pittsburgh shooting at a synagogue, the Christchurch attack at the two mosques, attacks on churches or the tragic mosque attack that happened in our country.

Currently, here in our province, the Ontario Human Rights Code forbids discrimination upon various grounds which depend upon the circumstances. If hate speech and propaganda is a chargeable offence, why should we allow such rhetoric on these grounds of Queen's Park or in our great province?

Madam Speaker, this private member's bill is a stepping stone towards peace. We should not let hate prevail here.

In the words of Confucius, "It is easy to hate and it is difficult to love. This is how the whole scheme of things works. All good things are difficult to achieve; and bad things are very easy to get."

Let us not let hate triumph. Let us unite as individuals and stop hate, and spread peace and love.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I am honoured and proud to rise in this House to speak in support of Bill 84, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act respecting demonstrations that promote hatred on legislative precinct grounds.

Madam Speaker, this bill sends a clear message. It sends the message that we stand united against hate. It sends the message that the Ontario Legislative Assembly is a symbol and it's a place. It's a symbol of unity, of freedom, of democracy and the rule of law.

Like my colleague who has introduced the bill, the MPP from York Centre—I share his background. I, too, was born in the former Soviet Union, behind the Iron Curtain, as someone of the Jewish faith. We did not have the same rights and privileges as we do here in united, strong and free Canada. It is these fundamental values that unite us all. And it's true, as the member from York Centre said: it gives us a home. It's the place where we belong, right here and right now, together and eternal.

This Legislative Assembly has the opportunity to send a clear message, and I couldn't be prouder to stand beside my colleague and support his legislation.

I would like to paraphrase from a very famous poem that can be found at Yad Vashem, the largest Holocaust memorial in the world, which is located in Israel. I paraphrase it and have adjusted it for modern times. It reads, "First they came for the Catholics, and I did not speak out because I was not Catholic. Then they came for the Muslims, and I did not speak out because I was not a Muslim. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not Jewish. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me."

Madam Speaker, I think this poem summarizes what we're trying to do here today. We stand here for free speech, but we have to understand the fundamental value between free speech and hate speech. That is why I stand here today and I urge all my colleagues to support the member from York Centre as he introduces Bill 84.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

I return to the member from York Centre for his two-minute reply.

Mr. Roman Baber: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm incredibly grateful to all the members who stood up and spoke in support of my bill. I'm very, very touched that the premise of my family coming to this country and seeking to avail itself of democracy and tolerance—something that we could not avail ourselves of in the country I was born in—has in fact come to fruition before my eyes today. It is incredibly special to me as a Canadian. It is incredibly special to me as a parliamentarian and as a person of the Jewish faith.

I am very, very touched by the words from my friend from Mississauga. Indeed, he is a brother and a colleague and has been supportive of me throughout this process. We can just pray that the display of work and civility and interfaith co-operation that we've seen here today could be replicated elsewhere.

Madam Speaker, from day one, our government has been clear: There is no room for hate in Ontario. Our government and all Ontarians are concerned by the alarming rise in hateful acts against the Jewish community, the Muslim community, the Sikh or any other community.

Regretfully, we've seen instances when the grounds of the Legislative Assembly here at Queen's Park were used

for hate-promoting and incitement to violence. That is unacceptable. We have to send a message that anyone seeking to promote hate or to incite violence, regardless of their religion or belief, is not welcome at Queen's Park.

1450

Ontarians cherish the freedom of speech; but freedom of speech does not give anyone the right to promote hate or violence. It's contrary to the Criminal Code, it compromises what defines us as Canadians and it should not be permitted in the assembly.

I'm very grateful.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should, before June 6, 2019, provide a firm funding commitment and a clear timeline for the delivery of frequent, two-way, all-day electrified GO rail service along the full length of the vital Kitchener GO corridor.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Lindo has moved private member's notice of motion number 42. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I want to begin by making an assumption. I have to assume, because this has come before the House a number of times, that we are all in agreement of the benefits of supporting this motion and ensuring that there is frequent all-day, two-way GO along this vital corridor. We know that this will promote job creation. It will build our economy. It will help fill jobs not just in Kitchener-Waterloo, but also in Toronto, where commuters are trying to get back and forth. The economic mobility that this will present, the innovation, the quality of life, I'm pretty sure—I would bet that everybody would agree that this motion and providing such a necessary and vital mode of transportation will most definitely help everybody across the province.

