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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 April 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 avril 2019

The House met at 1030.

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask members to introduce their guests, I'd like to welcome some very special guests who are here with us today in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd like them to stand up: Bill and Carol Baxter from Fergus, and Glenna and Doug Smith from the township of Puslinch. Welcome to Queen's Park. It's wonderful to have you here.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to introduce Moira McPherson and Richard Longtin from Lakehead University.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I too would like to say hello to Bill Baxter. It's great to see him here. He was an agricultural representative when I worked for OMAFRA, and a great example in Waterloo region to be followed—very good.

I'd also like to welcome today members of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association—it's so nice to have you here—Cathy Abraham, Rusty Hick and Jennifer McIntyre.

Mr. Joel Harden: It gives me great pleasure to welcome today my parents, Rosemary and Reg Harden, from the great riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Mom and Dad, thanks for helping me get here.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'd like to welcome to the House Nikki Porter, executive director of Epilepsy Ottawa.

After we've introduced our guests, I'd like to ask for a moment of silence for the passing of the father of our legislative intern Hudson Manning.

Hon. Doug Ford: It's the first introduction I've ever had, and it's so appropriate. My lovely mother came down to pay us a visit. If you think I'm tough to handle, Mr. Speaker, wait till she gets going.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I would like to welcome today Paul Raymond, who is the executive director of Epilepsy Ontario and also a constituent of Toronto Centre. Welcome.

Hon. Christine Elliott: We have medical students here at Queen's Park today from all across Ontario. Welcome. We're very pleased to see you all here.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today, for their first, I believe, lobby day here at Queen's Park, Cathy Abraham, president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, and

Rusty Hick, executive director. Thank you so much for being here.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'd like to welcome Yan Shugang, the president of Tsinghua University in China, as well as June He of Environmental Waste International, my constituency assistant Joanna Maio, and Trevor Gordon of Epilepsy Ontario.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have several visitors to introduce this morning. I'd like to welcome four students from London who are with the Ontario Medical Students Association: Sydney Eaton, Gali Katznelson, Victor Polins Pedro and Elise Quint.

I'd also like to welcome Jayme Arts and Rochelle Sorzano from Epilepsy Ontario, both of whom represent London and region, as well as Robert McNeil and Kelly Smith, constituents who are here from London West. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'd like to welcome Shawna Bailey, executive director for Epilepsy Simcoe County and Melanie Jeffrey, the president of the board for Epilepsy Ontario.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I would like to welcome Deputy Grand Chief Derek Fox from the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and also Tabatha Bull, chief operating officer for the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. Meegwetch.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to introduce Dianne McKenzie who is the chief executive officer for Epilepsy Durham Region. Welcome to Queen's Park, Dianne.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome the Ontario Medical Students Association and, more specifically, the students who came down from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I want to introduce my friend Anser Daud, who is here with the U of T medical team and the Ontario Medical Students Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome students from the Ontario Medical Students Association: Victor Polins Pedro, Zachary Weiss, Silvio Ndoja, Adrina Zhong, as well as Robert McNeil, an animal and environmental advocate and a constituent of mine in London North Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Miss Kinga Surma: I would like to introduce two constituents of mine: Donovan McKenzie, CEO of Heart of a Man, and David Charchalis, chief operating officer, Epilepsy South Central Ontario. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I would like to introduce Claudia Cozza, the executive director of Epilepsy York Region. Welcome to the House.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good morning. I'd like to welcome to the Legislature the team that is hosting the naloxone

awareness day. Please welcome David Renwick, Allison Tario, Mark Barnes, Allan Malek, Betsy Nejat, Victoria Ip, David Thompson, Angela Schotsman and Allison Jones. I urge all members in the House to please attend the naloxone awareness reception being held today right after question period in room 228.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to introduce my dear friend, my adviser, an adviser to the Premier, and a former great leader in Lac Seul First Nation: Clifford Bull. He is accompanied by Richard Longtin, government relations for Lakehead University, and the president, Moira McPherson, from Lakehead University. Welcome to this magnificent place.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'd like to introduce Cynthia Milburn, who is the chief executive officer at Epilepsy South Central Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Stan Cho: It's my pleasure to introduce Leah Sultan-Khan, director of community engagement for Epilepsy Toronto. I'm proud to say she's a Willowdaler and making a huge difference not just in our neighbourhood but throughout the city. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Today's page captain, from Elgin–Middlesex–London, is Virginia Will. Her family finally got into the Legislature. They had to go to the other side, but they're here. Welcome Steve Will, Melanie Will; grandparents Pat Will, Larry Will, Gail Rader, Roy Rader; and her sister Selena Will. Her brother, former page Jacob Will, is back in the House.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today a friend of mine, Eric Brouwer, who is from Mt. Brydges. Welcome.

Mr. Dave Smith: I don't see her yet, but we will be joined today by my wife, Lorien Smith.

1040

Mr. Ross Romano: I would also like to welcome Dr. Moira McPherson, president of Lakehead; Richard Longtin, government relations director at Lakehead; and Chief Clifford Bull, special adviser on Indigenous relations.

JOEL MANNING

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I rise on a point of order. I'm seeking unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence to acknowledge the passing of the father of one of our legislative interns, Hudson Manning. Mr. Manning died of a heart attack while hiking with Hudson on Friday.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa–Vanier is seeking unanimous consent of the House to have a moment of silence in memory of Mr. Manning. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Late last week, City News broke the news that the Ford

government is looking to cut a variety of OHIP-covered health services, not on the basis of what's good for patients, but to save half a billion dollars. The Premier's office quickly announced that they would not be asking patients to endure a colonoscopy without anaesthetic, and that is a relief to many people in the province. But that was just one of a long series of cuts that the government is considering.

Can the Premier tell us which health care services he is planning to cut?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member for the question because it gives us the opportunity to let the people of Ontario know what's actually happening.

First of all, the Appropriateness Working Group has been established as a result of the arbitrator's decision with the Ontario Medical Association, and we are resetting the button on a relationship that has been fractured over 15 years under the previous government. We are in a very appropriate place right now to be working with doctors to improve the patient experience across Ontario.

With respect to the specific procedure that the member referred to, all medical and diagnostic tests are going to be based on what the needs of the patient are, and that specific policy has not moved forward. The report was based on some old and outdated information. That specific diagnosis was ruled out; that was not going to be happening. The full anaesthetic requirements that were necessary would be continued under that particular procedure.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: As the minister mentioned, the Ford government has created something called the appropriateness group, but their mandate is to find nearly half a billion dollars in cuts, whether they are appropriate or not.

Another service that's at risk is pain management treatment. People who rely on them say that cutting the treatments will leave them unable to work. Will the Premier rule out cuts to these treatments?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The Appropriateness Working Group is to take a look at what's going to enhance patient care. I can say that we are very pleased to be working with the Ontario Medical Association on the provisions of Bill 74 that, if passed, will improve patient care. It's going to make sure that care is based on the patient experience and on evidence. That's what we need to make decisions on; that's what we will continue to make decisions on. We will work with the people who provide front-line care in order to do that.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: A review of health services should be focused on what patients need, but under the Ford government it seems entirely focused on how much funds can be cut and how deep the cuts can be. For patients who rely on pain treatment or patients who are waiting for MRIs and other procedures, that's frightening. Will the Premier come clean today on what services he plans to cut?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The whole purpose of Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act, is to enhance patient experience, to make sure that people get the services that they need in a timely manner and that those services are connected. That's what we intend to do. That's what we're working on. We know that the patient experience is not what it should be in Ontario right now, that people are not getting their services when they need them, that when they're released from hospital they're not getting home care in a timely manner, and that they sometimes don't even get home care at all, which means they end up back in hospital. We want to connect services, provide timely access to treatment and make sure that people get the care that they deserve in Ontario. That's what we're doing with Bill 74 and with the working group at the OMA.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, my question is to the Premier. For weeks, we have asked the government to publicly commit to public, not-for-profit health care delivery, and for weeks the Premier and the Minister of Health have done anything but that, anything but guarantee Ontarians that their health care scheme will not put our system in the hands of for-profit organizations.

Today, we'll be presenting amendments to the government's mega health bill that will ensure our public health system stays public. If this government is truly committed to protecting our health care system, will they support those changes?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: The whole purpose of Bill 74 is to strengthen our publicly funded health care system. I've said that time and time again. Speaker, through you: Though the official opposition tries to pretend otherwise, that's not the case. We are strengthening our public system with our local Ontario health teams that are comprised of local providers. They are going to make sure that there's coverage across their entire geographic area for all of the patient needs. If there's any money left over in any one given year, that's going to go directly back into patient care the following year. That's how the system is going to work to strengthen what we already have: our publicly funded and delivered system.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, the minister just did it again: "publicly funded." What we're saying is "publicly funded" but more importantly "publicly delivered" health care.

These amendments will enshrine the principles of the Canada Health Act, specifically to protect "against the expansion of private, for-profit delivery of services." Will the government support measures that will ensure our health care system stays in public hands?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Again, through you, Speaker: I think the member of the opposition is ignoring the facts as they actually are. He knows as well as every other member of the opposition that there is a lot of health care that is delivered privately but through the publicly funded

system. What about doctors? What would you do with doctors that are in private practice? Should we not have any doctors? The medical students are here. What should we do, then?

We want to make sure that anyone who needs health care in Ontario can get the health care that they deserve, and it is publicly funded. That's the important thing; that's what we're prepared—

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Final supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: The people have spoken, and they have told us they do not want the health care system to be dismantled and given away—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

I apologize to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for having to interrupt him. Restart the clock. Please place your question.

1050

Mr. John Vanthof: Full privatization of health care goes against who we are as Ontarians and Canadians. But it's clear that the Ford government has their own priorities: fewer health services and more for-profit delivery. Will the government reconsider and stop its plan to open up unprecedented amounts of privatization of our health care system?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Again through you, Speaker: I do not know where this member is getting this information. Because the people have spoken, and the people want better-connected access to health care services in a timely manner. That's what people want.

Bill 74 speaks about the increase in strengthening our public health care system. That's what it's all about. We want to make sure people get the services they need. That's what they're telling us. I don't know where you're getting your information, but clearly it's mistaken.

TEACHERS

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. Parents and students were stunned last week to learn that the government is plowing ahead with plans that will lead to layoffs for thousands of teachers and education workers. This morning, we've already seen the impact. Global News reports that, on Friday, 1,000 teachers in the Toronto District School Board alone learned they have been declared surplus, and it's clear that the Ford government's decision to expand class sizes is responsible.

Does the Premier understand that you can't build a world-class education system at the same time as you're laying off thousands of teachers who provide that education?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: It just boggles my mind where they get this information from.

Let me be very clear: Not one single teacher is going to lose their job. I'm going to repeat it again: Not one single teacher is going to lose their job.

There are currently 125,979 teachers in Ontario, up from 112,000 in 2004. We're up 13,000 teachers and 109,000 less students. I understand the NDP; they have it tough doing math as well. But it doesn't add up. It doesn't add up.

We're focused on making sure our students are ready for the new economy, making sure they're ready to get out into the work world and focus on their math skills that—50% of our grade 6 students are failing math. One third of those teachers teaching these students could not pass the same—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: 1,000 teachers in the Toronto public school board alone get a notice that they likely won't have a job next year. I call that mind-boggling—yes, I do—and I also call it a fact.

The tens of thousands of parents and education workers and trustees and students who gathered on the front lawn this weekend don't believe the Premier's line either. They know that firing teachers and cramming more students into overcrowded classrooms is not a recipe for success. This goes against every ounce of research that's out there, Premier. Does the Premier have any evidence that larger classes, fewer course options and thousands of unemployed teachers are going to improve our schools?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I have to reference an article in the paper. Let's look at the question that was asked in the newspaper over the weekend. I'll read it: "So when teachers, their unions or their advocates claim that the education system is facing deep cuts or being gutted, are they talking about actual facts or are they engaging in fearmongering?"

I'll tell you—it's pretty straightforward: It's about fearmongering. I have yet to hear the teachers' union come up with a solution to why half our students are failing math or why one third of our teachers are failing the same test. We're going to make sure that all new teachers—all new teachers—do proper math testing before they get into the high schools to teach our students.

Mr. Speaker, we're keeping the class sizes exactly the same through JK to grade 3. We're adding one student from grade 4 to grade 8. We're making sure that our students—

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

Interjections.

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

Next question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ross Romano: My question is for the Premier. Just this past weekend, the Premier travelled to North Bay and, on his travels, attended the grand opening of a nurse practitioner-led clinic alongside the Minister of Finance.

Ontarians expressed clearly during the election the need to fix the province's broken health care system. That is

why our government has taken steps toward enhancing health care. Our goal of ending hallway health care has been strengthened by North Bay's new nurse practitioner-led clinic.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier share more about the great news this new health care clinic brings to northern Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: First of all, I want to thank the outstanding MPP from Sault Ste. Marie. He's done a great job. And I want to thank Minister Vic Fedeli for having us up in North Bay. What great towns both Sault Ste. Marie and North Bay are.

We went to a nurse practitioners' clinic, a new one that just opened up. They're expecting to serve over 2,400 people. Their other clinic serves over 3,000.

This is just one step in our plan in making sure we end hallway health care. I had an opportunity to talk to the doctors and the nurses who do a great job there. They're excited. I think this would be a great footprint—a great footprint to spread across our province to take the rush hour per se off our hospitals and make sure we end hallway health care.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you to the Premier for that answer. The opening of the nurse practitioner-led clinic is outstanding news for North Bay and is a step in the right direction for our northern neighbours in ending hallway health care.

This is a government that continues to listen to health care workers on the front lines. The fact is, Ontario's doctors and nurses were not supported by the former Liberal government. Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell us more about the critical importance of front-line health care workers in northern Ontario and across the province?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie once again. It was fabulous to walk into this clinic and listen to the nurses. I said all throughout the election that the backbone of our hospitals, our health care is the nurses, the people who are there front and centre, taking care of our patients.

I'll tell you a story, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday—I think it was around 1 o'clock—I was going into my office in Etobicoke. I got a phone call from a patient up by the 400 and Finch—the hospital. They said, "They aren't feeding me. I need help. I need this; I need that. They aren't giving me proper meals." So I thought I'd surprise the person. I didn't have my detail; I just drove up there. I had the best time talking to the nurses, talking to the front-line health care workers. They were shocked to see me, but I told them help is here.

We will always support our nurses. Again, they're the backbone of our health care system. We were able to speak to the patients in there too, again, appreciating—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is again to the Premier. Let's talk facts, shall we? Last week—and it's a fact—

over 150,000 students from 700 schools across Ontario fought back against the Premier's plan to cut their education. They wanted the Premier to hear their voices loud and clear: They reject his moves to increase class sizes, cut time with teachers and jeopardize their quality of education.

But instead of listening to their voices, the Premier dismissed them. He claimed that they didn't organize for themselves and accused them of being nothing more than—these were his words—“pawns.”

Will the Premier apologize for condescending to and underestimating Ontario students?

Hon. Doug Ford: I just want to remind the big labour leaders of the teachers' unions that they don't have a veto on education. They never ran. They've been around forever; the same old leaders have been around forever. They're worried about one thing: They're worried about lining their pockets with the union dues from the teachers.

1100

Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to speak to numerous teachers, but one over the weekend, he was frustrated with the whole system. He said that we're on the right track. He said, “The only thing I've ever got off my union is a slice of pizza—one meeting.” That's what they've received off of their union.

I can tell you one thing: We will make sure that if teachers are involved in walking out of the classroom—like any other job, when you walk out of the classroom, you're going to be docked pay.

I've heard story after story about bulletin boards and cut-out pictures throughout these classrooms—anti-government posters. We don't believe in that. We believe in making sure we keep—

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): No, stop the clock. Sorry.

Government side, come to order. Opposition side, come to order. Order.

Restart the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, that about sums up this government: making it up as you go along, right?

The organizers of the Students Say No campaign—I'm going to give you their names: Natalie Moore and Rayne Fisher-Quann—heard the Premier's comments and drafted a letter in response. Their letter says this:

“We are smart enough to know when we are being shortchanged for your own gain. And we are tired of being disrespected—being told that we don't have the autonomy, the power or the responsibility to organize ourselves.

“We would greatly appreciate it if you stopped lying to the people of this province in order to discredit our”—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Doug Ford: Who drove all the buses, the students?

Ms. Marit Stiles: There were no buses.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for Davenport, come to order and the Premier will come to order.

The member must withdraw her unparliamentary comment.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was reading the letter, but I understand and I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I can look after this. Order.

The member can now place her question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to be clear, there were no buses at the student protest, and if you'd shown up at one of them to listen, the Premier might know that.

Does the Premier believe what Rayne and Natalie have to say and will he apologize to them here today?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members please take their seats. The question's been referred to the Minister of Education. Members, come to order. I need to be able to hear her.

Interjections.

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

The question's been referred to the Minister of Education. I need to be able to hear her.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you what we're never, ever going to do on this side of the House, and that is we will never, ever play political games when it comes to student success in the classroom. The people who are out perpetuating falsehoods and absolute misinformation need to be—

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): —and conclude her response.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, we are never going to play political games when it comes to the success of our students.

You know what? Everything we do is going to be measured and it's going to be responsible. It's going to be based on qualitative and quantitative research, like our consultation pointed us to this last fall. What are we focusing on? We're not focusing on the games that the members opposite are playing with students. Shame on them. We're going to be focusing on getting back to the basics, focusing on the fundamentals—

Interjections.

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

I'll remind the government side: Once the ovation erupted, I couldn't hear the minister. I had to cut her off.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Good.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Niagara Falls, that's not helpful.

Restart the clock. Next question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is to the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

It's no secret that the previous Liberal government made a mess of our electricity system through misguided policies to benefit insiders and force families and businesses to pay too much for their hydro bills.

Speaker, our government was elected to fix the hydro mess for the people of Ontario. The Liberals tried to fool Ontarians with their Fair Hydro Plan by keeping borrowing costs off the books. No one was buying what they were selling, certainly not in Durham. That became clear on election day.

Can the minister please elaborate on why the previous government's Fair Hydro Plan was so unfair for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member for Durham. She's a real champion for our energy sector, and I appreciate the work she does for her constituency in Durham.