Recently, I held a round table on transportation. I spoke to Sandy Pell from Vidyard. She wrote to me and she said, "By connecting our corridors, we open up access to further push the boundaries of what creativity means to us and, in turn, push the boundaries toward increasing innovation within the region. Connected access will bring together a broader group of people from different backgrounds, meaning that we can encourage more creative conversations and grow innovation."

It's extremely important for us to understand the impact that providing this mode of transportation will have. I couldn't agree with Sandy Pell any more.

I've also received, though, since tabling this motion, support from commuters and businesses—like, for instance, Vidyard—but also advocacy groups. I want to take a minute and say a very big thank you to Connect the Corridor. Connect the Corridor, founded earlier this year, is made up of the Toronto-Waterloo innovation corridor's top business leaders, innovators and job creators. Its members include the city of Waterloo, the city of Kitchener, the

city of Guelph and their chambers of commerce, alongside leaders in education, technology and financial services and advanced manufacturing sectors.

On April 2, they put out a press release in support of this motion. I just want to take a moment to read from their press release: "We hope the Legislature will make this a rare moment of unanimity," said Ian Mclean, chair of Connect the Corridor and president and CEO of the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce. "Congestion in Toronto is now ranked as the worst in North America and nowhere is this more evident than the daily, grinding, commute along the Gardiner, 427 and 401. We've settled too long for assurances and incremental increases—it's time for a real plan to deliver fast, frequent two-way all-day service with the timeline and budget to back it up. Connecting the Toronto-Waterloo innovation corridor, home to two of Canada's largest employment zones, is a job creator and economic multiplier—we strongly urge members of all parties to support MPP Lindo's motion on April 4th and hope the government will deliver a plan."

I want to just say, again, thank you so much to Connect the Corridor, not only for their support but for the advocacy that they have consistently been doing. I met them in a variety of places in my riding, but also during the budget hearings they came out to speak about this as well, so I just again want to give them a big shout-out.

However, in order for us to move forward, I think that we have to be very honest about how we got to where we are now, how it is that on April 4, 2019, I'm tabling a motion that has actually been tabled a number of times, a motion with the same idea, the same premise, the same goal. As we have this discussion, what I need us to focus our attention on is the lack of transparency that has been at play in both the Liberal and now the Conservative governments when this motion has been forwarded by various members in this House.

I'm going to actually leave the history of what has happened to my colleague and my friend the MPP from Waterloo. The member from Waterloo has participated in a number of ways in trying to get this going, and I really, really want to make sure that we put on record an acknowledgement of gratitude for her advocacy in this regard, so thank you very much.

I'm going to skip ahead. I'm going to start my little story here in December 2017, because it was in December 2017 that the member from Waterloo tabled a motion about this exact same thing, and it was debated, and everybody supported it. It passed. So there we were in December 2017—in fact, during the election, he wasn't the Premier at the time, but our Premier had actually said, "We're going to fund that" and "We're going to do it as quickly as possible."

This was a promise that was made. It was a promise that was made with the knowledge of how long people along this corridor and outside of it had been waiting for this. It was a promise that was made with a clear acknowledgement that past Premiers had not followed through. That's the reason, I would safely say, that people in my riding

believed that and held on to that and voted for that change, because when it comes to what the Liberals had promised and not delivered on, they hoped this was going to be different.

However, two things happened, two very important and troubling things. First, in December 2018, there was a sudden change of schedules announced, and chaos ensued. The schedule was changed without consulting commuters. Commuters arrived at the Kitchener GO station to find out that the express train was no longer, and that there was an extra train but it was coming at a different time. There were too many commuters there. It was packed, both in Kitchener and along the way, all the way to Union. They had to get security to come in to ensure that commuters were safe.

And in the announcement celebrating this shift that was supposed to be from the Minister of Transportation saying that we were taking a step in the right direction to fulfill this promise, it was just sort of thrown in that the freight bypass was no longer part of the plan. There was no discussion. To be honest, if I think back, when the Liberals had this plan and when this decision was made about the freight bypass, that was the only solution provided to commuters and to people in my riding that would solve the one problem standing in the way of getting two-way, all-day GO. When the Conservatives announced, “No, we’re not doing that,” but didn’t tell us what we were doing, it also ensured that chaos would ensue.

So because my friend the member from Waterloo and I are wonderful people trying to unite across all parties, we wrote three letters to the Minister of Transportation on January 9, January 21 and February 5. We wrote to the Minister of Transportation and sincerely provided examples of the chaos that was ensuing, and in the final ask, we even asked for a meeting. Unfortunately, we didn’t get a meeting, but we did get a reply. We were told that the minister is “committed to giving Ontarians a direct say in how we can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of provincial programs and services,” but we didn’t get a plan.

That’s the reason why, as I turn to some of the commuters who have sent me messages on the impact of not having two-way, all-day GO. This is why the trust has been broken. The plan is what we’re asking for, with a solid commitment with funding attached, so we know we’re going to get it this time.

1500

Sam Toman wrote an op-ed in the Toronto Star. He wrote that after being diagnosed with cancer and having to travel between Waterloo region and Toronto for chemotherapy, he soon realized that battling cancer often means battling traffic on Highway 401.

“The timing of chemotherapy matters. Over 18 months of despair, and hope and frustration we had no choice but to get to the hospital. You can be late for work if there’s a blizzard. You can reschedule a missed flight. You cannot miss chemotherapy.”

Alexandra Piatkowski, a student who was trying to commute—I keep hearing a lot of stories of students who

are trying to take advantage of the fact that you can be registered at a university or college and take a course at another university or college that may have a specialty course that you need. Well, they have to set aside two days in order to be able to do that. If they have a night course at, for instance, Ryerson—I’ve heard this twice—they have to leave the day before because there’s only a morning train, and there’s no train by the time they come back home. That’s absolutely ridiculous.

On the day that I held my round table, I made a new friend. Her name was Jana Beaton. She said to me, “I am a Ryerson University student who is from Kitchener-Waterloo. I travel to and from Toronto often.” She’s had to change all of her travel arrangements. She says, “The trains we have offered are so limited that it’s impossible to commute back from Ryerson when I have evening classes.

“As far as other modes of transportation, it can easily take three hours one way via GO bus, as they only go to Square One and it is extremely challenging to get from there to where I live near High Park, or downtown to my classes at Ryerson.”

We have to do better. In putting a plan together, we’ll be able to address one other issue that’s been brought to my attention from residents in my riding. There is an area called the Park Street layover, where the trains actually sit and rest and get turned on. They have complained about sound. The residents are aware that there are safety issues concerned. They’ve complained about the sound not because of the sound, but because they were promised that this was temporary. It has been temporary for nine years.

Given that there is such a breach of trust with the residents in my riding and across the corridor, my hope is that everybody in this House will stand with me to support this motion and provide the lovely residents of Kitchener-Waterloo and the rest of Ontario with an actual plan by June 6, the very last day that we sit. We can all celebrate. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I would ask all members who are having side conversations to please do their best to focus on the debate at hand. It also makes it less challenging to follow the conversations. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Harris: It is a real privilege to rise and stand in the House today and respond to the member for Kitchener Centre’s motion concerning two-way, all-day GO train service between Waterloo region and Toronto.

To begin, I must commend the member for her advocacy on this issue, including holding a round table, which she mentioned today, and raising awareness by undertaking a midday trek from Kitchener to Union Station.

I think we are in absolute agreement among the five Waterloo region MPPs, whether that be Progressive Conservatives or New Democrats, that two-way, all-day GO is essential to our local economy and connectivity with the greater Toronto area—a corridor which has ever-expanding economic importance to our province.