What a mess this trust fund cover-up was. The Auditor General issues a scathing report. KPMG asked for legal protection in order to work on the scheme. Sounds like a red flag to me, but listen to what our friends at the Globe and Mail reported on this: "Karen Hughes, associate deputy minister of the Treasury Board, said her staff wasn't comfortable with the plan and didn't recommend it. Steve Orsini ... said the entire public service neither recommended nor supported the Fair Hydro Plan." This sounds like a mess, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 87 is appropriately called "clean up the hydro mess act," and that's exactly what we intend to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'd like to thank the minister for all the great work he's done since we were elected last year.

Fixing the hydro mess is a top priority for our government, and I'm so glad we're already taking steps to deliver results for the people of Ontario. Families and businesses in Durham deserve to have confidence in their electricity system. Restoring transparency is an important first step.

I know there's more work to be done, Speaker. After 15 years of the Liberals' backroom deals and hidden accounting schemes, the people of Ontario can now have faith that their government is working to make their lives more affordable. Can the minister tell us what steps the government is taking to put the people of Ontario first?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Transparency is fundamental to this process. Our government replaced the global adjustment refinancing structure with a transparent, on-bill rebate. We believe that families and businesses deserve to know what the cost of hydro is, and we're in hot pursuit of a cut model instead of further subsidies, but those subsidies will be there on the bill for the people of Ontario to see—not hidden in a corrupt trust fund. More importantly, Mr. Speaker—

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

Hon. Greg Rickford: Withdraw. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, we're going to save the province of Ontario billions of dollars in borrowing costs as a result of our fair and transparent plan. We'll be taking the same approach when it comes to the job-killing carbon tax, which my learned friend here eliminated last fall and the Trudeau Liberals decided to put back in. We're going to tell Ontarians how much that costs, Mr. Speaker. Just wait and see.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Minister of Labour. The Minister of Labour has a vital role in the province and a responsibility to show leadership when it comes to collective bargaining and labour relations in Ontario.

Last week the Premier of Ontario disparaged elected union leaders who are advocating for their members, calling them "union thugs." Does the minister responsible for labour relations in the province of Ontario agree with the Premier's name-calling or will she take this opportunity to distance herself from the Premier's comments?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'd like to take the opportunity to say that collective bargaining is not at risk in the province of Ontario. Employees can still unionize. We are simply clarifying that some public sector employers are not construction labourers, when we talked about Bill 66 and what we passed.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are actively engaged in the Ministry of Labour with all stakeholders. That's union sides, non-union sides, that's businesses. We have a great record in the province of Ontario on dealing with collective bargaining: 98% of the discussions are completed with the two parties at the table.

1110

Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: We have, in the province of Ontario, with this party and this government, a good working relationship with unions. We'll continue to meet with them and have them at the table. We certainly have disagreements, and we can certainly hear the rhetoric—

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again to the minister: A lot of folks work in this province, and there is a lot at stake, especially as those workers head to the bargaining table with this government.

As Minister of Labour, she is charged with ensuring fairness, respect and good faith in labour relations in this province. If she won't distance herself from the name-calling in these comments, then how can she credibly do her job?

Ontarians need to have faith in the principle of good faith. Will the Minister of Labour clearly state that the Premier's comments were unacceptable?

Hon. Laurie Scott: As the Ministry of Labour, we meet with all stakeholders, all sides of labour negotiations.

We provide a service when, as I said, discussions of collective bargaining might be difficult. We, as the Ministry of Labour, provide mediators. We provide arbitrators. We are a neutral body, should that be needed from either side.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: A 98% success rate.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Yes. When we have a record of a 98% success rate in the province of Ontario, I'm very proud of the work that my Ministry of Labour does.

Do we have some interesting discussions? We certainly do, which is very healthy. But the Ministry of Labour is there to be used by both sides of collective bargaining units.

I know the press gets involved. I know that the members of the opposition like to do some fearmongering. But, Mr. Speaker—

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

SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS CENTRES

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: My question is to the Premier. Kathleen Finlay reached out to my office to tell me about her horrible experience of sexual misconduct while in the employ of the Ontario Securities Commission a while back. When she reported the allegation, her boss told her to keep quiet or lose her job. It is with her permission that I'm raising this.

She approached the Premier's office after the Premier said publicly that he would protect women who came forward to him. She was ignored, but worse than that, the OSC was contacted and she received threatening letters, and thereafter she was in hospital again.

I wrote to the Premier in December and followed up with his office, because I wanted to make sure that his office developed victim-friendly protocols when allegations of sexual misconduct are done.

My question to the Premier is this: Will you promise today to deal with Ms. Finlay's concern, and will you ensure that there are victim-friendly protocols in your office and throughout the government?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask the Premier to reply, I'll remind all members to please make your comments through the Chair.

To the Premier to respond.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Premier, for the opportunity to talk today about the protection and advancement of women in our province.

I would like to thank the member opposite for bringing this particular issue to the floor of the assembly. As I am not privy to the exact details of this, I would ask that the member opposite meet with me after question period, so we can have a conversation on how this ministry, as well as this government, can best protect women across Ontario who are trying to escape violence, whether that is sexual assault, domestic assault or sex trafficking in the province. We are highly committed in this government to ensuring the advancement and equality of women.

We have often said in this Legislature that strong women must continue to support women in this case, but it's up to all members of this assembly, including the strong members who are males in this assembly, to continue to stand against the circumstances that we've just heard about.

So, I'd be pleased to meet after with the member opposite, as well as with my staff, to ensure that we have some resolution to this today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: My question was for the Premier because the woman reached out to the Premier's office, so I hope that the Premier's office changes the protocol by which they respond.

Furthermore, I think Ms. Finlay and many women have expressed their concerns about the funding of rape crisis centres. I know that Hillary Di Menna published an article in *Now Toronto*, because she was fundraising for the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre and she ran into the Premier, and she was really happy when he gave her five dollars to support the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre. But he didn't seem to know that, in fact, his government had defunded the rape crisis centre.

So I'm asking again: Will this government fund fully the rape crisis centre? It is important. It's crucial for women that they do so for this year and for years to come.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much—important question. That's why this government is committed to \$174.5 million in funding, and we were pleased to have an \$11.5-million commitment just before Christmas.

Speaker, that's important because we're doing a number of things that are new in the province with respect to supporting women who are escaping domestic violence and sexual violence, as well as sex trafficking. We're making sure that we have more resources in rural communities. I commend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the member from Leeds–Grenville, as well as the member from Lanark, Frontenac and Hastings, for bringing these issues to the floor of the assembly. They were what inspired us to move forward.

I'm presently working with the Attorney General so that we can ensure there are better victim supports across government, and we're working with the Ministry of Labour so that when we deal with sex trafficking or human trafficking and labour trafficking, we have a resolution to this. We are a government that is committed to wrap-around supports, whether that's Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Attorney General, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services or the Solicitor General. We're committed to doing that because we believe it is the right thing to do.

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. Stephen Crawford: My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. My constituents are very concerned about the sustainability of Ontario's finances. Because of poor choices and irresponsible spending, Ontario was left with a \$15-billion deficit and inherited \$338

billion in debt when the McGuinty/Wynne Liberals left office. Because of the rise in debt levels, Ontario's interest payments on debt are now the fourth-largest line item, and it costs us \$1.4 million to service the debt every single hour. That's over \$30 million in interest payments per day that are not going to roads, hospitals, transit systems and front-line services.

Can the President of Treasury Board inform the House what action the government is taking to address this government spending?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member from Oakville for that great question. It's true, Mr. Speaker, that we inherited a spending challenge from the previous Liberal government, an increase of over \$200 billion of debt. What did we get for \$200 billion? That's the question. Did we get our health care system fixed? No, we didn't, because of the minister. Did we get our education and math scores fixed? No, we didn't. Did we get more hospitals? No, we didn't.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, the government inherited \$72 billion a year spent on wages. The member mentioned \$30 million a day in interest expenses. We've announced the consultations so we can begin the process to manage wage in a way that is modest, responsible and sustainable. These consultations will inform the government on the next steps to responsibly manage growth. Our government is committed to working with our partners to ensure that every taxpayer dollar is invested in a fair and sustainable way.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I would like to thank the President of the Treasury Board for his answer. It's shocking how much debt the Liberals actually managed to rack up. Earlier this month, Minister Bethlenfalvy tabled the 2018 salary disclosure, more commonly known as the "sunshine list." It showed that in 2018, the number of employees making over \$100,000 per year increased by over 20,000 people. Since the Liberals took office in 2003, the list has grown by more than 600% and is now over 150,000 individuals. To me, this shows that the President of the Treasury Board is on the right track by opening up good-faith consultations with our public sector concerning wage growth.

Can the President of the Treasury Board inform this House as to what action is needed now?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you again to the member from Oakville. Let me be clear, I'm impressed day by day with our public sector, who work hard and are dedicated and work with great diligence, but we must be honest about—

Applause.

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Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Yes, thank you. But, Mr. Speaker, we must be honest about what we can afford while ensuring the sustainability of government programs and services. We cannot manage our spending if we ignore the role that compensation plays in that regard. We must confront intergenerational inequity and we have to do everything in our power to cushion against future shocks.

Let me remind the House that we're in the 10th year of an economic recovery. We should be more fiscally disciplined to ensure that we can afford the things that matter most, as I mentioned: sustainability of our health care system, sustainability of our education system, sustainability of our social services and our universities. That's why we announced these consultations, and that's what we're going to do.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Last week, the President of the Treasury Board delivered a chilling speech about this government's plans to squeeze the wages of public sector workers across the province. The government has promised to hold back wages from front-line workers like teachers and nurses—nurses that the Premier just called the backbone of our health care system.

I quote the President of the Treasury Board, who referenced "trade-offs that will lead to reductions in compensation costs." How much of a reduction in compensation should public sector workers like our nurses be bracing for?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Through you, Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member opposite for that question. Our government is committed to restoring sustainability to our public finances while preserving critical front-line services that the people of Ontario depend on. We've taken immediate actions: We've frozen executive compensation. We've frozen broader public service compensation. We're consulting and we're taking steps now to fix the incredible mess that we inherited from the previous Liberal government.

One of the first steps that we took was to look at all elements of our expenditures, and compensation represents more than half. We believe it's our duty to address the sustainability of public sector wage trends. So, Mr. Speaker, we need to take firm action to protect the vital front-line programs and services now for generations of today and for future generations.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Mr. Speaker, my guess is that front-line workers would like to know how much this firm action is going to cost them. Families have been feeling squeezed for very long after 15 years of Liberal governments ignoring the increasing cost of living, leaving us with skyrocketing hydro bills and out-of-control housing costs, all while letting wages fall further behind. Now Ontario families hold record levels of household debt.

So my question is, how can this government find millions of dollars to appoint the Premier's friends and Conservative Party insiders to cushy patronage positions while asking public sector workers like our nurses to tighten their belts?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Again, thank you to the member opposite for that question.

Breaking news: We inherited a \$15-billion deficit in this province. We inherited \$200 billion more in debt since 2003. As someone who worked in the private sector, who worked at a credit rating agency, I know the numbers too well. Inheriting a 40% debt-to-GDP puts this generation of Ontarians at risk, and it puts at risk those programs and services that matter the most.

I mentioned before that what this government is going to do is make sure that we get on a sustainable path so that we can protect core services in our health care, in our social services, in our education and in our justice system for the people of Ontario. That's what we're going to do.

POLICE SERVICES

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the Ontario Solicitor General. Every day, Ontario's front-line officers do incredible work to keep our families safe. Often this work is silent, preventive and unseen.

Last week, our Premier shared the news that Ontario would once again proudly proclaim the title of Solicitor General.

Mr. Speaker, could the Solicitor General please tell the members of the House about the significance of this change for front-line officers across Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It is an incredible honour to serve in Premier Ford's government with such a great depth of talent in our caucus. I continue to be amazed at how committed and talented the members of caucus are.

I want to assure the member from Richmond Hill that our work continues. It's all about protecting the front line. It's all about making sure that victims of crime and the individuals who choose not to respect the laws of Ontario are appropriately dealt with. I will continue to do that, and I will do it in a way that, frankly, I don't think the Liberals and the NDP do, and that's by listening—listening to the front line and making sure that they share their best practices and the ideas that they have to make Ontario a safer place. It's critically important to our work as a government and it's something that I'm proud to do as Ontario's Solicitor General.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I thank the Solicitor General for her response. Our front-line officers, and all of us, are proud to have you as our Solicitor General.

Over the past 15 years, we witnessed the previous Liberal government fail to respect our front-line officers. It is great to see our government act on the commitment to restore the relationship and respect between the government, the front-line officers and the people. As a member of this government, I'm proud to stand here today and know that we have kept another promise we made to the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, could the Solicitor General please share more about the government's commitment to supporting the front-line officers across Ontario, please?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Richmond Hill for allowing me to share some of the initiatives we've already begun in our ministry.

Of course, recently we passed the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, which made some real changes that are going to improve safety in our streets and allow our front-line officers to do the work that they need to keep our community and our families safe.

We've already initiated some new programs in our correction facilities because I think we can all appreciate that it is critically important that our corrections officers have the tools they need to get the job done and protect individuals who choose not to respect the laws of the land. There is much work to do with my colleague the Attorney General on the probation and parole side, but I want to assure the people of Ontario that we are working as a cabinet, as a caucus and as a government to make sure our communities are safe.

PHARMACARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This week, I had a constituent come to my office with a very troubling story. She's a new mom with a six-month-old son who requires prescription formula. The formula was covered by a government program. However, as of April 1, she no longer receives coverage. It will cost this young family \$600 a month. I'm going to repeat that: It will cost this young family \$600 a month because their private insurance does not cover the formula.

Did the minister not have the foresight to see this coming when they rolled back drug coverage for people in this province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. Actually, what was in our thoughts was to make sure that all young people who required medication would be able to get it and that the insurer should be the first payer, but if there isn't an insurer involved, the young person, child or youth will still get the coverage they need. That was our goal from the beginning, and that is what we are planning to continue. However, if there are circumstances where people are not covered fully, then there is also the Trillium network that they can apply to.

With respect to this particular issue, I would be happy to speak with you about it to see how we can be of assistance to this young woman and her child.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: This government has shown time and time again that they will recklessly cut programs in this province without any regard for the effects on everyday people. There used to be a government drug plan program that would help families who need prescription formula, but now if families aren't covered by a private insurance plan, they're out of luck. Kids are out of luck.

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When will this government stand up, do what's right and provide all Ontarians with full prescription drug

coverage so no child in this province goes without the prescription formula babies need?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, back to the member again: If this is a prescription formula that this child needs, then it should be covered. If it's not covered, there is the Trillium network that they can apply to.

What we've actually done is enhanced the system to make sure that all young people are getting coverage in a sensible way. The insurers should be the first payers. I think that's what the people of Ontario would expect: that if there's a private insurance plan, it should cover it. But if there isn't one, we want to make sure every child and young person gets the coverage they need. That is what the plan prescribes. That is what it's meant to do. If there is some reason why it's not working for this person and they cannot get assistance through the Trillium network, please, I would like to speak with you about it to see how the ministry can be helpful.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Dave Smith: I want to make it crystal clear who my question is for: the most excellent Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

For 15 years, the previous Liberal government hampered the economic potential of northern Ontario. The Far North Act is a perfect example of how potential jobs and economic growth were limited by the Liberals' failed policy. We've heard repeatedly from our colleagues that no one from this region asked for or even wanted the Far North Act. Making Ontario open for business and, more importantly, open for jobs includes the incredible resources that the Far North has to offer.

Can the minister inform the House on what our government is doing to encourage economic growth in the north rather than putting up barriers?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for his advocacy and also the work that he's doing on our caucus advisory team. It's invaluable work for me as the minister. I also want to thank my colleague the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and Minister of Indigenous Affairs for the knowledge that he has on the north and how he has been able to assist me in this process. People in the Far North should be very confident that their interests are well represented at Queen's Park.

The member is absolutely right: The previous Liberal government was not interested in what the people in the Far North wanted when they brought in the Far North Act. As announced in our fall economic statement, our government is in the process of reviewing the Far North Act and has been seeking input on a proposal to repeal the act. Submissions will continue to be accepted until April 11. That's going to be a big day in Ontario, Speaker. I look forward to the work ahead as our government is committed to making the Far North open for business and open for jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the minister for that answer. Our government's proposal is the type of bold

action we need to take if we're going to make the Far North open for business and open for jobs. I know the people of the Far North will be relieved to know that help is on the way under the leadership of our Premier and this minister. Instead of pandering to special interest groups, our government works for the people. The proposal to repeal the Far North Act will finally help the Far North reach its economic potential.

Can the minister expand on how the proposal will help the people of the Far North?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you again for the supplementary. Our goal is to cut restrictions on important economic development projects in the Far North like the Ring of Fire, all-season roads and electrical transmission projects. Unlike the previous Liberal government, who paid no attention to what the Far North wanted, we will take the time to properly engage with our Far North First Nations partners and other stakeholders. Speaker, we will get this right. We will retain any approved land use plans through changes to the Public Lands Act in addition to any plans that are already at an advanced stage. Our proposal will unleash the economic potential of the Far North, and we are committed to making sure we create job opportunities for every region across this great province.

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Education. Following this government's \$1-billion cut to public education last month, 35 educational assistants received layoff notices from the Thames Valley District School Board. This is in addition to the 100 special education learning coordinator positions that were eliminated on March 6. The EA layoffs were announced even as the board prepares for more than 500 students with autism to enter the school system in September, many for the first time.

Speaker, this government wants to talk about math, so here's my math question to the minister: When you add 500 students with special learning needs to Thames Valley classrooms and take away 35 of the educational assistants who help them, will students in London be better off or worse off?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: The answer to that question is, stop fearmongering. The fact of the matter is, year in and year out, school boards across Ontario work through an exercise whereby surplus notices are given. My question back to the member opposite is, how many did they lay off last year and the year before that and the year before that? If she were honest with herself and the members of her own caucus as well as the constituents that she's representing, she would say that this is a normal annual routine activity that school boards—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Your remarks implied an unparliamentary statement. I'm going to ask you to withdraw.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the minister: Like many other school boards, Thames Valley already has a shortage of educational assistants. These 35 layoffs will just make the shortage worse, especially for students with autism. The loss of these 35 EAs means that EAs who wanted to become certified in applied behaviour analysis are being told to cancel their training because there is no one to cover for them in the classroom.

Can the minister explain how making specialized autism training available to EAs will help support students with autism when EAs can't be spared from the classroom to participate in this training?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Do you know what? We have one great big mess that we need to clean up after 15 years of failed leadership from the Liberal government. And we're going to get it right because, collectively, between the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and the Minister of Health and myself, we're embarking on a consultation that I hope everybody participates in. It's going to be one of a kind. It's kicking off in May. I encourage the member opposite to tell her stakeholders to be sure to engage in this consultation. In fact, Minister MacLeod invited everyone in this House to participate as well.

The fact of the matter is, Speaker, we're going to get it right because, again, we're not going to stand and thump our chests and fearmonger. We're going to be in the trenches working alongside all of our stakeholders, just like we did this last fall. Again, our consultation last fall has landed us in very, very good positions moving forward, and I have every trust that the consultation that will kick off in May will do exactly—

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

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICY

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is for the hard-working and open-minded Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Recently the Globe and Mail reported that the US government has formally requested that the Canadian federal government renegotiate the Safe Third Country Agreement for asylum seekers.

Speaker, we know that the influx of illegal border crossers has placed a significant strain on Ontario's social services system. Can the minister please update the House on the efforts of our government for the people—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, I'm going to have a hard time withdrawing a comment that's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I hope the member understands the consequences of refusing to withdraw. I'm going to ask him one more time.

Mr. Joel Harden: Withdraw.

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order. The member withdrew.

I'd like the member for Markham–Unionville to conclude his question.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Speaker. Can the minister please update the House on the efforts our government for the people is taking to hold the federal government to account for their failed border policies?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to commend the member from Markham–Unionville for not only being in this assembly but being a strong voice for newcomers in this country and, in particular, within this province. I think he is a great success and a tribute to the immigration system when it's working in the province of Ontario and in Canada.

The federal government does have sole jurisdiction over immigration and refugee resettlement policy, including those who are eligible to make a claim. But let me be perfectly clear—and we're not the only ones saying this. Every single Premier, regardless of political stripe, from every province and territory, stood behind our Premier, Premier Ford, in August, telling the federal Liberal government that they must pay for their failed border policies in Quebec. We have itemized a list of \$200 million that we have expected the federal government to pay, and their recent budget is an outright admission to what this government and every other government, provincially and territorially, in the country of Canada has said to the federal government. We're asking them to pay their bills for their failed border policy—

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Minister. Thank you for standing up for Ontario taxpayers.

The article I mentioned highlights a statement from a federal government official. The official said between 60% and 70% of asylum seekers crossing the border into Canada between ports of entry appear to have entered the United States specifically to claim asylum in Canada. These individuals enter the United States on a visitor's visa with no intention of seeking asylum, then illegally cross our border claiming refuge. Can the minister explain our government's position on this matter?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: This is a very important issue because I believe that Canadians, including all Ontarians, deserve to have confidence in a rigorous immigration process.

We know that the Ontario Auditor General is looking into the costs that our province has incurred as a result of illegal border crossing. In Quebec, we know the Parliamentary Budget Officer—as well as the Toronto neighbourhood studies—has validated our concerns with respect to accommodations and the shelter system. We know the city of Toronto and the city of Ottawa have both come to the table asking the federal government to support us.

That is why this government, along with every other government across this nation, provincial and territorial, has stood behind our Premier, Premier Ford, in asking the federal government to pay its bills. Finally, they have acknowledged, with the recent budget, that what we have

been saying for the last 10 months is accurate, but we're simply saying to them it's not enough. They are only coming to the table with a minimal amount of money. That is why I think it's important that the federal government not only acknowledge its problems, but pay for them—

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

NORTHERN HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Jamie West: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Highway 69 is a connective artery between northern and southern Ontario. It is essential for business, trade and tourism in our region and into the north. With many fatalities, Highway 69 has also proven to be an unreliable death trap. It's been 14 years since the Liberals promised they would complete the four-laning of Highway 69 to Sudbury, and we are still waiting.

The Sudbury Chamber of Commerce has urged this government to fund the four-laning of the last 68 kilometres of Highway 69. Businesses are concerned that northern Ontario's critical infrastructure and transportation deficit is damaging our local economy. Experts tell me that the cost of demobilizing construction projects and then remobilizing in the future will be incredibly cost-prohibitive. It may be so expensive that Sudbury may never see completion of the four-laning of Highway 69.

Will the minister finally tell the people of the north that this government will invest the money we need to finish Highway 69 all the way to Sudbury, and when should Sudbury expect that completion?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question. This is a government that is going to invest in transportation and roads and bridges and highways across the entire province. We just recently gave \$1.3 billion to Ottawa to finish their LRT. We promised a billion dollars to Hamilton for their LRT. We just recently announced \$1.3 billion for highway and bridge maintenance across the entire province.

This is a government that's going to stand by Premier Ford's promise to build transit across this entire province, and that includes our important highways, roads and bridges. I look forward to having more discussion with the member opposite after our budget announcement on April 11.

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S NIECE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): A number of members have informed me that they wish to raise a point of order. First of all, the member for Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: I just want to share some happy news with everybody in the House. On Friday, April 5, at noon, my brother and his wife, Richard and Michelle Cho, gave birth to a healthy, happy baby girl, Chase Cho. Congratulations to them.

ANNIVERSARY OF ACCIDENT IN HUMBOLDT, SASKATCHEWAN

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Bill Walker: At 12:30, I'd like to welcome all members of the Legislature down to the main staircase for a photo to support organ donation and honour the memories of all those who suffered—it's the Humboldt Broncos one-year anniversary. We'll be doing a statement at 1:30 for that as well.

WILBERT KEON

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

Mr. John Fraser: I have some sad news. Dr. Wilbert Keon, a former Conservative senator and an incredible contributor to health care in our community, in Ontario and in the world, passed away on Sunday. It's very sad news. His contributions are immeasurable, and I just wanted to make sure that everyone was aware of that.

SPEAKER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I have some happier news I'd like to share. This member was elected 29 years ago and he hasn't aged a bit. Today happens to be his birthday. Let's all wish a happy birthday to our Speaker, Ted Arnott.

Singing of Happy Birthday to You.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Please take your seats.

I'm going to ask the government House leader to withdraw.

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 1 o'clock.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1300.

WEARING OF HOCKEY JERSEYS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the Minister of Government and Consumer Services has a point of order.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to seek unanimous consent for everyone to be able to sport a jersey in support of organ donations, and particularly to honour and remember those who were impacted by the tragedy of the Humboldt Broncos that happened a year ago, especially Logan Boulet, who has turned that sad tragedy into a very positive effect that will impact many lives over many years.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Everyone heard that? Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Joel Harden: I remain pleased and honoured that my parents, Rosemary and Reg Harden, are here from Vankleek Hill, Ontario—Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, low-income tenants are being driven out of their homes by predatory landlords. In the past month, I have met with people from three different apartment buildings in my riding who are enduring mass evictions. The landlords want to clear out the buildings, apparently do minor renovations and then rent out the units at dramatically higher rents. Units now going for under \$1,000 per month at 245 Logan are being advertised to future tenants at \$2,300 per month.

It's very clear what's happening here. Tenants—many of them seniors who have lived in their units for decades and paid the rent that allowed the landlord to make a decent profit and maintain the buildings—are now being driven out so that new owners can make a fortune. Not only are their lives being upended so someone can make big bucks at their expense, but the units will be permanently unaffordable for people with low incomes after these changes are made.

That's wrong. The Ford government needs to act now to protect tenants from these predatory practices.

EARTH DAY

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: First celebrated in 1970, Earth Day is a special day every year when people across the globe hold events and gatherings to show their support for environmental protection.

In Canada, the first official Earth Day was held in 1980, with week-long ceremonies opened by Progressive Conservative MP Flora MacDonald. On Earth Day 2016, the landmark Paris agreement was opened for signatures. Canada agreed to a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Thanks to the leadership of Minister Phillips, Ontario is on track to do our part.

Earth Day this year will be no different, with events around the world. In my riding of Scarborough–Rouge Park, I am proud to say that I am hosting a shoreline cleanup this weekend to keep our beaches beautiful and free of litter, so my constituents and all visitors can enjoy the stunning shore of Lake Ontario.

I will also be attending a number of other cleanup and Earth Day events, including the ones hosted by the CCRA, the Highland Creek Community Association, Friends of the Rouge Watershed and Green Canada.

I hope we can all work together to keep Ontario beautiful and clean for generations to come.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, on Wednesday, April 10 of this week, disability rights leaders and activists will be converging on this building at Queen's Park because our office is hosting a town hall on accessibility. They're coming to share their wisdom and personal experiences so

we can hear directly from those affected by inaccessibility and how we as a province can do better.

All of us in this place received a wake-up call from the Honourable David Onley's report on the third review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. In searing language, he told us about the agonizingly slow process Ontario is making towards full accessibility by 2025.

I want to quote from the report. Mr. Onley says, "Every day, in every community in Ontario, people with disabilities encounter formidable barriers to participation in the vast opportunities this province affords its residents—its able-bodied residents—as will be fulsomely described" in the report. "For most disabled persons, Ontario is not a place of opportunity but one of countless, dispiriting, soul-crushing barriers."

Speaker, 1.9 million people with disabilities and their families are tired of waiting. This is a human rights issue, and we must act with greater urgency if we want to achieve greater accessibility.

That's why we're opening up this place on Wednesday—to make sure that we can listen to people on the front lines. I invite my colleagues on all sides of the House to join us for that event in room 351 on the third floor.

Let's commit ourselves to a province that's free from barriers so everybody can live their lives to the fullest.

CANADIAN WOMEN'S HOCKEY LEAGUE

Ms. Lindsey Park: I was disappointed to recently learn that the Canadian Women's Hockey League would be folding on May 1, 2019. This news is devastating for both players and fans of women's hockey.

For those who don't know, this is the league that many of our Olympians play in between Olympic Games, and the competition in the league has been one of the foundations of the Canadian women's hockey team's continual top performance in the Olympic Games.

Not only that, but the league also provides a venue for young female hockey players to attend and watch their role models play outside of just the Olympic Games once every four years. I remember being inspired by Sami Jo Small, the women's Team Canada goaltender, when I attended Toronto Aeros games as a kid. In Durham region, I think of how many young Clarington Flames, Oshawa Lady Generals, Whitby Wolves, Durham West Lightning and North Durham Blades players have been inspired by their play. Many came out to a CWHL game hosted in Bowmanville this season.

Sport is an important part of the cultural fabric of Ontario. Hockey in particular is something that brings Ontarians together, regardless of ethnicity and background, uniting people behind a common love for the game.

I want our incredible female athletes to know that I stand with them to fight for the continued success of our game. By coming together as a hockey community, we will keep these players on the ice.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise today to speak on the housing crisis taking place in my riding of York South–Weston. Last week, I held a town hall in my riding on housing to hear directly from the constituents. People are stuck, and Toronto's housing support systems are bursting at the seams.

I heard directly from constituents who have been waiting on the waiting list for affordable housing for more than seven years, whether they were young families, single mothers with children, or those living with disabilities. The system chewed them up and spat them out. For those who were fortunate enough to secure shelter while waiting for affordable housing, constituents reported having to spend the majority of their income on housing. This is in addition to having to live in overcrowded conditions due to price restraints. With more than 100,000 households waiting to access 94,000 social housing units in Toronto, it is safe to say that we are experiencing a crisis.

Again and again, I have been asked by constituents why this government isn't pushing to build more purpose-built rental units instead of condos that they will never be able to afford.

After 15 years of neglect by the previous Liberals, the people of York South–Weston are hurting, and they know that this current Conservative government won't be of any help to them. It is making things worse. The people of York South–Weston deserve better.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise today on the inaugural Green Shirt Day. Today we thank Logan Boulet and organ donors across the country. Logan made the decision to be a donor just weeks before his passing in the tragic Humboldt Broncos bus crash. He has inspired thousands of Canadians to register as organ donors.

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I also today want to thank one of my constituents, Janet Parr. Janet is a community hero and organ donation champion who received the Trillium Gift of Life Network's 2018 Champion Award. A heart transplant recipient, Janet has made an outstanding difference in organ and tissue donations in Ontario.

Janet, along with Linda and Mike Willis, has worked tirelessly to promote organ donations in our community. As a result, the number of registered organ donors in Guelph is far above the provincial average. I want to thank Janet, Mike and Linda for the tremendous work they have done in our community.

I am proud to say that I am one of the 51,160 registered organ donors in Guelph. I encourage everyone across Ontario and across the country to be an organ donor and visit beadonor.ca to sign up today.

COREY CONNERS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today I rise in the Legislature to recognize the newest sports hero of Listowel in my riding of Perth–Wellington. Yesterday, Corey Connors

won the Valero Texas Open and his first PGA tour victory. He has also punched his ticket to next week's Masters in Augusta, Georgia.

Corey brought his A game to the golf course on Sunday. He made three birdies in the final five holes, shooting a six-under 66. He was 20-under for the tournament.

He is the first Monday qualifier to win on a PGA tour since 2010. This is also his first PGA tournament win. He will join only one other Canadian at next week's Masters, the great Mike Weir.

Corey got his start putting and ball striking at the Listowel Golf Club. From a young age, we all saw his passion for the game. No matter the career highs or lows, he always remained positive.

Corey is focused on doing his best and leaving it all on the course. His colleagues describe him as a smart, constant and committed golfer. His hard work and determination paid off yesterday in Texas.

Congratulations to Corey and his biggest supporter, his wife, Malory. Both of you stole the hearts of Canadians yesterday. Listowel, Ontario, and Canada will be cheering you on at next week's Masters. Way to go, Corey.

EDUCATION

Mr. Chris Glover: Last Thursday, I joined a few thousand students who were just some of the 100,000 students who walked out to protest against cuts to our schools. Then on Saturday, I marched here at a rally where tens of thousands of students, parents and teachers were rallying for our public education system.

As a teacher in 1997, I marched on Queen's Park in a similar rally when Conservative Premier Mike Harris launched an all-out assault on our schools. His goal was to create, in the words of the Conservative minister of the day, "a useful crisis" in order to open our schools up for eventual privatization. He said he would start discrediting our school system and launched an all-out verbal assault on teachers and students who were fighting to protect schools.

Last week, the government started using the same rhetoric as the Conservatives used during the Harris years. The Premier called teachers and students "thugs" and "pawns," saying the system is broken, even though Ontario students are tied for first in reading, seventh in science, and in the top 25% in math in international scores.

There is work to be done to improve our schools, but that's a continuous job, and you don't improve our schools by cutting teachers out of them.

Mike Harris underfunded our public schools by \$1.2 billion and then launched a \$700-million private school tax credit. It is the same privatization agenda that the parents and students and teachers who were marching last week understand is the agenda of this government, and they will fight to protect our school system.

JASON GORDY

Mr. Toby Barrett: It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Jason Gordy on his recent victory at the Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi.

Jason Gordy is a well-known and top-notch Special Olympics athlete from Norfolk county. For the past 25 years, Jason has represented my riding at Special Olympics events across Canada, initially as a swimmer; however, now, at age 46, he's a bowler.

Jason trained extremely hard to hone his bowling techniques, and finally his training paid off. Gordy won gold in the men's singles competition, with a final score of 502 in 10-pin bowling at the Special Olympics World Games.

Shirley Shaw, the Simcoe community coordinator of Special Olympics Ontario, was quoted in the Reformer: "We were so excited he got gold. We're more than ecstatic that all of the extra training he put in has really paid off. Jason is a lovely young man that is very involved in the Special Olympics."

Speaker, Jason Gordy is not only a bowling champion; he also plays golf, he plays basketball, and he's a junior coach with the swim team.

Gordy truly is an inspiration, and his contributions are greatly appreciated and respected.

Thank you and congratulations, Jason Gordy.

FINE ARTS SOCIETY OF MILTON

Mr. Parm Gill: I rise today to highlight the Fine Arts Society of Milton.

I have started displaying local artists' paintings on the walls of my constituency office in an effort to showcase the talented individuals in my great riding of Milton. Everyone who comes through my constituency office can see the artwork now displayed on the walls and get to know the story of each painter. I will be rotating it every six weeks and look forward to highlighting many more talented artists moving forward. Just as the dining room at Queen's Park works to promote Ontario's artists, I am working to do the same in my constituency office to highlight our Miltonians.

Mr. Speaker, the Fine Arts Society of Milton is a non-profit organization that promotes fine art and artists in Milton and the surrounding area.

The first paintings that we're currently displaying were created by Kirsty Rutter from Campbellville. They include paintings named Hint of Blue, Greeting the Dawn, and Colour Me Not.

I thank Kirsty and the Fine Arts Society of Milton for working with me to create this awesome program.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

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

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION, DE LA COMMÉMORATION, DE LA PRÉVENTION ET DE L'ÉDUCATION À L'ÉGARD DES GÉNOCIDES

Mr. Babikian moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 97, An Act to proclaim Genocide Awareness, Commemoration, Prevention and Education Month /
Projet de loi 97, Loi proclamant le Mois de la sensibilisation, de la commémoration, de la prévention et de l'éducation à l'égard des génocides.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Scarborough—Agincourt care to briefly explain this bill?

Mr. Aris Babikian: Mr. Speaker, the intention of this bill is to prepare our future generation, our future leaders—to many atrocities that took place around the world. These atrocities took place against humanity. Our future generation—politicians, soldiers, army—should be aware of the kind of world that we are living in. I have spoken with many soldiers when they are posted on peacekeeping missions around the world. When they come back, they are shocked by what they have seen. At least this will give them some kind of pre-posting preparedness to know what they are facing.

Also, many of our neighbours have gone through these sufferings, and this is only to acknowledge their—

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

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you to all colleagues of all parties for their spirit in sporting jerseys today.

On April 6, 2018, a year ago this past Saturday, Canadians received news of an unthinkable tragedy. A bus carrying the Humboldt Broncos junior hockey team to a playoff game collided with a semi truck at an intersection in rural Saskatchewan. In an instant, 16 lives were lost and dozens more were changed forever. An outpouring of grief and support from communities across Canada and around the world took place in the days following the crash.

From out of this deeply felt sense of grief and loss came one glimmer of hope. One of the victims, Logan Boulet, registered to be an organ donor just weeks before the crash, and ended up saving six lives with his very heroic donation. When people learned of this act of heroism, more than 100,000 Canadians rushed to register themselves as donors.

Organ donation truly is heroic. It's a way of giving meaning to the grieving, and saving lives through sacrifice.

Our government is recognizing Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Month throughout April and today, the Day of Green. Ontarians can register to be a donor online at Ontario.ca/beadonor.