Where I and my colleagues strongly disagree with the opposition, and the reason why I will not be supporting this motion today, is on the motive and its approach. While our government's fantastic Minister of Transportation, the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, has made significant progress already on this file, the members opposite are determined to play unhelpful political games and use damaging rhetoric in the process.

Before I elaborate on the unhelpful and damaging approach taken by the members for Kitchener Centre and Waterloo in particular, I wanted to highlight some of the good news that illustrates this government's progress toward two-way, all-day service for the people of Waterloo region.

As I've celebrated in this House previously, this includes, in September, adding more car and seat capacity on the Kitchener GO line and, in January, expanding GO train service by 25%, including a mid-afternoon train leaving Union Station at 3:35 p.m. This now results in five morning trains to Toronto and five returning home to Waterloo region. And on March 9, just in time for March break, our government announced that kids under 12 can now ride free on GO trains and GO buses.

Madam Speaker, these are incredible achievements for such a young government, and it is just the beginning. Why is it only the beginning? Because of the leadership of the Minister of Transportation and the new CEO of Metrolinx, Phil Verster. This leadership has driven Metrolinx to cultivate a stronger working relationship with CN, which has allowed increased GO train service along the sections of rail corridor that they own. Specifically, through ongoing discussions with CN, we are working on agreements that allow passenger and freight to operate in parallel, allowing us to steadily increase service between Toronto and Kitchener until two-way, all-day GO is delivered. That's how we added the trains in January, and I can assure this House that there will be more to come. By working with CN to make better use of existing tracks, we can deliver more and faster service.

And there's more. Through Metrolinx, our government is working with rail partners to find new ways to increase service. Double-tracking and updating level crossings are part of what we are looking at on sections of this corridor. As we speak, Metrolinx is undertaking a significant investment to modify train crossings from Georgetown to Kitchener, to improve speed and cut down the overall travel time.

All the Liberals and the NDP managed to do in 15 years was rack up a \$15-billion deficit without getting Waterloo region any further towards this goal.

No more waste. No more delays. No more indecision. We are moving forward, ahead of schedule, with incremental improvements until we reach two-way, all-day GO train service for Waterloo region residents.

We are listening to our local residents as we are implementing these changes. When it came to our attention that after the 25% increase, the resulting schedule changes led to some unintended consequences, like overcrowding, we quickly worked with Metrolinx to add additional cars and restore the express train.

In addition, Metrolinx hosted its first-ever regional consultation outside the GTA, in Waterloo region. Phil Verster and senior leadership team members spent the day listening to Connect the Corridor, a Waterloo region-Toronto association of local mayors and business and university leaders, in conjunction with local MPPs and residents—during an evening public meeting.

Our government is committed to getting the people of Ontario and Waterloo region moving so they can spend more time with family, friends and loved ones.

Madam Speaker, what will not help deliver increased service and might actually have negative consequences is the approach the NDP—particularly this motion from the member for Kitchener Centre—are taking. What we do not need right now is political posturing. What we do not need right now is to set one more arbitrary deadline.

Let me explain why, Madam Speaker. The people of Waterloo region are sick and tired of politicians creating deadlines they just can't keep, whether we are talking about two-way GO or the LRT, for that matter, and sometimes I wonder if the official opposition truly understand this. Metrolinx is currently in negotiations with CN Rail, a private company that owns the crucial corridor between Bramalea and Georgetown. This company ships products from Ontario to the rest of North America and ports that connect to the world. Therefore, any attempt to set arbitrary deadlines is not only infeasible, but also irresponsible. In fact, the relationship between Metrolinx and CN has significantly improved since we replaced the Liberal government. The new trains are proof of this work, and we are getting results.

So really, the NDP's attempt to force an arbitrary deadline cannot possibly work. They simply do not understand how to work efficiently with businesses.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, let me mention one other contribution from the NDP and the member opposite that we don't need: the use of derogatory language. On Tuesday, preceding the member for Kitchener Centre's round table—which I commend, as it is always a great way to hear from constituents—she called the government's policy on two-way, all-day GO nothing more than “chaos” on the radio.

1510

Members here on the government benches are used to inflammatory language and fearmongering from the party opposite—the party of perpetual opposition—but I fear this language undermines the great, hard-working, talented men and women at Metrolinx and the Ministry of Transportation. They have implemented our government's incredible service increases so far and will lead us, with their expertise, toward two-way, all-day GO.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I encourage the NDP members for Kitchener Centre and Waterloo to move past the political games. Work with us, the Minister of Transportation and Metrolinx so that we can, together, move this project forward.

This government understands that Waterloo region's dynamic and expanding economy needs two-way, all-day service. The Progressive Conservative members for

Kitchener South–Hespeler and Cambridge and myself, on behalf of Kitchener–Conestoga, will continue to advocate every day to make this a reality.

So let's reject this motion. Let's get to work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I rise today to speak about how important this motion is, but I want to start by sharing a little bit about Brampton and how we live and how we feel.

Bramptonians consistently are left behind. Notwithstanding the fact that we have one of the fastest-growing cities in this country, the fact that we're the ninth-largest city in Canada—in spite of all this, the past Liberal and Conservative governments have left us behind. The result? Brampton is lacking in every area we need for our success. We are left behind with respect to health care. We only have one hospital, which is overcrowded and underfunded. We are left behind with respect to education, where the dream of a university was ripped away from us at the eleventh hour with its cancellation. We are left behind when it comes to affordability, with the fact that we have some of the highest auto insurance in this country, despite the fact that billion-dollar insurance companies are making record profits. And we are left behind when it comes to transit, with the fact that we do not have all-day, two-way GO and adequate stations throughout our city.

Despite the fact that our population is growing daily, we don't have the health, education or transit investment to keep up. The result? Gridlock across our city.

Brampton has one of the lowest live-work ratios. Huge populations of Bramptonians leave every day to go to work and to go to school. GO trains are packed every morning with commuters as they travel to Toronto—hours wasted by working families, by students; time that could be spent far more productively studying, being with family, relaxing, working.

Bramptonians are tired of being left behind. We are tired of consistently receiving the short end of the stick.

At the least, this Conservative government owes it to Brampton to invest in two-way, all-day GO so students can travel to university, since the government killed the dream of Bramptonians being able to live and learn in their own city.

In Brampton East, the investment in transit is so behind that we don't even have a GO station. Folks in our riding have to travel through traffic to go to Malton or go to Bramalea GO station to access the train.

The current situation is simply not acceptable. The Conservative government cannot continue to leave Brampton behind. The situation will not work itself out. It's bad today, and it's going to get worse every single day moving forward.

But it's more than that. It's about the social determinants of health. It's about building a healthy and happy society; about creating a city, a region, a province where people can be their best selves.

The studies are clear. When people have access to public transportation, to good transit, it has a positive impact on every aspect of their life. Socially, it gives them

the freedom to visit friends, to visit families, to go to school. Economically, it gives individuals the opportunity to travel to access work no matter where it is in this region.

I give the example of individuals who don't just go from Brampton to Toronto for work but often go from Brampton to Waterloo. A friend of mine, Amarbir, who also worked at Vidyard, would travel every day from Brampton to Waterloo, two hours in commute wasted because there are literally no trains going the other way, no trains going from Brampton to Waterloo. It's also about health. We need to create healthy and happy communities. We need to get two-way, all-day GO in Brampton. We need communities to get access across this line. That's why we need this motion passed: We need two-way, all-day GO.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Amy Fee: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the motion brought forth by the member from Kitchener Centre. Thank you for your remarks today and everything that you're doing on this issue, and definitely for the opportunity to address your motion today.

I'd like to start by first thanking the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, as well as the member from Cambridge and our Minister of Transportation for the endless hours of work that we have collectively put in on this issue together.