Awareness is critical, because while 85% of the public supports organ and tissue donation, only 33% are actually

registered donors. That is a shocking statistic. We can and we need to do better. It only takes two minutes to register consent. It's a simple action that can save up to eight lives and enhance another 75. To be eligible, registrants need to be at least 16 years of age and provide their health card number and date of birth.

There are more than 1,630 Ontarians currently waiting for an organ transplant, and since 2003, more than 17,000 Ontarians have received a life-saving organ transplant.

I'd like to recognize the work of our colleague David Piccini, the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South, for his private member's bill to promote organ and tissue donation through an improved registration of consent during the renewal or issuance of a health card or a driver's licence. I'd also like to thank the members of the House for their support for this bill.

I would further like to thank the former member for Northumberland–Quinte West, Rob Milligan, for his hard work on this issue when he was an MPP colleague in this House.

Many of our honourable colleagues join me today in wearing hockey jerseys to commemorate this solemn anniversary. An affinity for hockey is as central to the Canadian identity as our harsh winters or maple syrup. We wear these jerseys in honour of those lost in the tragic crash, and in support of those who have been the beneficiaries of donation.

I ask all members of this Legislature to help me honour the Humboldt Broncos by encouraging as many Ontarians as possible to be a donor.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I rise today in these chambers to reflect upon a moment in Canadian history that no one will ever forget. Each person in this room and, I can imagine, each person in the nation can remember where they were on April 6, 2018.

When reports started to come in about the terrible tragedy in Saskatchewan, many people could not imagine the scope and significance that this great loss of life would have in this country and across the globe.

As the grim reality of the situation near Tisdale, Saskatchewan, began to unfold, a massive outpouring of love, sympathy and empathy swept our nation. Hashtags like #HumboldtStrong quickly went from online solidarity to become massive crowd-funded foundations, with hundreds of thousands of dollars of assistance donated for the families and friends of the 16 young boys, coaches and volunteers who lost their lives, and the remaining 13 victims, who are still struggling with their injuries, both physical and mental, to this day.

Hockey moms and dads are passionate supporters of their kids and young adults throughout their hockey careers. When something like this happens, it hits us all hard.

Across the nation and even across the border in the USA, people started leaving their own hockey sticks outside their doors. #SticksOutForHumboldt" was born out of a need to display people's grief and to show that the hockey community was there for the people of Humboldt.

While grief over the tragedy continued to pour out for the victims and their families, questions began to be heard about how and why this happened. There was a growing realization amongst the hockey community that they and their children also spend hours of time each year on buses heading to games, tournaments and other events in all kinds of weather. People began to realize that something like what happened to the Broncos could easily have happened to them. How did a transport truck manage to not see the stop sign before, in front of it and at the crossing, and not notice the massive coach bus turning into the intersection where the tragedy took place?

More questions were asked. Who was the driver of the truck? Was he qualified? Were drugs and alcohol a factor? While drugs and alcohol were ruled out as a factor in the collision, there was some question of the qualifications of the driver.

During the trial, in which the driver pleaded guilty to 29 counts of dangerous driving causing death or bodily injury, the judge noted that the driver of the truck had many chances to stop but didn't, and said it was inconceivable that he missed the intersection's many large signs, including the flashing lights. The judge went on to say, "Seconds matter. Attention to the road matters."

The people who work here in this Legislative Assembly also have to heed the judge's words. As lawmakers and as people of good conscience, we must do everything in our power to prevent a repeat of what happened in Saskatchewan. Transport ministers of each province and at the federal level must be even more vigilant, to ensure that the transport industry remains safe and upholds their duties to maintain public safety and trust.

Transport companies must have strict guidelines on how drivers are properly trained. They must ensure that their fleets are properly maintained and in tip-top condition on our roads. New rules regarding the logging of hours and the right to refuse unsafe work must be standardized and strongly enforced across our country.

While the transportation industry in this country can be proud to call itself world-class, it still faces many challenges. The real problem lies when a small detail is missed, and that small mix-up results in a 50-ton machine, moving at 100 kilometres an hour, blowing through a stop sign with flashing lights and resulting in the worst accident of this kind in Canadian history. Seconds do matter, because if they are not properly accounted for, these seconds can change lives forever.

I want to take my final time today to give my greatest sympathies to the friends and families of the Humboldt Broncos junior hockey team who are no longer able to play our national sport.

I would like to take a special moment as well to give my best wishes to those who are still recovering from their injuries. Whether physical or mental, these people need to know that even after one year, the people of this great nation are with you and wish for your full recovery.

I am extremely proud, Speaker, of our people and our country. The people reached out with their support, both emotionally and financially. I know money can't bring

back our loved ones, but it certainly demonstrates to the families and the community of Humboldt that we share your loss and pain, and we should do our very best to ensure that a tragedy like this never, ever happens again.

Speaker, please don't forget: April is donor month. Make sure you sign your donor cards.

Mr. John Fraser: I just want to begin by thanking the Minister of Government and Consumer Services for finding me a jersey, offering me one, and getting the colour right, and the size almost right.

We're here today and we are remembering, acknowledging and giving honour to a real tragedy in our nation—a tragedy that touched all of our hearts because it involved young people, it involved our sport, it involved families, and in some way we're all connected to that. We're a big country, but we're all connected together.

We're also here remembering Logan Boulet, whose donation of organs saved six lives. He was inspired by a coach. He told his dad the year before, "I want to do this," which is a pretty incredible thing for a 16-year-old to say. It is a gift—it's a real gift—and it must have been really hard for his parents, so I want to acknowledge, at that moment when—we can't imagine it; the unthinkable happens to you, and all you want to do is just crawl in and protect yourself and get away from all of the things that are around you because you've just lost your child—that you have the presence of mind and have the courage to say, "I want the loss of his life to make a difference." That's what organ donation is all about.

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We're also celebrating the Logan Boulet effect. That's why we all wore green. I do want to say that I was wearing green—it's turquoise, and it's on the palette. I know that some of us had challenges with that today: "That's not green."

The point is, we're all here because we are united in the importance of organ and tissue donation. It's something that's important to all of us. We don't always get that opportunity in this Legislature—to join together and to speak about the things that are important to all of us, that we all agree on 100%.

I'm just honoured to have a few words to say about that today. I want to thank both the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—I got it right—and—

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Grey-Bruce-Owen Sound.

Mr. John Fraser: —Grey-Bruce-Owen Sound—thank you very much—for their words of remembrance and their words that brought us all together.

Applause.

PETITIONS

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. Percy Hatfield: This petition was given to me by D'Arcy Leader from Branch 143 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Windsor.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I'm going to just edit this as I go, Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

I fully agree, Speaker. I'm going to sign it and give it to the page to bring down to the table.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Joanne Burton and Joanne Thibault—Joanne Burton is from Wahnapiatae; Joanne Thibault is from Chelmsford—for gathering this petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Premier Doug Ford promised that there would not be cuts to nurses' positions; and

"Whereas in Sudbury we have already lost 70 nurses, and Health Sciences North is closing part of the Breast Screening and Assessment Service; and

"Whereas cuts to the ... Breast Screening and Assessment Service will result in longer wait times, which is very stressful for women diagnosed with breast cancer; and

"Whereas cuts to the Sudbury Breast Screening and Assessment Service will only take us backwards;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Provide adequate funding to Health Sciences North to ensure northerners have equitable access to life-saving programs such as the Breast Screening and Assessment Service."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Mirren to bring it to the Clerk.

CAMPUS RADIO STATIONS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition here called "Campus Radio Stations Are an Essential Service." I want to thank Brady Holek, who is the station manager of CJAM 99.1 FM, which is our campus radio station in Windsor.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario campus radio stations consist of over 150 staff members and 3,500 volunteers, a majority of them youth and students;

“Whereas campus radio stations offer training and development for students, both as part of their on-campus course curriculum and within the community at large, including preparation for careers in broadcasting and journalism;

“Whereas campus radio stations in Ontario are key providers of emergency information under the National Public Alerting System;...

“Whereas campus radio stations have a high fixed cost compared to other student services;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deem campus radio stations an essential fee under the Student Choice Initiative.”

I completely support this petition. I will sign my name to it and send it to the table with page Gwen.

CAMPUS RADIO STATIONS

Mr. Joel Harden: I have a petition here entitled “Campus Radio Stations are an Essential Service.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario campus radio stations consist of over 150 staff members and 3,500 volunteers, a majority of them youth and students;

“Whereas campus radio stations offer training and development for students, both as part of their on-campus course curriculum and within the community at large, including preparation for careers in broadcasting and journalism;

“Whereas campus radio stations in Ontario are key providers of emergency information under the National Public Alerting System;

“Whereas campus radio stations are an independent news and media outlet for students and communities that provides a platform for marginalized voices;

“Whereas campus radio stations have a high fixed cost compared to other student services;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deem campus radio stations an essential fee under the Student Choice Initiative.”

Speaker, I want to thank Colleen Zetaruk and the signatories to this petition. I will be giving it to page Julia for the Clerks’ table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Don’t Increase Class Sizes in Our Public Schools.”

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

“Whereas larger class sizes negatively impacts the quality of education; reduces access to teaching resources

and significantly diminishes teacher-student interactions; and

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

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

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

I thank my constituents of Parkdale–High Park. Also, as a parent of a child in the public education system, I couldn’t agree with this more, and I affix my signature to it.

CAMPUS RADIO STATIONS

Mr. Chris Glover: I’m reading a petition titled “Campus Radio Stations are an Essential Service.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario campus radio stations consist of over 150 staff members and 3,500 volunteers, a majority of them youth and students;

“Whereas campus radio stations offer training and development for students, both as part of their on-campus course curriculum and within the community at large, including preparation for careers in broadcasting and journalism;

“Whereas campus radio stations in Ontario are key providers of emergency information under the National Public Alerting System;

“Whereas campus radio stations are an independent news and media outlet for students and communities that provides a platform for marginalized voices;

“Whereas campus radio stations have a high fixed cost compared to other student services;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deem campus radio stations an essential fee under the Student Choice Initiative.”

I support this petition and will pass it to the page.

EPILEPSY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the folks at Epilepsy Ontario.

“Whereas there are over 95,000 people living with epilepsy in Ontario, including 30% who do not have effective seizure control; and

“Whereas Ontario’s community epilepsy agencies provide education and support programs to people living with epilepsy and their families, including seizure management and how to address the many physical, psychological and social challenges that come with living with epilepsy; and

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"Whereas epilepsy education and support programs provide a valuable contribution to Ontario's health care system, but community epilepsy agencies receive no core government funding for these programs; and

"Whereas, by funding epilepsy education programs, the provincial government could reduce unnecessary emergency room usage, help alleviate Ontario's hallway medicine crisis and save the health care system money;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for education and support programs through Ontario's community epilepsy agencies in the 2019 provincial budget."

I wholeheartedly support this and will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Katherine.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Ian Arthur: I have a petition here entitled "Support Ontario Families with Autism."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, Speaker, and will be affixing my name to it and giving it to page Ben to take to the Clerks.

CAMPUS RADIO STORES

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm pleased to present a petition signed by a number of residents in my community.

"Campus Radio Stations are an Essential Service.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario campus radio stations consist of over 150 staff members and 3,500 volunteers, a majority of them youth and students;

"Whereas campus radio stations offer training and development for students, both as part of their on-campus course curriculum and within the community at large, including preparation for careers in broadcasting and journalism;

"Whereas campus radio stations in Ontario are key providers of emergency information under the National Public Alerting System;

"Whereas campus radio stations are an independent news and media outlet for students and communities that provides a platform for marginalized voices;

"Whereas campus radio stations have a high fixed cost compared to other student services;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deem campus radio stations an essential fee under the Student Choice Initiative."

I am very pleased to affix my signature to this petition, and I'll pass it along to page Gajan to table it with the Clerks.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas one in five children and youth in Ontario experience a mental health issue that significantly impacts their lives, and the lives of people around them;

"Whereas there are over 12,000 children and youth on the wait-list seeking mental health and addictions care;

"Whereas the wait times for children and youth seeking mental health and addictions care in the province average three months to 18 months;

"Whereas too many children and youth have died waiting for treatment, and early treatment is more likely to be effective in helping people live full and happy lives;

"Whereas the failure to take action in helping children and youth access mental health and addictions services hurts people, families and Ontario's communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cap the wait time for children and youth seeking mental health and addictions services to 30 days after these services have been deemed essential, taking all the necessary policy and funding steps to ensure that the minister is able to enforce this cap, and provide children and youth the services they need and deserve."

I fully agree with this petition, and will sign it and send it to the table with Katie.

CHILD ADVOCATE

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition here entitled "Protect the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth."

It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children and youth are Ontario's most valuable resource and deserve the best start in life we can provide;

"Whereas Ontario's most vulnerable children and youth are too often underserved by our child welfare, mental health, youth justice and special-needs sectors;

"Whereas that lack of service can result in health challenges, lower educational outcomes, reduced opportunity, injury and sometimes even death;

"Whereas children and youth, and in particular vulnerable children and youth, often have no voice and few adults to speak on their behalf;

“Whereas the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth is charged with the responsibility of providing an independent voice for children and youth by partnering with them to bring issues forward;

“Whereas the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth provides a necessary focused approach, putting children and youth at the centre of all their work, that cannot be provided by any other office;

“Whereas the closure of the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth represents a step backwards for Ontario that will harm our most vulnerable children and youth;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the ... government to reverse its decision to close the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.”

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

TRAFFIC CONTROL

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Laurie Brisson from Wahnapiatae in my riding for this petition.

“Whereas residents of Wahnapiatae are concerned about the safety of the intersection of Highway 17 and Highway 537 and would like greater traffic control measures in place to prevent further accidents and fatalities; and

“Whereas an accident that occurred on October 1, 2017, resulted in loss of life; and

“Whereas two different accidents occurred on October 13, 2017, that involved multiple vehicles and closed Highway 17 for seven hours, delaying traffic; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has jurisdiction over highways and is responsible for traffic safety in Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly:

“That the Ministry of Transportation install traffic control measures such as a flashing light at the intersection of Highway 17 and Highway 537 to enhance traffic safety.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Katherine to bring it to the Clerk.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe that concludes the time that we have for petitions this afternoon.

VISITOR

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to take a moment to introduce a good friend of mine, Michael Barbour, who was at Carleton University with me. He’s also a professor out in California. He’s visiting Toronto. But the most memorable and, I guess, notable mention is that he’s a proud Newfoundlander.

Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

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 4, 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. Ian Arthur: It’s a pleasure to rise today and contribute to the debate on this important bill. I’d like to thank the members from Toronto–Danforth and Waterloo for the contributions that they made to this debate already.

In many ways, energy is actually how I ended up in this House. The moment when I read those headlines in the Auditor General’s report about the billions and billions of dollars that had been wasted on energy and subsidies in Ontario—that was actually the moment I decided that I was going to try to step up and try to do something about that. So it’s something that I’ve paid close attention to, and I’m excited to contribute to the debate on it. But I was hoping to contribute to a debate about how we can move energy to a better place in Ontario, and I don’t know that I’m really going to get to do that, because most of what I’ll be speaking to this afternoon is how this bill changes the garnishes but, really, the meat and potatoes of energy in Ontario are going to stay the same under this new Conservative plan.

It basically relabels and reaffirms the old, bankrupt Liberal unfair hydro plan, and it opens the door—and I find this quite shocking—to a permanent subsidy of hydro bills through the tax base. That’s a scary proposition, Mr. Speaker, because people were up in arms about this borrowing scheme. In many ways, it’s how we ended up with the Legislature that we have now. Folks across Ontario were incredibly upset. The Conservatives have moved it out of the trust—and I do appreciate that—but they’ve moved it into the deficit. They’ve continued the borrowing, and they’ve opened the door to do this on a permanent basis.

I get why this would be politically expedient, because folks may stop paying attention to it as it goes down. This government has no interest in hydro bills actually going up under their watch. We saw what that did to the last government. So a permanent subsidy would be a very useful tool down the road if they can keep it hidden from the public and make sure that people aren’t up in arms about it.

1350

Really, what it does, though, and why I dislike it to its core, is that it’s taking public tax dollars, because we have a partly—or majority—privatized hydro system in Ontario, and is actually funnelling them into private profits. That’s a terrible thing, Mr. Speaker. That is asking the people of Ontario to subsidize profits—not just the interest

on the loans, which haven't gone away, but the profits, potentially, down the road.

I question how fiscal conservatives can be proud of extending mass amounts of debt—temporary rebates—for political gain. Have we not learned our lesson about the dangers of going down this road? Was the last election not a big enough, most glaring example of why that is a poor policy choice going forward? Just this morning, the member from Oakville was lamenting the debt left by the Liberals in one of question period's softball questions—and this was super-soft; this was a 10-ply question. I'm surprised it actually rolled down to the front benches. On one hand, they're attacking terribly incurred debt by the Liberals, but on the other hand, they're forgoing the opportunity to do anything about it. They haven't actually changed the Liberal plan with energy in Ontario.

The former CEO of DaimlerChrysler once said that there are two things that made Ontario competitive for manufacturing, and that was our publicly owned health care system and our affordable, hydro-based electricity system, also publicly owned—not fully publicly owned, but publicly owned at the time. He said that if we lost either of those two things, we would be at an increasing competitive disadvantage in Ontario. If either one of those two things go away, we're in trouble. We're going to lose those jobs.

We have a government now that, despite everything they say, has left the door open for potential privatization of our health care system, so that for-profit companies can deliver services and get paid by our tax dollars—yes, still publicly funded, but again, that's what I was talking about earlier: taking public money, tax dollars, and funnelling them into private profits. And they're continuing with a plan that borrows huge amounts of money and charges us massive amounts of interest—temporary relief on residential hydro bills, but makes us, again, at a competitive disadvantage on hydro rates.

I wonder what he would say now if he could look at the system and see what was happening, and see that we're not just forgoing one of our potential competitive advantages for manufacturing in Ontario but actually getting rid of both of them, Speaker. It's quite a shocking thing that this progressive, for-business government is deciding to go down both of these roads—unless you think about what the real motive is, and that is what I was saying earlier: the funnelling of those tax dollars into private profits.

So now we are facing that legislation that opens the door to privatization of health care. We've have had it for a long time in hydro. Let's just talk about that a little more.

Hydro was affordable for 100 years. For 100 years, we had some of the most affordable hydro in the world. That's an impressive, impressive history. When did that change? It changed in the 1990s. It changed when we began privatizing the hydro system in Ontario. Immediately—you can see it. You look at a graph, and you see where the prices started to skyrocket and you see the instant we started privatizing it.