I need to be perfectly clear from the outset of my remarks, though, that I cannot support this motion, because our government's approach to negotiating train times with CN is working. We have said it countless times, over and over, and I will say it again: Our government is committed to delivering two-way, all-day GO service to Kitchener. When our government for the people was elected less than a year ago, we made a commitment to get the residents of Ontario moving faster, which includes the residents of Kitchener South–Hespeler and Waterloo region. This is a goal that is shared by all in this House. The Minister of Transportation has been working hard and making investments, ensuring that promises made are promises kept. That includes working diligently and tirelessly to improve service to Kitchener.

Making it easier and more convenient for people commuting between Waterloo region and Toronto is paramount to growing our economy and creating good jobs for people in my region and throughout Ontario. Therefore, it's ironic, Madam Speaker, that the opposition has decided to play partisan politics with this issue in hopes of tricking people in Waterloo region into believing their false narrative by questioning our commitment to GO service to Kitchener.

In January, our government was pleased to announce increased train service in the mornings and evenings between Kitchener and Toronto, representing a 25% increase in service. In February, we saw another train added, and we continue to improve service for local residents, working hard every day to make sure that we get to two-way, all-day GO service between Toronto and Kitchener.

Metrolinx has a strong working relationship with CN, which has allowed for this increased GO train service along sections of the rail corridor that they own. CN owns those tracks. Just yesterday, Metrolinx CEO Phil Verster stated that the company has started on a plan to install passing loops at Georgetown, which will allow more trains to run to Kitchener. He reiterated that the project will be completed next year, so that residents and commuters will not have to wait until 2024 for two-way, all-day GO service.

I couldn't talk about this issue without mentioning the former Liberal government. They were strongly supported by the NDP and managed to rack up a \$15-billion deficit and failed over 15 long years to provide the service that we have introduced within our first year of government. That means when we say we are committed to getting this province moving, we mean it, and it certainly includes getting two-way, all-day GO service to Kitchener. Our government for the people is expanding GO service faster and years earlier than the previous government ever planned. This is just the start of more great things to come for the users of our transit system.

I want to conclude by thanking my fellow members from Kitchener–Conestoga, Cambridge, Brampton West and Brampton South for their amazing advocacy work, as well as our amazing transportation minister. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's an honour to support the member for Kitchener Centre's motion today that "the government of Ontario should, before June 6, 2019, provide a firm funding commitment and a clear timeline for the delivery of frequent, two-way, all-day electrified GO rail service along the full length of the vital Kitchener GO corridor." I'm proud to be standing here.

1520

It's no doubt that everyone agrees that our region deserves world-class public transit, which means everyone in our region can get from A to B quickly and at an affordable price. It's a very reasonable goal to aim for. It's also reasonable to assume that that's not something that we have today. The Toronto Board of Trade estimates that we lose up to \$6 billion a year in productivity because of the congestion that we have on our roads.

We have the unglamorous and unwanted record of having some of the longest commutes in North America. As the transit critic, I meet many of those commuters who tell me about their, quite frankly, horrendous commutes. Cleaners, office workers, baristas, baggage handlers, flight attendants and people in the tech sector all struggle daily with the reality of commuting in this region.

I heard many stories when I worked with the workers at Pearson airport about baggage handlers who lived in the Brampton area who would do the night shift, and then they would sleep in a friend's car at Pearson airport so that they could get to work on time for their shift that starts at 4:00 or 4:30, so that they could pick up their baggage and put it on the flights, for the people who are doing the 6 a.m.

flights. They simply had no way of getting home in time, going to sleep and then coming back. That's an unfortunate reality all across our region.

I also heard stories from some of the people here, including the member for Kitchener Centre, who talked about how it takes three hours to go from Kitchener to Queen's Park on public transit because of the lack of quality service that we're experiencing along that region. The member for Ottawa responded and said, "Well, it's actually quicker for me to go down to Porter and fly to Ottawa to get home than it is for you to get to Kitchener," even though it's in the same region. Quite frankly, I think that's unacceptable.

I'm worried about this government's commitment to improving transit. I'm seeing a lot of press releases; I'm seeing a lot of announcements. That's exactly what the Liberal government did. But I'm not seeing that led to real change on the ground, and that's what commuters are looking for.

One of the things that really concerned me was the announcements that were made around GO service earlier this year that somehow, magically, there would be improvements on the Kitchener GO line. But how it turned out in reality is that there was an increase in overcrowding, because it wasn't actually an increase. It was just changes in the number of cars, and there were changes in the number of trains and when they were leaving and so on. It resulted in delays, overcrowding and, quite frankly, a situation that was unsafe. When things like that happen, I've got to wonder: Does this government really have its handle on the transit issues that we have in our region today?

One thing I can be clear about is that transit is complicated. Fixing transit takes a lot of work. But there are a few clear, good things that I recommend that this government move forward on: (1) Work with municipalities. Don't treat them as an enemy, like you're doing with the subway upload. (2) Support this motion, because the communities in Kitchener and Waterloo and Brampton have been asking for this for over a decade. The business community has been begging for this. They're telling you it's needed.

This is a very sensible motion. It will improve the commuting experience of people all across this region, and it will improve the economy not just in Toronto, but in Kitchener, so support it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I have to say, I didn't expect that the government would not support this motion, because the PC Party supported this motion just in 2017, because at that time, the PC Party thought that having a plan and making a funding commitment for infrastructure made sense, but they don't now.

In fact, I worked with the original Michael Harris, who was the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, on this very motion. He encouraged the PC Party to actually support it. So it is quite astounding that the member from Kitchener–

Conestoga is standing in his place and saying that this party no longer supports making a funding commitment, putting an infrastructure plan in place, so that investment will now be drawn into the riding of Kitchener–Waterloo.

I have to say, the member from Kitchener Centre took transit from KW to Queen’s Park just on Tuesday. It took her three hours. Three hours is not a sustainable commuting experience. It does not encourage people to get into the trains or into the buses.

The member from Timmins can get from this place to his door in two hours and 10 minutes, in northern Ontario. This is not an acceptable condition—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Come to order, Kitchener–Conestoga.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I have to say, I think I’ve hit a nerve on the member, because you’re totally disconnected from the real needs of the Waterloo region.

The fact that since 2012 I have been advocating for just a plan from a government on this issue, and the members who came to the budget committee—Connect the Corridor, the universities, Communitech, the municipalities—all they have asked for is a plan, because once that plan is in place and once that funding commitment is secure, they know and we know that that will draw investment to the region.

They’ve been promised a bullet train from the former Liberal government; they were promised 15-minute, all-day GO; and they were promised a dedicated line where commuters would not have to sit in a GO train for 15 minutes while a freight train passes them.

So the tension between the commuters and the freight in this province is real. If you follow the Metrolinx Kitchener line, you will see that commuters consider their experience to be chaotic. When the member from Kitchener Centre uses the word “chaos,” that is the real, lived experience of commuters from Kitchener–Waterloo and Brampton and all the way along that line. That is the real lived experience.

So let me ask you a question: Why would CN just give up their freight business to make this Minister of Transportation look good? They just will not do it. There’s no good argument for it. If it’s the cost, then be open and transparent. What is it going to cost? What is it going to cost for that deal that is being made? Because the freight bypass was the key part of ensuring that we could electrify the line, that we could get a train from Toronto to Kitchener–Waterloo, and that those 2,000 jobs that are empty right now in Waterloo region could be filled by the people who live here in Toronto and Brampton.

The fact that all we are asking for, all the member from Kitchener Centre is asking for, is for you to make a firm commitment to keep a promise, to make sure that that investment is very clear—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Kitchener–Conestoga will come to order.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —is absolutely fiscally irresponsible, and, let me tell, you will be laughed right out of this region for not voting for this motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Kitchener Centre has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: This is quite fascinating. I did use the word “chaos” on the radio, because when you don’t have a plan, chaos ensues. When you don’t have a plan, you don’t have milestones that the community can hold onto to have a sense of where we are in actually achieving our goal.