I won't deny that there were problems with the hydro system that needed to be dealt with then, but the privatization of it was not the solution that we needed. We needed

a more efficient system, a publicly owned system, and we didn't get that. What we got was an inefficient private system that has caused bills to skyrocket, and that had a massive effect on the last election.

Harris began the privatization with generation. Premier Eves wanted to privatize hydro, but it was too close to an election and he knew what a poor decision it was going to be, so he didn't. He left it to McGuinty, who spent his entire campaign on an anti-privatization platform. Doesn't this sound Liberal? He spent an entire campaign talking about not privatizing things, about how important public assets were. His entire platform was based on it. You know, Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals could find it in themselves to govern based on the platforms that they actually ran on—I can't even imagine. It's just crazy.

The privatization of Hydro One began under McGuinty—then, again, under Wynne, campaign promise after campaign promise not to further privatize Hydro One.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind the House to refer to members by their riding name or their ministerial title, if that's applicable.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Premier Wynne—sorry; my apologies, Speaker—Don Valley West. I did forget the riding and used the name. My apologies for that. The campaign talk came back to me.

Upon election, the same thing happened again, as it had done under the previous Premier. We had even more privatization. Frankly, it was the nail in the coffin to that government. It led to everything else that we saw in that election. It was the divisive issue. We had our vision of how hydro would go and what it would look like in the future. The government had a lack of vision for where hydro would go in the future, or no real plan in that way. Now we're kind of seeing where that comes.

It actually reminds me of another kind of privatization debacle, we'll say, that happened and that has been back in the news recently, and that was the privatization of the 407 under former Premier Harris. It was sold in 1998 for \$3 billion and change, and it is now valued at \$30 billion—a public asset that we sold for pennies on the dollar for—

Interjections.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I don't have to? Okay. For pennies on the dollar—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Actually, you can sit down.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I'm being asked to sit down by members opposite, but I'll take that as a point of flattery.

It was sold in 1998 for \$3 billion and change and is now worth \$30 billion, and projected to go to \$45 billion in value. That's the 407. That should have been a public asset, but it's not. It was sold for political expediency just before an election.

That sounds a little bit like something else that I remember from just before another election. That was the gas plants scandal. It has to do with energy. It was this: "In order to gain some ridings and some votes, let's make a decision that will cost the people of Ontario a tremendous amount of money"—a tremendous amount of money; billions and billions of dollars—"and let's shift some gas

plants and let's cancel some contracts." That also sounds familiar. It's like history is repeating itself.

I know I'm flip-flopping a little bit back and forth between Conservatives and Liberals, but I really can't help it, because policy after policy, time after time, bill after bill, it's Liberal, Tory, same old story. I just don't get it. I don't see the difference.

I'll go back to my food analogy at the beginning, because I like fitting these in sometimes in the Legislature here: You've changed the garnishes on a Liberal bill, but you haven't changed the meat and potatoes. It is the same thing. You've changed it from "ratepayer" to "taxpayer," but you are still borrowing huge amounts of money that we're going to be paying interest on, and you've shifted it into the deficit that you talk about every single day in this Legislature, and about how important it is to get rid of it. While I appreciate it not being hidden in a trust fund—I do appreciate that—moving it into the deficit doesn't solve the problem.

Again, you see the political expediency coming out here, because eliminating that would cause a spike in residential bills, and that would be politically unwelcome, we will say. We know how much Ontarians care about their bills, so now they're going to print exactly how much the rebate is on the bill. But it doesn't actually solve the problem. Frankly, it shows a lack of leadership.

Energy in this House has been debated a lot, and there has been some truly fantastic debate. Some of it might actually even qualify as touching on what leadership in energy would look like.

I'm just going to quote here: "What we are certain of is that this Liberal government's new hydro scheme is going to be a big hit in the pocketbooks of Ontarians, one of unprecedented proportions. The short-term gain that they're professing out there, a 25% hydro-rate cut this summer, will lead to long-term pain..."

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Who could this masked crusader for the people be? Who could this person arguing against this borrowing scheme be? None other than the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Someone who previously condemned something—they've given it a new label, they've coloured it blue instead of red, but the substance of it is exactly the same, and now he's standing up to profess the quality of the bill, how much it actually does.

I'm glad, as I said earlier, that the shady trust fund is actually gone and been shifted into the deficit. At least now we get to actually see the cost of borrowing in the deficit, and the billions of dollars it's going to add every year. But that's not leadership, Madam Speaker. That is not taking us in a better direction on hydro in Ontario. Frankly, I am skeptical about where this government is going. It was just a few short months ago that the Avista deal between Hydro One and Avista in the States was actually cancelled by regulators, leading to \$131 million in penalties. And why? Because of political meddling—\$131 million in fines because of political meddling on the part of this government in energy in Ontario.

Not letting markets do their job—that does not sound like the Progressive Conservatives whom I've heard speak

before. I don't really understand where the shift—well, I mean, we all understand where the shift happened. It's a new Progressive Conservative world out there. I hear the rhetoric every day, but I'm still quite shocked.

Another good example of this: The member from Markham-Stouffville, who I am always pleased is in the House when I am debating, claimed that the member from Toronto-Danforth was making phantom claims when he referred to nuclear going to 17 cents an hour by 2020, but those projections came from the Auditor General, who is your favourite person—sorry, who is this government's favourite person—when her numbers suit the narrative that they're trying to create. But when they don't like the numbers that the Auditor General puts forward, they call them "phantom." How can the Auditor General be so accurate when she's attacking a Liberal plan, and then when the Progressive Conservatives adopt a similar plan—very similar; shockingly similar—suddenly the parts of her critique, the 17 cents per kilowatt hour, are phantom numbers? That doesn't sound like leadership to me, Madam Speaker.

I'm going to spend the last bit of my time talking about what could have been done differently, where we could have gone with that. Conservation is incredibly important. I know that this government has moved conservation programs under the IESO, and I hope that they are expanded because it is by far the cheapest solution to our energy problems in Ontario: estimated to cost about two cents per kilowatt hour. Conservation is two cents per kilowatt hour. The programs are significantly cheaper than any other options that we have in Ontario to deal with our energy crisis, so I do hope that all the programs we have for conservation are expanded, are made easier to access, and become central to this government's plan for energy because it's so, so important that we pursue that conservation.

This government has promised a 12% reduction in hydro rates. Now it kind of makes sense, the potential for that permanent tax subsidy of hydro rates in Ontario—that suddenly kind of makes sense. They need a 12% reduction. If they got rid of the loans and everyone's bills went up, that 12% would actually climb quite significantly. It would climb a lot, Madam Speaker, because suddenly you wouldn't just have to lower another 12%; you would have to make up the false reduction that we are currently experiencing on our bills, the false reduction in our bills that we have only because we borrowed huge amounts of money which this government is continuing to borrow.

There are some hard realities that need to be faced in energy in Ontario, and we need a solution that is better, but the borrowing of money at massive amounts of interest—surely that goes against so much of what the members opposite actually believe in, but they haven't changed the course. They haven't shown leadership. They haven't made those hard decisions. They have favoured what is politically expedient, and it just shocks me. There are so many better places, and it's so important that we do solve this energy crisis in Ontario.

Just to come back to one other idea that we had, I had brought forward a motion to this Legislature about removing mandatory time-of-use on electricity bills here in

Ontario to alleviate the costs. Estimates are that for some people, that could actually lead to a 10% reduction in their hydro bills—simply eliminating mandatory time-of-use pricing on power. That was another incredibly expensive program with the Liberals, with questionable motivations. But rather than adopting the motion, the government defeated it and they claimed that I hadn't brought forward a comprehensive enough plan, that my motion only tackled one part of it and that we would see—they said it was a good idea. I believe it was the member from Markham–Stouffville, again, who actually said it was a good idea but it wasn't part of a comprehensive plan on energy.

So now we have this bill tackling the hydro mess in Ontario and acknowledgement that the time-of-use pricing scheme was part of that mess, and somehow that idea hasn't actually made it into this bill. When I brought it forward, it was insufficient; it wasn't well rounded enough. But then when the supposedly well-rounded plan of the Conservatives comes forward, somehow it's not actually in there. A simple thing that would alleviate pressures on everyday Ontarians, that would be so simple for this government to do, is not part of their comprehensive “fix the hydro mess in Ontario” bill. Frankly, that's quite shocking, Madam Speaker.

Again, it just comes back to what I was speaking about at the very beginning, which is the political expediency overriding the need for a fundamental change to how we approach energy generation, storage, distribution and consumption in Ontario. We need a bold vision going forward. It needs to be based on storage. What we could do if we brought storage in in significant quantity in Ontario is remarkable, both in terms of combatting climate change and lowering costs for individuals. But it would need leadership. It would need to look towards the future, understand where technologies are moving, and, for the first time in a generation, actually lead on energy in Ontario.

Thank you very much for allowing me to contribute to this debate. It has been an honour, and I do hope this government moves ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank the honourable member on the other side for his passionate speech. As I was sitting there and listening, I couldn't help but think it was actually the opposition that supported these Liberal disastrous policies for almost 15 years. To stand there on the other side and now try to preach is really unfortunate, Madam Speaker.

When we campaigned, during the campaign we communicated with the people of Ontario how we are going to deliver relief for families, small businesses, organizations, farmers, you name it. This government got right to business. Soon after getting elected, with every single initiative we've introduced, it has been how we can put money back in the pockets of the people of Ontario. This piece of legislation does just that.

Madam Speaker, I'll tell you, I represent a riding that has a significant rural component, so lots of farmers, lots

of small businesses, and lots of not-for-profit organizations. It is heartbreaking when you talk to them and you see the challenges they are facing, especially with high energy costs. Businesses are having a hard time to make ends meet. Farmers are having a hard time to make ends meet. They are having to struggle, along with middle-class families and especially seniors in my riding, having to choose between eating and heating. We've all heard that phrase many, many times.

Madam Speaker, I can tell you that I am proud of our government and proud to be part of this team that continues to look for ways each and every single day in terms of delivering relief for Ontario families. I would encourage the opposition to support this piece of legislation.

1410

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, I know you recognize this as a Windsor Spitfires shirt. It's green, and I think that's appropriate on “be a donor” day. To stretch a point, you could say the failed Liberal plan left a lot of people in Ontario, when it came to their finances, on life support. I just thought I'd throw that out there.

There is no harm in admitting a mistake. There's no shame in admitting a mistake. The member from Kingston and the Islands just brought to your attention what you have failed to put into this bill: getting away from the mandatory time-of-use billing. You don't have to get up at 3 o'clock in the morning to do the family laundry if you put it in the bill that you won't be penalized if you do your laundry at peak periods. You recognized it at the time, and you haven't put it in the bill. There's no shame in correcting that. You have time. Go ahead and do that.

You also have an opportunity to start reclaiming the shares that were sold to the investors, so the profits go to the investors' pockets instead of back into the general fund of the province of Ontario. Nobody told the Liberals they had any authority or any power to sell a public asset such as Hydro, but they did it. It wasn't a Liberal plan. It was a public plan, and they sold it. Bring it back into public hands. It belongs in public hands. Your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren will thank you for that. As opposed to that money going to the investors' pockets down on Bay Street somewhere, bring it back into public hands. That's where it belongs.

I've mentioned in this House before that if you go back into the history of Ontario, they ran referendum after referendum after referendum on whether the power coming from Niagara Falls to light our homes should be kept in public hands or private hands. Every result said, “Keep it public. Don't make it private.” You have a chance to change it and change it now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member opposite for his speech. Our government promised to clean up the hydro mess, increase transparency in our electricity system and make life more affordable for Ontarians. I'm so proud of the fact that I'm part of a government and a

team, as my colleague just mentioned, who are actually looking after the people of Ontario. We're looking out for the people of Ontario to provide them relief so they can actually make ends meet, to provide them the support they are looking for because, at the end of the day, the people of this province are struggling.

I'm proud to represent my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville. In my riding, we have a huge senior population, and they are living somewhat like—at the end of the day, for them it's how they can make ends meet when they have such huge hydro bills coming at the end of the month. They are living on pensions; it's a fixed income.

What our government is trying to do is trying to help these individuals have a good life. They have worked extremely hard so that we can have a good future. Now it is our time to help these individuals, and I'm so proud of our minister and my colleague here, his parliamentary secretary, who have prepared this bill to make sure that we are able to provide relief to the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would just like to say that I sat on the Select Committee on Financial Transparency for—it seemed like five months, and the purpose of that committee was to get to the bottom of this hydro mess that the Liberals left behind. But it was a lost opportunity because the members on the government side blocked witnesses at every turn. We wanted to hear from Gordon Campbell, who was one of the commissioners, about how the carbon tax has resulted in one of the prosperous economies in Canada. We wanted to hear from Cindy Veinot, the provincial controller, who was part of the accounting for this, but that was blocked. We wanted to hear from the CEO of Hydro One, the \$9-million man—they blocked that as well—as well from the chair of the board for Hydro One—blocked.

Also, we wanted to hear from KPMG, the very accounting firm that was talked about on the other side of the House, which sought an indemnification. They did seek an indemnification. We wanted to hear from that accounting firm, but that request was blocked.

The member from York Centre will know, because he was on the committee, that those requests were blocked at every turn—so much for getting to the bottom of it, and so much for openness and transparency.

But make no mistake: Privatization is at the root of the problem with our hydro system. We have just seen what the disaster of the sell-off of our private asset Highway 407 has been for the people of Ontario. It has been a huge disaster. Mike Harris is on record as saying his one regret from his term is that he didn't complete the privatization of the hydro system.

With this bill, nothing has changed. Really, it's the Liberal plan, only now you're just taking the onerous debt from the ratepayer to the taxpayer.

I ask you: How is this bill making life affordable for Ontario taxpayers? It's not. Some \$2.4 billion in annual borrowing that is going to add now to the deficit and the debt—how is that helping the people of Ontario? It is not. OPG still exists. We still have to pay the costs there.

So, really, fixing the hydro mess with this bill? In my opinion, Madam Speaker, it's only getting messier.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you to the members opposite and on this side for contributing to the debate today.

I just want to reaffirm what I was saying: Substantially, nothing has changed. You have changed from ratepayers to taxpayers, but you are still borrowing, because you're afraid of the political repercussions of putting that cost back onto people's bills. Folks in Ontario have stopped talking about their hydro bills temporarily, because they have gone down a little bit—although everyone in this Legislature knows that those are false savings. It doesn't even have to wait for their children and grandchildren, who will still be paying for this borrowing scheme. It's in the future of their own lives, but it will probably be sometime after the next election, Madam Speaker.

We will have to deal with this debt eventually. The members opposite speak so often about the crushing debt in Ontario but, given an opportunity to eliminate a substantial portion of that debt, they have chosen not to. They have chosen not to. The elimination of the borrowing scheme should have been a priority for this government, despite the political repercussions, because that is leadership. That is bravery, and something that they know will be politically unpopular, but that they also know has to be done.

They keep saying things have to be done, and justifying so many other things that they are doing. Why can they not show that leadership on this file? Why do they have to whitewash a program that was red and is now blue, and continue down a path that will lead us into increased debt and increased costs and not do anything to actually substantially solve the energy crisis in Ontario?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the Minister of Government and Consumer Services on a point of order.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to correct my record. Earlier today, in my ministerial statement, I used the term “Day of Green.” I should have said “Green Shirt Day,” in support of organ donor awareness month.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Every member has an opportunity to correct their record.

Further debate?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Before I start speaking to Bill 87, I just wanted to acknowledge that I am wearing the sweater from the Hamilton Bulldogs, signed by a number of the young players on the team, who were really not much older than Logan Boulet, the young Humboldt, Saskatchewan, player who, a year ago, lost his life in that tragic accident, and whose death has inspired millions of Canadians to acknowledge both the importance and the value of organ donation.

It is a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill 87, our government's Fixing the Hydro Mess Act.

During last year's election, my colleagues and I in the government committed to cleaning up the mess the

Liberals had made out of our hydro system, and to cut hydro prices by 12%. This was one of our five key commitments during last year's campaign, and we are delivering results for Ontarians with this bill as well as with other work that has preceded it.

1420

Speaker, I would first like to commend our Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, as well as his parliamentary assistant, my very dear friend the member from Markham–Stouffville, for the fantastic job that they are doing in keeping our government's promises on this front. I know they will continue to work hard to serve the interests of ratepayers across the province.

Ratepayers are tired of constantly footing the bill for years of waste and mismanagement. In far too many cases, they are tired of having to make a choice between paying for food or paying their utility bills. They elected us to change this, to reverse this trend, and that's exactly what we are doing.

Just last month the minister put his foot down when it came to executive compensation at Hydro One, capping it at less than a quarter of the former CEO's direct compensation. Our government, along with the majority of Ontarians, felt that it was about time Hydro One stopped taking our tax dollars for granted.

Now, with Bill 87, our government is proposing more steps forward that will help keep our promise of putting more money in the pockets of ratepayers. If passed, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act would achieve the following:

It would find savings of up to \$442 million by re-focusing and uploading electricity conservation programs to the independent electricity operator.

It would overhaul the Ontario Energy Board to make the regulatory system more efficient and accountable, while continuing to protect consumers.

It would hold residential electricity bills to the rate of inflation.

It would wind down the Fair Hydro Plan, saving billions of dollars in borrowing costs.

And it would introduce a new, transparent rebate that is clearly stated on consumer bills, to replace the Fair Hydro Plan.

I would first like to provide some context as to why the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act is so important, and why our government put forward this piece of legislation.

For 15 years, the previous government just stood by as electricity prices increased at an unsustainable pace, in some cases doubling or even tripling. In fact, you could say that some of their policies were contributing factors to those increases. What's worse is that the Liberals thought they could get away with it just before the last election by borrowing billions—that's billions of dollars—in order to provide rebates for the same people whose rates had skyrocketed under their era of waste and mismanagement. In essence, they were saying, "Sorry for nearly tripling your electricity rates," and calling it a Fair Hydro Plan. Speaker, how is this fair? We on the government side of the House didn't fall for this scam, and it's accurate to say that neither did the people of Ontario.

For years, the Liberals sat in these benches blaming everyone but themselves for the hydro mess. But, Speaker, I ask you: What exactly did they do about it in the 15 years they were in government? Did they work hard to come up with solutions? Did they work hard to fix what they believed was broken by past governments? I, along with my colleagues and most Ontarians, would say, no, they did not.

The Liberals launched the Green Energy Act 10 years ago with such fanfare. Our province was promised a large economic boost, more jobs, cheaper electricity bills and substantial improvements to the environment. The Green Energy Act was meant to help the economy recover from the last recession and lead to a greener environment. Unfortunately, we now know it was all hype with no substance. We now know what really happened: skyrocketing hydro prices with nothing to justify the increases.

As I've said in this House before, I was co-hosting a current affairs program called Square Off on CHCH Television in Hamilton when the Green Energy Act was first introduced. When the act was being discussed on air, some things just didn't add up to me. The arguments made in favour of the act seemed hollow.

My reservations about the Green Energy Act and other aspects of the high-spending Liberals motivated me to run for office. Fast-forward to today, and I am honoured to now be part of a government that is willing to do the right thing and take the necessary steps for Ontarians to see concrete improvements to their lives. We are reducing red tape on business, we are ending years of wasteful spending and, with Bill 87, we are well under way to cutting hydro bills by fixing the mess.

One of the more substantive ways in which the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act will be living up to its name is the way our government intends to centralize and refocus conservation programs. The current conservation funding structure costs the electricity system over \$1 billion, as well as up to \$150 million in bonus payments to local distribution companies, or LDCs, for program delivery. By contrast, this legislation would lead to central program delivery by the Independent Electricity System Operator rather than the LDCs. This change would put an end to the millions in bonus payments that actually do nothing to help conservation. All told, this amounts to a savings of over \$442 million that will help lower rates for large employers, giving them the opportunity to invest more into their companies and to create more good jobs.

This transition to centralized conservation will lead to large savings for businesses right across Ontario. For example, an auto sector company consumer could see a bill reduction of about \$15,000 per month—not \$15,000 a year, but \$15,000 a month. A mining sector company could see their bills reduced by about \$30,000 a month. Speaker, these are real, very significant savings that could be put towards wages for staff or increased benefits.

Another major aspect of the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act is the winding down of the Fair Hydro Plan, resulting in savings of billions of dollars in borrowing costs. The Fair

Hydro Plan turned out to be anything but fair and very far from a plan. According to estimates from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, the Fair Hydro Plan cost Ontarians \$4 billion in borrowing costs—\$4 billion. That, Speaker, is a ridiculous amount of money spent on such a flawed plan. As if the past 15 years of Liberal governments aren't proof enough, we should not be surprised that the Liberals wasted as much as they did.

Bill 87, if passed, would replace the Fair Hydro Plan with a new, transparent, on-bill rebate that consumers will start seeing this November. We want customers to know the true cost of the power that they are using. A new rebate will be clearly displayed on hydro bills as a single line item.

Another part of Bill 87 that I would like to touch on is how our government is proposing to take steps to modernize the Ontario Energy Board by improving organizational governance, promoting regulatory excellence, and cutting red tape. In recent years, the OEB hasn't been living up to its obligation to serve the interest of electricity ratepayers. Our government wants to make the following changes to the OEB through Bill 87:

We want to establish a new governance structure and better separate the Ontario Energy Board's management, administration and adjudication responsibilities.

We want to streamline processes by amending the OEB's consumer education objective and reduce duplicate responsibilities between the OEB and the IESO.

We want to promote efficiency and reduce the regulatory burden by requiring the OEB to report on its efforts to simplify energy sector regulations on a yearly basis.

Madam Speaker, as one of the five main pillars of our campaign last year, our government is willing to do whatever it takes to keep this promise that we made to voters. The Fixing the Hydro Mess Act is fundamental to our government's vision to get back on the right track when it comes to the hydro sector. That is why I am pleased to be supporting Bill 87, and I ask my colleagues to do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'll agree with the title of this legislation, "clean up the hydro mess," because during the campaign I definitely heard from people in Ontario that hydro and electric energy were a problem in this province. What I heard is that voters were very upset about the privatization of their public utilities. They did not see the wisdom of handing off profits in something that is so essential to them.

What caused the mess were privatization, deregulation and political meddling in the regulatory bodies. And in this legislation, I see the same plan.

Instead of being funded by hydro customers, the loan that was off the books is now on the books, but it is still there. The debt is still there, and taxpayers will be footing that bill.

1430

You're also allowing political advertising on bills. Make no mistake: What you're calling transparency, other people would just call political advertising on their hydro bills, and actually, people are not being fooled.

What we really have to examine is how we attack—and we have a plan; it was in our platform—the debt, and how we bring hydro back into public hands. That is how you solve this problem, not by handing off profits to—who knows? Maybe even an ever-increasing privatization plan.

So I will not be supporting this legislation, and people in our riding are not fooled.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: It's an honour to rise here today in support of Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, introduced by the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

For the last 15 years under the Liberal mismanagement, we've lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs right here in Ontario, and a lot in the auto industry, where I come from.

The choice between paying your electric bill, buying food or paying rent for seniors in my riding of Mississauga–Lakeshore was unbelievable. When I was knocking on doors, they were telling me they couldn't afford to pay their rent or eat. Twenty-one per cent of my riding is seniors. The fair hydro scam has wasted \$4 billion more than necessary. We can't have this going on anymore.

Bill 87 will build on this record. As the minister said, it is a comprehensive and responsible approach to building a modern, effective and transparent electricity system that works for the people again. Madam Speaker, I urge all members to join with me in support of Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: When she started out, the member for Flamborough–Glanbrook mentioned her Hamilton Bulldogs jersey and the importance of why we're wearing the hockey jerseys today. Yesterday in Windsor, at the Windsor Family Credit Union Arena, the home of the Windsor Spitfires, we held a special "be a donor" awareness day as well, a Green Shirt Day in honour of Logan Boulet and the Humboldt crash and his sacrifice, which will benefit the lives, save the lives, of at least six people and has left a lasting legacy.

I mention that because one of the former Spitfires who was there, Bill Bowler, literally gave me the shirt off his back. He took off his jersey—he had a special green Spitfires jersey—and said, "I want you to wear this in the Legislature tomorrow," when he found out that Bill Walker would be making this motion so that we could wear our jerseys.

I just want to tell you, Speaker, that, as you know, Bill Bowler, in 1991 to 1995, set the Ontario Hockey League record, which still stands today, of 318 assists, and he set a franchise record of total points during those four years of 467. He has played in the NHL, the international league and other leagues as well, and done very well; his jersey hangs in the rafters at the WFCU. So a shout-out to Bill Bowler, and to Steve Horn, who does the marketing with the Spitfires, as well.

But to this bill—not to Bill Walker, but to the bill that the government has in front of us today, fixing the hydro

mess, so-called—you're just like the Liberals. You put out a really nice sticker name and everybody thinks this is what you're doing, but you are falling so short on this bill. You're not doing much of anything.

But thank you for the opportunity to talk about the Windsor Spitfires this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Roman Baber: I just want to address my comments to the commencement of the member's speech, recognizing the day not only as organ donation day, but also this grim anniversary of a tragic accident that not only affected so many lives but, in my view, also helped shape the future of transportation in our country.

Prior to my election—in the seven years preceding my election—I practised insurance and commercial litigation. Regretfully, I've seen too many instances of difficulty on the roads that resulted in catastrophes. Although we don't have too many details arising out of the Saskatchewan tragedy, we do know that the driver had at least three opportunities to stop before running that stop sign, yet didn't. Alcohol and drugs were not a factor, so it would be safe to assume that he must have been distracted.

Regretfully, we're seeing an incredible uptick in motor vehicle incidents in the last couple of years, and they're stemming primarily from distracted driving. This is something that the IBC speaks about, this is something that law enforcement authorities speak about, and regretfully, it has yet to really register. It has yet to resonate with Ontario's drivers, or with Canadian drivers, that distracted driving kills.

We have been able to effect a cultural shift when it comes to impaired driving, but we're not there yet in terms of distracted driving.

I urge all members of the House and all members of my family and friends to think of this catastrophe that will linger with us for many years to come, and to do everything we can to combat distracted driving.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: When it comes to the energy sector in this province, our government is really committed to getting it right. We are committed to implementing policies that benefit ratepayers.

I mentioned, and I've mentioned many times in this House, about why I got into politics. The Green Energy Act was a dismal failure, and we are paying the price and seeing soaring hydro rates. It has taken its toll on consumers and ratepayers right across Ontario. It has taken its toll on businesses right across Ontario. It had to come to an end.

It was a policy that was brought in by the previous government with promises to provide jobs, with promises to create green energy. All it really did was create an absolute mess, as far as hydro goes, in the province of Ontario.

For far too long, Ontarians have had to face these skyrocketing hydro prices, and yet the previous government did absolutely nothing to truly help them to address it. For

15 years, the Liberals stood in this Legislature and blamed us for the hydro mess. But they created it. They had 15 years to get it right, and they simply didn't. Instead, they wasted billions and billions of taxpayers' dollars, and they borrowed a lot of that money. What did we end up with? The hydro mess.

As one of the five main pillars of our campaign last year, our government is willing to do what it takes to clean up this mess. The Fixing the Hydro Mess Act is fundamental to our government's vision to get back on the right track when it comes to the hydro sector.

People of Ontario, people right across Ontario, in northern Ontario and central Ontario and in my area of Hamilton, want cheaper hydro rates. They want a government that will deliver on that promise, and that's exactly what we are doing with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to stand in this Legislature and stand up for—well, I wish I was standing up for strong public power. But I do like to have this conversation in the Legislature. I've done it before, as we all have on the NDP benches, when we were faced with the Liberals wrong-headedly selling it off. We were part of the campaign with the entire province to stop them in that, and we were unsuccessful. They sold it off for parts. And now here we have a bill before us called the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act.

Speaker, I'm ever the optimist. I have to be; I come out of public education. I come here every day to represent the fine folks of Oshawa, so I would hope that I am an optimist. I saw the title and I thought, "Oh, are we going to fix the hydro mess in Ontario?" The answer, flashing forward, is no.

1440

No, disappointingly, this government is missing opportunity after opportunity to make this a better system, to fix what the last government did.

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The minister on the other side, I'm sure, is going to want to engage in this conversation, but I would invite him to wait for questions and comments. I'm sure that he can set me straight at that time.

Speaker, this bill has a new label on the Liberal hydro scheme. The bills are still going to go up. Across Ontario, we all know that electricity shouldn't be considered a luxury, and it certainly shouldn't be priced as one. We have a situation—we all talk about it in this House—where people have to choose between heating and eating and that folks have to make unbelievable decisions. We have been in this House and we have had to put our foot down to stop winter disconnections. We all know the folks across our communities who are hardest-hit, and we want to be able to make that right. And here we have a bill that doesn't accomplish that.

My colleague from Kingston and the Islands and the member from Toronto–Danforth have very eloquently and clearly put on the record a lot of the details and the missed opportunities. But I'm going to take us back in history a

little bit, because this bill doesn't do what it ought to, and I want to talk about why we really should be fighting for strong public power.

Earlier, the member from Brantford—Brant was asking us what we would do. What would we do? I am happy to answer his question now. It's still online that when the NDP ran, we wanted to bring hydro back into the public fold. We wanted to bring it back into public hands, for the greater good of all of our businesses, all of our families and all of our households and farms across the province. That plan is still up, and the government is welcome to take a look at it. I'm glad that they're asking for our input and would like to move forward in a positive direction, so let's see if they take a look at that and reverse course.

My colleague from Toronto—Danforth had a lot to say in his hour lead. I'm actually going to quote from Hansard and give him full credit. He asked a question about this bill. He said: "Does the bill before us actually take the steps necessary to clean up that mess? Does the minister—does the Premier—plan to bring Hydro One back into public ownership? Or, when private power contracts come up, when they expire, does he plan to take them back into public ownership so that, again, we have a public system in Ontario? Not that I can see in this bill.

"Does he plan to use conservation to drive down the need for new transmission and distribution lines or new generation? Conservation is absolutely the cheapest option before us. No. In fact, he has cut back conservation....

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

Further to that, the member from Toronto—Danforth goes on to say: "Privatization has been at the heart of the problem before us. They will not reverse it. They have no interest in it because they don't have confidence in governments doing things. They think it should all be turned over to the private sector. Frankly, the industrialists in Ontario at the beginning of the 20th century understood the fallacy of that approach, and because they rejected it, they were able to build an industrial society here in this province."

So, let's go back in time. Let's talk a little bit about the early industrialists—who, by the way, weren't socialists at all, guys. They were a lot more conservative than folks in this space. Maybe the "Conservatives"—I'm going to say that with air quotes—could stand to have some of that history.

I'd like to share some of the article from the Dictionary of Canadian Biography on Sir Adam Beck.

Sir Adam Beck fought for public hydro. He was knighted because he championed good ideas for the people. In fact, a statue was erected in his honour. The bronze monument of Sir Adam Beck is not far from here. We can drive by it when we're on our way to and from Queen's Park. Schools have been named in his memory.

I'll read part of an article researched and written by H.V. Nelles.

"The Prometheus of Canadian politics during the first quarter of the 20th century, Sir Adam Beck brought the inestimable benefit of cheap electric light and power to the citizens of Ontario through a publicly owned utility, the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario. He had to fight continuously to build Hydro, as it came to be called, but supported by municipal allies he succeeded in creating one of the largest publicly owned integrated electric systems in the world.... Adam Beck more than any other public figure in Ontario reshaped the institutional life of the province by making electricity a public utility and legitimizing, through his accomplishments, public ownership as an effective instrument of policy throughout Canada."

Speaker, Sir Adam Beck is quoted as saying, "It is the duty of the government to see that development is not hindered by permitting a handful of people to enrich themselves out of these treasures at the expense of the general public."

Speaker, it was traumatizing, and I'm using that word honestly and sincerely for myself, to have stood in this House while we watched the last majority government sell it off for parts, to undo all of that amazing work that had been done through the years in building a strong, revenue-generating public asset that was accountable to the people of Ontario.

Beck extolled the power of abundant, cheap light because his vision was that every farm be lit up, that every family would have access to affordable public power, that every business could grow. I would imagine that the Conservatives would somehow connect to that, and so we have an opportunity with this bill to do more, to do better.

Heck, we heard from the member from Kingston and the Islands that we're not even addressing the mandatory time-of-use pricing issue that the government did say was a good idea, but not enough. It was enough to include in your—you're saying—comprehensive legislation. Well, it's not in here. It's a missed opportunity.

Where is the commitment to the people of Ontario, to the businesses of Ontario? They're basically keeping the same plan that the Liberals had and relabelling it. They'll get into the fine details and pick one or two message points that they're going to hit at over and over and over, but down the road, it's the people of Ontario who are still going to be worse off.

Some 100 years ago we gave someone with good ideas about public power a knighthood and 100 years later we're standing here pretending like that isn't an option, that tinkering is the right thing to do.

What the last government did was a despicable thing, absolutely. They ensured that small business will stay small, that people can't pay their bills. Sir Adam Beck wanted to brighten the homes of working people, and I wish this government would make a connection to that and make that a priority.

I'm trying to find—there's a quote in particular, Speaker and it's—ah, here we go. Sir Adam Beck, who

was a Tory, who was backed by business, who ran “a 10-year campaign and 18 municipal referendums, brought public power to Ontario in 1905.” The last government just got rid of it in one short stretch. But for 95 years, Ontario had a chance to prosper under strong public power, and, “On his deathbed, Sir Adam Beck said, ‘I wish I could have lived long enough to build a band of iron around Hydro, to keep it safe from the politicians.’”

Well, he couldn't, and we have an opportunity here. Why aren't we having the conversation about bringing it back into public hands? This government—it's so confusing to me; you guys seem to hate revenue. Why are you allergic to revenue-generating assets? I mean, we talk about the 407. The member from Kingston and the Islands brought it up. We don't have the revenue that comes from that. The sell-off of Hydro One—and this government has no interest in bringing it back. They're cutting off revenue streams.

They talk about the spending problems. We also have a revenue problem, so I challenge the government to answer that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions or comments?

Mr. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, we're starting to see the elements of an NDP policy in this debate.

What's interesting is that we just finished the Bill 66 debate last week, and many of the members of the NDP were calling that an omnibus bill. It was 30 pages long; it was too long for them. There was too much in it and they called it an omnibus bill.

But what we're starting to see here is the elements of an NDP policy. What they're talking about doing, Madam Speaker, if I get them correct, is they're talking about spending billions of dollars and purchasing back shares in a private company. They're talking about increasing hydro rates immediately—not in the future, but immediately for our businesses, for our homeowners and for our farmers. Across the board, massive increases in hydro immediately is what they're talking about. They're really all over the map.

The member from Kingston just talked about nuclear rates. He talked about future nuclear being at 17 cents a kilowatt hour. The member for Toronto–Danforth talked about it being at 12 cents a kilowatt hour. Colleagues, what's it at? It's at 6.7 cents. So they're all over the map. They're making it up as they go along.

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What's even worse, Mr. Speaker, is that—his bill is a next step. It's a next step. We brought in the Green Energy Act; we withdrew those contracts. It would have cost billions of dollars for Ontario taxpayers.

But we're also taking care of the financing. We're shining a light on the financing, and we're saving ratepayers, taxpayers, \$4 billion in the process—\$4 billion in the process. So I would encourage the NDP to support this bill, because \$4 billion is a very good step.

Also, if they want to bring forward an omnibus bill that deals with eliminating the Fair Hydro Plan right now, then I encourage them to do so. If they want to bring in an

omnibus bill that deals with the costs of nuclear, I encourage them to do so. But as I stand, there is nothing on the order paper, either from the member for Toronto–Danforth or any member of the NDP, which would deal in an omnibus way with the things they are talking about in their speech—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

Mr. Paul Calandra: What we're talking about is a systematic approach—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

I remind the members that when your time is up and I'm prompting you, your time is up.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

Questions and comments? The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Be sure to let me know when my time is up.

Do you know what? I would say that this bill—we can talk about it in many ways, but it's telling us that this Conservative government seems to like two things. Clearly they like to privatize our public assets, just like the Liberals, and clearly they like to recklessly borrow billions of dollars, just like the Liberals.

I, too, got into politics because of the hydro file. The fact that our hydro system was built on the backs of our parents and our grandparents—it was the bricks and the mortar of a public asset that served us well. And the Liberal government—it was not theirs to sell off for parts, as the member has said. It was theirs to hold in trust. Now this government has a chance to undo what the Liberals have done, which was to sell away an asset that should have been held in trust for future generations, and they haven't even attempted to change that. What we have before us is just the Liberal plan with borrowing.

It boggles my mind that what this government purports to be is open and transparent and fiscally responsible when, in fact, they are continuing to borrow—borrowing \$2.5 billion a year to subsidize the hydro file. As we have said, this is subsidizing private profit. This isn't anything that's going to be benefiting the taxpayers. Ratepayers' costs are now going to be on the rolls of the taxpayers, and it is \$2.4 billion.

Now they've said they're going to have an on-bill rebate. At least Mike Harris, when he privatized the system, called it a debt retirement charge. But this government has learned from those mistakes, so now they're going to call a rebate something that, in fact, is borrowing. I can't imagine anything more cynical. It's almost like taking your credit card and buying something and presenting it to you and saying, “This is a gift for you.” But you know what? The people of Ontario are smarter than that, and they're going to see through this cynical political ploy on their hydro bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do appreciate the opportunity to comment on what is an ongoing issue with the cost of electricity. I think most of us here, in door-knocking over

the last two or three elections—really, what we heard at the door was that people were having difficulty paying their bills, and specifically their electricity bills. So I'm quite heartened that we are now debating yet another piece of legislation to clean up the hydro mess. I get a kick out of the title of Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act.

Full disclosure: I heat with electricity. That means, out of necessity and given the ongoing high price of electricity, I go through, this winter, maybe 15 cords of wood, and in a colder winter, perhaps 20 cords of wood. It's good exercise. But I'm in an area where there's no natural gas and I have to rely on electricity for heat and just about everything else.

When we were in opposition, we made a number of commitments to help out with the price of electricity. Part of that was to—we talked about a rebate to return the cost of conservation programs to the electricity ratepayer and have it funded through general revenue. It's one more step in a series of ongoing steps, and I'm sure there will be more to deal with this.

We came in, in the past election, where Ontario had the highest, fastest-rising electricity costs in North America, and we were sitting at the highest rates in Canada. So I fully appreciate this kind of legislation and I look forward to many more actions on this front.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's fantastic to be able to stand and contribute to this debate a little bit more.

I just want to talk about a couple of those numbers and where they came from. They were in chapter 3 of a report by the Auditor General of Ontario, when she looked at the real costs of generation due to the refurbishment of the Darlington nuclear facility. The 12-cent number is the projection for 2022, and the 17-cent number is the projection for 2024. So, in terms of us making up numbers or simply pulling them out of thin air, in actual fact we are reading a report from the Auditor General of Ontario and relaying those numbers to this government. I'm not sure that they have actually read the report. I think this would be quite a valuable contribution to the debate, to bring light to some of the numbers attached to this, so that the government could take heed and make their decisions based off that.

I at no point stood up and said that any part of what the Liberals did was beneficial for energy in Ontario. We bought into green energy when it was the most expensive that it could possibly be. But now that it's actually competitive, we've actually bought out of it under this government, at huge cost—and those lawsuits have yet to really start rolling out. The reason I say that is that even at that 6.2 cents for nuclear, which I think was the number the member opposite brought up, contracts for wind and solar right now are around 3.7 cents, Madam Speaker. That's significantly lower than even the current price of nuclear, let alone the future projected price, which the Auditor General is expecting to go to both 12 cents and then, two years later, up to 17 cents—which is where those numbers came from.

I would encourage the members opposite to read the report. It's highly educational. It's a value-for-money audit and fantastic.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the thoughtful comments from around the room. The member who was interested in the NDP policies—as I said, we had a platform going into the last election. We've checked every pizza box and desk looking for the current government's platform. But they're welcome to take a look at ours, if they'd like to see what we would do, what we will do, when we have the opportunity to form government.

Speaker, as we've heard, this Liberal borrowing plan—only it's got a Conservative name tag—is disappointing, and I think in the long run is going to be damaging to folks across the province. To put these rebates on bills but to borrow in order to do that is problematic. This tax-funded hydro rebate that is integrated with the HST rebate is equal to whatever the government prescribes. So that's fascinating. Also, something I didn't mention and I'll remind folks about: Everyone in this House who was here in the last Parliament, except the Liberals who are here, was up in arms about the partisan advertising that was going home in the bills, going out in the bills. The hydro bills now, though, according to this piece of legislation, must be accompanied by prescribed information. What will that look like? Will that be advertising?

When we were debating Bill 32 and the natural gas expansion, I brought this up. I put forward an amendment in committee about making sure that you could not have partisan advertising in the bills. That was a different bill—but again, bills going into people's homes and not using that as opportunity, as a vehicle, to be partisan. And the government—it was the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington who said, “I have substantial sympathy for the member on this issue. However, it's way too broad. Partisan advertising: What is partisan advertising? Where do you start? Where do you stop with this?” I stop here.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Let's just get straight to business on this very important piece of legislation, as the need for such action is already well documented in the parliamentary Hansard.

The reason we're doing this is simple: Families of all backgrounds, especially those in lower-income and/or fixed-income situations, should not have to choose between the necessities in order to fund a program that makes well-connected persons in the energy sector incredibly rich.

The Fixing the Ontario Hydro Mess Act, 2019, seeks to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, 2017, and the Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, 2016.

A number of amendments to other legislation, to ensure consistency through the provisions in the schedules, are detailed in this bill. I'll read some of them.

Amid the legislative changes, there are three key areas of change: (1) energy conservation, (2) modernizing the Ontario Energy Board, and (3) changing the rate structure.

The Fixing the Ontario Hydro Mess Act would do the following, if passed:

- find savings of up to \$442 million by refocusing and uploading electricity conservation programs to the Independent Electricity System Operator, known as the IESO;

- overhaul the Ontario Energy Board to make the regulatory system more efficient and accountable, while continuing to protect consumers;

- hold residential electricity bills to the rate of inflation;

- wind down the Fair Hydro Plan and, as a result, save billions of dollars in borrowing costs; and, finally,

- introduce a new, transparent, on-bill rebate on consumers' bills to replace the Fair Hydro Plan.

By uploading the delivery of conservation programs to the IESO, the province is avoiding unnecessary duplication in administration costs. Going forward, local distribution companies will not receive the up to \$150 million in bonus payments for achieving targets.

The government is committed to lowering hydro bills by 12%. The Fixing the Ontario Hydro Mess Act builds on actions taken to date, including overhauling executive compensation at Hydro One and terminating more than 750 unnecessary renewable energy contracts, avoiding \$790 million in costs.

The conservation changes are expected to lead to savings for medium-sized and larger employers. For example, a large employer consuming 50,000 megawatt hours a month would see a bill reduction of about \$30,000 a month, allowing them to invest these savings in modern equipment or expansion to create new jobs.

The proposed overhaul to the OEB was informed by the recommendations of the OEB Modernization Review Panel, stakeholders and regulatory experts. The changes reflect best practices and support independent decision-making.

Finally, the Financial Accountability Office estimated that the previous government's Fair Hydro Plan added almost \$4 billion in borrowing costs for Ontario families, seniors and businesses.

We're taking these measures seriously, because we've canceled 750 planned energy contracts, and we're also lowering the salary cap on the Hydro One CEO, among others, to \$1.5 million, down from \$6 million. But that's just simply not enough. Those measures prevent the problem from getting worse. But for the families, businesses, community groups and charities being forced to choose between essentials because of absurdly expensive hydro, in a province where we produce a surplus of electricity, major positive changes need to come now for relief to be felt and for communities to grow.

We are closely working with our small, medium and large job creators, because we also understand that there is work to be done there. Despite the fact that removing red tape is extraordinarily important, the high cost of energy

is something that we all, on both sides of the House, continue to hear about, and we all focus on that.

Despite our inroads with the industry, we're focusing our efforts for positive change in the energy sector first on low-income, rural and Indigenous communities, because we know there's still work to be done there.

You might be surprised to hear this, but in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington—the heart of southern Ontario, between London and Windsor, a mere 50-minute drive from Detroit—we did not have reliable access to energy until very recently. While I know that we are discussing the specific matter of hydro today, it is very relevant to the discussion that our government's work to expand natural gas capabilities throughout the province is relevant, as it complements our hydro program in lowering the cost of energy for families and businesses, as well as charities.

Madam Speaker, in a past life I worked for 12 years as an analyst at Union Gas in Chatham, seeing the growth of our energy sector, be it hydro, gas or otherwise, under the leadership of the Bill Davis government. Many friends still working at Union Gas, Enbridge, Ontario Hydro and others understood the damage of the last government's green energy program from decades of experience.

These same people, as well as job creators and community leaders in my riding, are telling me just how cheap hydro, as well as the availability of conservation-minded natural gas alternatives, allowed their operations to rotate different energy supplies for different tasks, allowing for new expansions for businesses and organizations in the area that were impossible under the last government.

Now, this is especially great news for groups like the Children's Treatment Centre of Chatham-Kent, the YMCA and the hospitals in Windsor, as they can use the savings in the short term to shoulder the burden created by the federal government's onerous carbon tax, a tax that we've heard from CTV News and other reports last week will, in fact, cost area hospitals \$381,000 this year and nearly \$1 million by 2022 in Windsor, Essex and Chatham-Kent-Leamington. Our government is committed, through all means necessary, to make the essentials of life as low-cost as possible for our hospitals, our community centres, our businesses and, most importantly, our families.

Now, we do this by centralizing energy conservation programs. We've lifted the program up to the IESO. The reason we've done that is so that we could centralize and have a more focused program, a program that allows our local distribution companies access, and we can work through the IESO so that demand and conservation work together, not against each other, as we have seen in the past. The result of this going forward could be a savings, colleagues, of some \$440 million—that's right, \$440 million. Now, some will say it seems to be common sense that conservation would work closely with generation so that trying to do the right thing doesn't cost you money. Well, that's what we're doing. It's a very, very simple but yet important step.

It's further estimated that somewhere between \$15,000 and \$30,000 a month could be saved by some of our largest

electricity users. Think about that for a minute, Madam Speaker. Think about that fact just for a moment: \$15,000 to \$30,000, not a year, but a month. Think of how many jobs that alone would create. Think too of how many more patients Windsor hospital, Hôtel-Dieu Grace, the Children's Treatment Centre and others—it can change the lives of others for the better with those savings.

In my area of Chatham–Kent–Leamington, I have over 500 industrial wind turbines in my riding, and the former Liberal government made it clear that their “flavour of the day” electricity-producing idea would be best. Well, I guess the old TV show *Father Knows Best* fits former Premier “Daddy” Dalton McGuinty.

By the way, the NDP supported the Liberals 97% of that time. Wow, that's incredible.

Where did this get us? Higher electricity rates and produced energy on the backs of the people of Ontario, and now it's being given away to neighbouring states and provinces who, by the way, are taking business out of Ontario. Why? Because they have much lower energy rates. Wow. Unbelievable. It's unfathomable.

So as a government for the people, we will continue to put families, businesses and communities first, and because of this mandate for the people, I'm looking forward to the passage of the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019.

Again, Madam Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence in allowing me to speak to this particular bill entitled the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

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Ms. Suze Morrison: It's certainly a pleasure to rise in the House to speak to this bill today. I want to start by reflecting briefly, as many of us have done, on the jerseys we're wearing today.

I'm proud to be here in a Leafs jersey. I was raised in downtown Toronto—a Leafs fan certainly in my household. As we've reflected on our hometown stories, about hockey today especially, I've heard a number of members talk about the reasons they got into politics in relation to this bill. One of the reasons that I got into politics, Speaker, was largely because of my lived experiences of poverty growing up in downtown Toronto. I'll tell this House, I never got to play hockey growing up. I didn't get to have that experience because, quite frankly, my family couldn't afford it. We couldn't afford the gear, we couldn't afford the fees. Sports was just not something that was part of my life, because it was too expensive.

When the member from Chatham–Kent–Leamington spoke about this bill, his first remarks were that families should not have to choose between the necessities of life and making energy sector folks incredibly rich. Well, that's exactly what this government is continuing to do. By not bringing hydro back into public ownership, this government is following up on a terrible legacy the Liberals left us by continuing to line the pockets of wealthy energy sector folks on the backs of everyday consumers who can't afford their hydro prices.

In my family, growing up, I developed a terrible fear of mail—I'll be quite honest—because I would watch my mom open our mail every single day, and it would be too stressful for her to open the bills because she knew she couldn't pay them. I would watch them sit and pile up on the bookshelf, unopened envelope after unopened envelope. The hydro bill was in there because she couldn't afford to pay it. She knew there wasn't enough money in the bank.

Instead of making things better, this government is making things worse. The right course of action here is to bring hydro back into public ownership, where it belongs.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Will Bouma: It's wonderful to rise on this side of the House again and to be able to speak to Bill 87. I would just like to thank the member from Chatham–Kent–Leamington for giving us some insights into Bill 87. I'm so impressed. He's a mentor to me with his untiring advocacy for the people of Chatham–Kent–Leamington and an example for me in Brantford–Brant. So, thank you.

In looking at this bill and to his statements, I can't help but think how no one in this House can't be for energy conservation and better programs to deliver that saved \$442 million to the people of Ontario. No one cannot be in favour of modernizing the OEB; it's time. And, in fact, no one can be not in favour of decreasing rates.

Listening to the opposition this afternoon, I was just struck by their complete lack of a plan on this. In fact, we've been told this afternoon that we should look at the opposition's platform. Really simply, to look at that, we knew there was a \$7.5-billion hole in their platform. We knew that it called for the buying back of Hydro One for \$6 billion. So knowing that, they would not have taken any of the cost-saving measures and tax reduction efforts that our government has taken. They would have doubled the deficit within their first year of taking office. I don't know how anyone can be in favour of that.

We know that the opposition is in favour of charging the highest carbon tax rates in the world, and we also know that they want to charge the most taxes, as I heard on the campaign trail—just charge the rich a little bit more. But when I asked the question, who was that rich? Well, the answer came back: just the hard-working families of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, let's pass this bill. Let's get going in the right direction with the hydro mess so that we can fix this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments? The member for—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Davenport.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Well, you're wearing a Windsor jersey.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I know.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): It's the best jersey in the House, I might add.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And I wore it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to stand here and speak regarding this bill in response to the comments from the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington. I have to point out again that this is another bill with a name that does exactly the opposite of what it purports to do.

I've been thinking about what to say about this bill a little bit lately, and let's be clear, there is not a lot here. It is very thin. We've got a bill that takes the failed and, shall we say, bankrupt so-called Fair Hydro Plan that the Liberals put forward, a massive borrowing of money to reduce hydro rates, and it's been given a different name basically to make it seem like it's some kind of radical change and then put back on the table, reaffirming that so-called fair hydro bill. But the fact is, under this bill, we are going to be borrowing billions of dollars to deal with hydro prices without actually ever addressing the underlying problems, which are those of privatization, of an overinvestment in a gas plant scheme, and ultimately failing to do what really needs to be done, which is to bring hydro back into public ownership. This is a very, very empty plan.

It's funny. I was thinking about all of the different costs of this plan in the past and so forth, since this current government isn't really going to be changing much here, clearly. I was thinking about the impact that those hydro costs had on school boards back under the previous government and continuing on. I actually found a quote from the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, who was calling out the previous government for the hydro charge and the trouble that was causing schools. I thought, this is another example: Here we are; the same issues exist. Nothing is solved by this piece of so-called legislation that really does nothing but repeat what the previous government put in place.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Billy Pang: It is my honour to rise today to support the government taking bold action to fix the hydro mess through Bill 87, and to echo the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington, who was talking about saving ratepayers money. It takes effort to save money.

Let me share a story. When I came to Canada 19 years ago, I went to an electrical store and bought my first 36-inch TV. It was a very interesting experience. When I talked to the salesman, he told me, "Okay, this is the best one you can get, and it's a good deal." Then I spent about one hour to bargain for a better price. After one hour, my wife, who was standing next to me, said, "Hey, hubby, it's time to go. Cut the deal." Then I said, "No, honey, it's not the right time yet. You know what? If I can achieve my goal, I can save three days' wages. I've spent only one hour here—I can talk for another day." The salesperson heard that. Then, in the next 30 minutes, I cut a deal. I saved two days' wages.

You know what? It is not easy to save some money, but when you work hard—at the end of the day, it was a win-win: The salesperson got his commission and I got a TV at a very good deal.

Today, our government is working hard to get a better deal for our ratepayers. So I support Bill 87.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to thank the members from Toronto Centre, Brantford–Brant, Davenport and Markham–Unionville for 50% of the insightful knowledge that they relayed. The other 50%, I'm not so certain, when I listened to Toronto Centre and, of course, Davenport as well. We have to remember that the NDP did, in fact, support the former Liberal Fair Hydro Plan.

What's interesting is that the member from Davenport talked about our plan being an empty plan. Well, you know what? Let's just put it this way: We're not going to fill the pockets of the rich and famous anymore.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: They can say what they want—it may lack a lot of merit. But as soon as we say something—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm going to ask all members from all sides to come to order. I have to be able to hear the member that's speaking. Thank you. Back to the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I hope I get a few extra seconds because of their interruptions as well.

There's something I do want to share. Of course, this is near and dear to your riding of Windsor West, Madam Speaker: the greenhouse growers down in Leamington. I've talked to some of the greenhouse growers down there. The largest greenhouse grower in North America, actually, is down in my riding, in Leamington. I've talked with him, as well as some of the other greenhouse growers. Over the next two years, they're going to be investing close to \$1 billion in new business and the building of greenhouses.

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In order for that to be successful, they have to have energy. They have to have natural gas. They also need to have effective hydro, and with that—not just hydro, but they need to have decent rates that will help keep them in business. So again, we're going to help them with their energy costs, and we're going to do just that with Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: On this side of the House we know the difference between the Green Energy Act and the Fair Hydro Plan: something that was supported and something that wasn't supported. It's never too late to correct your record, sir; never too late to correct your record.

Good afternoon, Speaker. It's always a pleasure. It's always a pleasure to stand in this House and speak to Bill 87, the so-called Fixing the Hydro Mess Act. I'm not sure about the title, but I do know that the former Wynne Liberal government created one hell of a mess with our public hydro system. You'll recall that our constituency offices were flooded for months with calls and visits from

people who couldn't afford to pay their hydro bills. They faced a tough choice: pay the rent or mortgage; put food on the table; or pay their hydro bill. For a while, hydro was being cut off in the cold winter months when people couldn't keep up with their payments.

The Liberals had so totally screwed up the hydro file that they did the unthinkable, the unbelievable. They thought they were being creative, but they were just being stupid. The Auditor General caught them at it and didn't bow to their pressure—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please. I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I withdraw, Speaker. It was a stupid remark.

The Auditor General caught them at it, though, and didn't bow to their pressure and intimidation to be quiet about it, and that's when voters in Ontario finally had enough. They had been willing to forgive any number of scandals and accusations, and what the media called "cash-for-access" with powerful cabinet ministers, but the straw that broke the Liberal brand was hydro. Selling our public hydro system under the guise of needing the money for infrastructure projects was a sham.

You were here, Speaker, in this House, as was I, when the signs first surfaced that hydro was for sale. Our leader, the member from Hamilton Centre, Andrea Horwath, asked then-Premier Kathleen Wynne, the member from Don Valley West, in question period if she was going to sell our public hydro system. "No," she was told, then-Premier Wynne said. She had no intention of ever doing that. Then, of course, we know what happened. Public shares in Hydro One were sold off in phases, benefiting the friends of the Liberal Party, who snapped them up for the bargain they were. Millions of dollars used to come back to the government coffers, to be used for various purposes in education, health care and infrastructure projects, and now that money goes into the pockets of investors instead of back into our general fund. This bill, Bill 87, does nothing, absolutely nothing, to fix that, to correct that injustice, that attack on public taxpayers.

Speaker, in farming circles there's an old saying: You can put lipstick on a pig, but at the end of the day it's still a pig. This bill has the lipstick, the new label—a blue label instead of a red label, as my friend from Kingston and the Islands has pointed out—but it's still a pig of a bill, with a bit of garnish. The investors are still at the trough, rolling in the dough, and the Ontario hydro system is still in a mess.

We still pay extra to wash our clothes during the peak hours of the day. There's nothing in there to fix that part of the mess in our hydro bills, and why not? If you want to really fix the hydro mess that the Liberals left us, pick the low-hanging fruit. Stop the predatory pricing on people who can't get up in the middle of the night at off-peak hours to do the family laundry.

Speaker, let's turn back the clock to drive home the point on how badly the former Liberal government stuck it to us when it comes to hydro pricing.

This is not a prop, Speaker; this is the special report from the Auditor General from October 2017. The title is

The Fair Hydro Plan: Concerns about Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Value for Money. I'm going to read from this report because it lays the groundwork for what we're speaking about here today: the mess the Liberals created and stuck us with on the hydro file.

Speaker, I have to tell you: I was a member of the public accounts committee when this report was issued, and well I remember the attacks the Liberals used to try and discredit the report and the Auditor General. But as history shows the public didn't buy it then and they don't buy it to this day.

The Liberals are no longer trusted. They broke faith with the electorate. They are paying the price and here is why, according to the report:

"The Office of the Auditor General recommends that the government:

"(a) record the true financial impact of the Fair Hydro Plan's electricity rate reduction on the province's budgets and consolidated financial statements; and

"(b) use a financing structure to fund the rate reduction that is least costly for Ontarians."

"When governments pass legislation to make their own accounting rules that serve to obfuscate the impact of their financial decisions, their financial statements become unreliable. This is particularly concerning when a government states that it follows Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) when in fact, the accounting rules being applied are actually not in accordance with Canadian PSAS. When organizational structures and transactions are designed to remove transparency and accountability, and unnecessarily cost Ontarians billions of dollars, the responsibility of an Auditor General is to apprise the Legislature and the public in accordance with the Auditor General's mandate....

"Under law ... the Legislature has given the Office of the Auditor General the right and responsibility to speak out when the financial information of the government is not, or will not be, presented fairly and transparently to both the Legislature and Ontarians. In issuing this special report to the Legislature, we are fulfilling our responsibility under Section 12(1) of the Auditor General Act....

"Our work included interviews and a review of documentation, including emails. We received all information we requested with one exception. The Ministry of Energy signed a contract, with a retainer of \$500,000, to receive help from a law firm to provide search services and to compile emails before providing them to us. At the time we completed this special report, the ministry had still not provided us with all of its emails, which we requested on May 31, 2017....

"It is clear to us that the government's intention in creating the accounting/financing design to handle the costs of the electricity rate reduction was to avoid affecting its fiscal plan. That is, the intention was to avoid showing a deficit in the province's budgets and consolidated financial statements for 2017-18 to 2019-20, and to likewise show no increase in the provincial net debt....

"Our concerns are that the planned accounting for the government's budgets and consolidated financial statements is incorrect, and that it was known that the planned

financing structure could result in significant unnecessary costs for Ontarians....

“Ratepayers’ hydro bills will be lower than the cost of the electricity used as a result of the electricity rate reduction. However, power generators will still be owed the full cost of the electricity they supply, so the government needs to borrow cash to cover the shortfall to pay them. The effects of the additional debt required to fund the generators need to be accounted for as part of the annual deficit and net debt of the province. However, the government did not properly account for this debt impact from the electricity rate reduction in its 2017-18 budget and is not planning to account for it properly in its future consolidated financial statements. In essence, the government is making up its own accounting rules....

“Through the Fair Hydro Act, the government created a needlessly complex accounting/financing structure for the electricity rate reduction in order to avoid showing a deficit or an increase in net debt in its budgets and in the province’s consolidated financial statements....

“According to the government’s current plan, the only electricity rate reduction lasting beyond 2027 will be a 9% reduction mainly from the HST rebate and other taxpayer-funded programs. From 2028 on, ratepayers will be charged more than the actual cost of the electricity being produced in order to pay back the borrowings. The total borrowings to be repaid will be an estimated \$39.4 billion, made up of \$18.4 billion borrowed to cover the current rate reduction shortfall and \$21 billion in accumulated interest over the term of the borrowings.”

“Applying the government’s complex accounting/financing structure could result in Ontarians incurring extra interest costs over 30 years that could total up to \$4 billion more than necessary....

“The government knew there was a high risk that it would receive a ‘qualified’ audit opinion on the province’s consolidated financial statements as a result of using legislation to create a regulatory asset, but it accepted this risk in order to avoid showing a deficit and an increase in net debt in its budgets and consolidated financial statements. Accordingly, the 2017-18 budget does not, but should, include the impact for 16% of the costs of the policy decision to reduce electricity rates by 25%. The 16% reduction is estimated to cost an average of \$2.5 billion per year (over 10.5 years) through to 2027....

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“Private sector accountants, lawyers and bankers were engaged to develop and support the plan. Advice was also sought from broker-dealers and investment advisers....”

“An increase in the accumulated deficit”—Speaker, do you know what I am going to have to do? During my two-minute response, I’m just going to finish off a couple of pages because I’m running out of time.

But it’s still not too late to correct your record, that we didn’t support the Fair Hydro Plan. We did support the green energy plan but not the Fair Hydro Plan, as you said. You can correct your record at any time.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, it’s “questions and comments” so I think I’ll ask some questions and hopefully the honourable member will have time to answer some of the questions for me, because I’ve been hearing a lot here. Part of this—and obviously it is and I’ve said it a number of times—is the next step. We’re not bringing all of the changes all at once. We have to do it one piece at a time.

But what I keep hearing from the NDP opposite is that they want a different approach. They want an omnibus approach. So I ask the member opposite, is it the NDP’s intention—because there is nothing on the order paper right now—to bring forward an omnibus bill which will, in part, eliminate all aspects of the Fair Hydro Plan? How much will that cost? What will the increase in rates be to our taxpayers? Is it their intention to do that? Is it their intention to bring back elements of the Green Energy Act which we eliminated, which would cost almost \$1 billion for Ontario taxpayers?

Is it the NDP’s intention to bring forward a bill which would see the province of Ontario spend billions of dollars—\$7 billion to \$8 billion—in buying shares in a private corporation from, among others, the teachers’ pension plan and the Ontario municipal employees’ retirement fund? Is it their intention to do all of those things, and when can we expect to see this bill before the House? Because we’re hearing a lot from the NDP of the things that they want to see in a bill, but they’ve never brought forward a bill to that aspect. And I think the Ontario taxpayers will agree.

We’re going to disagree on elements of it. I don’t believe that spending \$8 billion privatizing hydro is a good thing. The member opposite, though, would appreciate that part of being a responsible opposition isn’t only criticizing but it’s bringing forward solutions. You’ve enunciated a number of things. When will we see this omnibus bill that the NDP in every single one of their speeches keeps talking about—because I look forward to that debate in this House.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It’s my pleasure to rise to offer some thoughts on the comments from my colleague the member for Windsor–Tecumseh. Certainly in response to what we just heard, I think the member for Windsor–Tecumseh made clear, as did our critic the member for Toronto–Danforth, that the solution to fixing the hydro mess is to bring Hydro One back into public hands, and that is what is entirely absent from this bill. I think that the member from Windsor–Tecumseh very succinctly outlined why this bill is simply a rebranding of the Liberal hydro scheme with a new name on it. It actually does nothing to in fact fix the hydro mess.

Speaker, I was elected in 2013 and one of the first things I heard, one of the most constant things I’ve heard over those six years, is around the cost of people’s hydro bills. We’ve seen a 100% increase in hydro bills in this province. It is unacceptable that so many Ontarians are put in a position of having to choose whether to pay their

hydro bill, buy their prescription drugs, or put food on the table. There is a need to address the fiasco that the Liberals have created in our hydro system, but this bill doesn't actually do anything to fix the problems that we have seen. If this government was serious about fixing the hydro mess, they would take immediate steps to begin the process of bringing Hydro One back into public hands.

We look forward to the day when we will see such a bill come from this government, but we're not holding our breath.

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

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to my colleague the member from Markham–Stouffville. I always enjoy his comments and, today, his questions in the Legislature.

Thank you to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. I am going to disagree with you regarding name of the bill, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, because it's a perfect name and it's exactly what we are going to do.

I'm sure every member in this House can attest to the hydro crisis of the past 10-plus years. Between 2006 and 2016, the amount an average household in Ontario spent on electricity more than doubled. According to the Ontario Energy Board, the average household spent \$40 per month in 2006, and \$83 per month in 2016 on electricity.

During this time, job creators had to make difficult decisions on whether to continue to invest in Ontario or relocate to another jurisdiction with cheaper hydro rates. In 2017, Byron Nelson, the president of a Toronto manufacturer, said to the *Globe and Mail* that his company was scouting for a location to open a factory in Illinois or Ohio. Why was that? Nelson responded that it was because Ontario's hydro rates are too high.

This is a problem for all Ontarians. In a 2018 poll—and that's not just the election poll—less than half of our constituents said that they could easily afford their hydro, and 38% said they had difficulty finding the money to pay these bills at the end of the month.

I have seen the effects of bad policies directly on my riding. I have heard from countless constituents that they are unable to pay for their hydro, or that their massive payments have forced them to slip deeper into debt.

Our government is taking action on this crisis right now. Bill 87 and its measures to steady hydro rates, include on-bill rebates and set increases to the rate of inflation will ensure stability in our electrical system for decades to come.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to address an important part of this bill, the part that is a cut to conservation programs. I'd like to list the programs that are being cut in this bill, so that it is in the record.

The business refrigeration incentive provides businesses with incentives for direct installation of product refrigeration equipment upgrades.

The Audit Funding program provides funding for a portion of the costs of a facility energy audit.

High Performance New Construction provides design assistance and incentives for building owners and planners who design and implement energy-efficient equipment within their new space.

Existing Building Commissioning provides incentives for improving the efficiency of chilled water systems, including audit, purchase and installation of equipment.

Monitoring and targeting provides incentives to purchase and install monitoring and targeting systems for operational incentives.

The instant discount provides point-of-purchase incentives at participating retailers for qualifying energy-efficient products, including LED light bulbs, light fixtures and power bars.

The heating and cooling incentive provides rebates for purchasing and installing new, qualifying energy-efficient heating and cooling equipment, such as central air conditioners and furnaces, including smart thermostats and air-source heat pump systems.

Residential new construction provides incentives to improve energy performance and install energy-efficient products in new builds.

These are all important energy conservation things that business would benefit from and that individuals would benefit from. I think that, in amendments, these should be reconsidered.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm just going to throw out a couple of more numbers. What I've been listening to was really how the Liberals have put us in so much debt, and it will result in a total increase of \$26.2 billion in net debt, and so our electricity bills are expected to go back up, except for that 9% reduction on the HST, and then increase even further to pay back all of the borrowings.

These borrowings and accumulated interest are expected to total \$39.4 billion: \$18.4 billion covering the rate reduction, \$17.8 billion in interest accumulated over phases 1 and 2, plus additional interest of \$13.2 billion accrued during phase 3. The amounts are planned to be fully repaid by 2045, if you can wait that long, Speaker.

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To my good friend from Markham–Stouffville, who challenged us to present a bill: It doesn't matter what we do. We give private members' bills all the time. You say, "Yes, let's put them in committee." They never get called to committee. What a total waste of time. We get unanimous consent in the House on a Thursday afternoon for a bill that never goes anywhere. You guys are afraid to bring our bills to committee. You're afraid to bring them for third reading. You're afraid to let the public know that the NDP actually had some good ideas. You can challenge us all you want to bring you bills; you don't do anything with them.

You're going to have to wait another three years. I say that in all good faith. In another three years, you'll hear what the NDP plan is. It will be part of the platform, part of the government and part of the throne speech, and then

you'll be saying, "Oh, I should have listened then. I might have saved my seat."

By the way, Speaker, when you were over there as a member, you were wrong in saying that the NDP supported the Fair Hydro Plan. I'm still waiting for you to withdraw and correct your record. Nice speaking to you this afternoon, sir.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I appreciate the comments from the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, but I would ask him on those final comments to withdraw.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'll withdraw, and I'm still waiting for you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Don't challenge the Chair.

Further debate? I recognize the member from York Centre.

Mr. Roman Baber: Mr. Speaker, it's good to rise before you on Monday afternoon on the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act. I've been listening to the debate this afternoon; in fact, I've enjoyed it immensely. It was cordial, interesting and informative. But it almost seems as if there's some sort of amnesia going on among some of the members of the opposition party, because we have now been experiencing a steady rise in electricity prices for close to a decade. This is not something that necessarily happened in the last couple of years. This has been in the works for a while.

Our party has not been supportive of the Liberal plan to sell off a portion of Hydro One. In fact, it was particularly not supportive of the manner in which the Liberals went about it. This was, what I recall at the time, equivalent to a fire sale. When our party, the opposition at the time, came to the Liberals and said, "Hey, if you're going to privatize hydro, at the very least let the public know that we're getting fair value for it. Get an independent value opinion"—something you ordinarily do in this size of a transaction. However, the Liberals resisted any attempt for independent valuation and sold off a portion of Hydro One as if this was a fire sale.

But to suggest that Ontario only experienced this uptick in prices after the sale of Hydro One would be incorrect, Madam Speaker. In fact, most of the trajectory we have been seeing commenced much earlier in the decade, subsequent to the passage of the Green Energy Act. This is something that my friends in the opposition can never get away from. The Green Energy Act was a product of misguided Liberal ideology. It was the previous Liberal government that destroyed our electricity system through their ideological policies that forced families and businesses to pay significantly more than they should.

When we talk about energy prices being unsustainable just prior to the previous election, this is not something that we just tell anecdotally and this is not a one-off example. I represent the great riding of York Centre. York Centre has a considerable amount of seniors. The north Toronto population is aging. I can't tell you how many times people at the door simply told me that life was becoming unaffordable—because a fixed income for

pensioners isn't going anywhere but hydro prices kept on climbing. I tried to explain—people would often ask me, "Roman, what is happening with these prices? Why is this happening?" The answer was very simple. For ideological reasons, the Liberals decided to stimulate, to invest, to procure very expensive energy—wind energy, solar energy—often costing us 80 cents a kilowatt. Without thinking, they went ahead, veered off and procured that energy from some of their donors—something entirely different that should probably attract some attention as well. But they went ahead and they ordered this very, very expensive energy. It turned out that, in fact, as we've heard during the hearings of the committee on financial transparency, all of that energy wasn't even needed.

Regretfully, battery technology isn't at a place where we can conserve all of the energy we want, and so Ontario would produce a surplus of electricity, would not have an ability to store it, and would have to sell it off overnight. So, overnight, we would sell our surplus energy to our neighbours like Manitoba or Saskatchewan, or we'd sell it south of the border. We'd sell it to Ohio or Michigan. But we would have to sell it at a market price, which typically would be somewhere between five and eight cents. Imagine, Madam Speaker: We used to procure electricity at 80 cents a kilowatt and then turn around and sell it at five cents a kilowatt. The difference was borne by the ratepayer. This is precisely the reason for this monstrosity, for this horrible conception that has now led us to the place where we're at today. Fixing the hydro mess is not just a piece of legislation that we're debating here; fixing the hydro mess is going to be one of the greatest challenges of our government. It's going to take years and years of work.

But we've answered the challenge by, first and foremost, repealing the Green Energy Act for good. It's gone. This monstrosity that caused this price differential between what we paid for energy and what we sold energy for is finished.

Second of all, we have immediately proceeded to terminate the 790 or so contracts that remained outstanding that would have contributed to an approximate cost of an additional 800 billion dollars' worth of energy we do not require. Those contracts are gone. They're gone. It's all part of our plan to restore Ontario's energy advantage that was lost under 15 years of Liberal mismanagement.

Now comes the third step. It's trying to make sense and it's trying to get a hold of this out-of-control hydro debt. This scheme that the financial transparency committee spent five months listening and studying—this would be the first step in unravelling that scheme. When I hear from members of the opposition that it doesn't go far enough or it doesn't do much, let's look at what it actually accomplishes for a minute.

By taking the debt off of OPG's books—in fact, it was a subsidiary of OPG called the OPG trust—the province is able to borrow at a better rate, saving the taxpayer at least \$4 billion. In addition to that, the province is restructuring various conservation authority measures and saving another \$442 million. So \$4.5 billion equals approximately 10% of the entire cost of the plan. What's important to

understand is that that 10% is already built into the cost of the plan. By taking that cost out, we're also saving on additional interest that would accrue with time on the plan as a whole. I don't want to get into the math, but 10% is just the beginning.

There is another very important component. Regretfully, my time is short. I could probably spend another hour, easily, discussing the monstrosity that they created with the Fair Hydro Plan. But there is a very important component and something that we learned from the FAO when they came to testify before the committee. It's important to understand that the Fair Hydro Plan is predicated on borrowing. It's not just predicated on borrowing amounts known; it's also