All this motion was, was a request for a plan. To stand up and, instead of supporting the motion, accuse me of partisan politics—and yesterday I was accused of fearmongering. I think to myself, “Every moment that I have taken to be in this House, to stand at this seat and to speak to the government, I have been respectful, I have been polite and I have been conciliatory. I have asked for meetings.” I have been told, “Work together. Work together. Let’s work together,” except how do I work with somebody who won’t take meetings with me?

I’ve asked the Minister of Transportation to set up a meeting. I actually wanted a meeting with the Conservative members in Waterloo region as well—

Mr. Mike Harris: You never asked.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: That was asked. It was asked in writing—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Kitchener–Conestoga is warned.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: And instead of receiving the meeting, I am told that this is me playing partisan politics.

So here is my last word: The commuters and the members of the advocacy community across Kitchener Centre have asked me to do this work, to stand in this space and use my privilege to advocate for what they need. The community of businesses has done the same.

I will stand here and I will continue to stand here asking for a plan, because chaos cannot be the norm.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I would like to draw everyone’s attention to the fact that we have a visiting former member, Frank Klees, in the Legislature.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Klees served in this House from the 36th to 40th Parliament. I believe the riding in the 36th was York–Mackenzie; Oak Ridges from the 37th to the 38th; and Newmarket–Aurora, most recently, from the 39th to the 40th. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The House will come to order.

The time provided for private members’ public business has expired.

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item number 58, standing up in the name of Ms. Berns-McGown.

Ms. Berns-McGown moved second reading of Bill 83, An Act to proclaim a Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Social policy, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of it being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed.

PROHIBITING HATE-PROMOTING
DEMONSTRATIONS AT QUEEN'S PARK
ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 INTERDISANT
LES MANIFESTATIONS FOMENTANT
LA HAINE À QUEEN'S PARK

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Baber has moved second reading of Bill 84, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act respecting demonstrations that promote hatred on legislative precinct grounds. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Mr. Roman Baber: Justice policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of the bill being referred to justice policy? Agreed.

GO TRANSIT

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Lindo has moved private member's notice of motion number 42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."
All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."
In my opinion, the nays have it.
Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1532 to 1537.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All members will please take their seats.

Ms. Lindo has moved private member's notice of motion number 42. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Hassan, Faisal	Shaw, Sandy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Gurratan
Bell, Jessica	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stiles, Marit
Berns-McGown, Rima	Lindo, Laura Mae	Tabuns, Peter
Bisson, Gilles	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Burch, Jeff	Miller, Paul	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Morrison, Suze	
Glover, Chris	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baber, Roman	Hogarth, Christine	Phillips, Rod
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Sylvia	Piccini, David
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kanapathi, Logan	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bouma, Will	Karahalios, Belinda	Rickford, Greg
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Roberts, Jeremy
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Khanjin, Andrea	Romano, Ross
Clark, Steve	Kramp, Daryl	Sabawy, Sheref
Coe, Lorne	Kusendova, Natalia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martin, Robin	Scott, Laurie
Downey, Doug	Martow, Gila	Skelly, Donna
Dunlop, Jill	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Dave
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Fee, Amy	Nicholls, Rick	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Gill, Parm	Park, Lindsey	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Harris, Mike	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 22; the nays are 51.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, April 8, 2019, at 10:30.

The House adjourned at 1540.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Downey, Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	
Dunlop, Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Orléans	
Lecce, Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (IND)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubuski, 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

Chair / Président: Dave Smith
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Chris Glover
Christine Hogarth, Logan Kanapathi
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Dave Smith, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Parm Gill
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Jane McKenna
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Lorne Coe, Michael Coteau
Mike Harris, Faisal Hassan
Jane McKenna, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Toby Barrett, Catherine Fife
Goldie Ghamari, Jim McDonell
Norman Miller, Suze Morrison
Michael Parsa, Peggy Sattler
Kinga Surma
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Will Bouma, Paul Calandra
Lorne Coe, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
John Fraser, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie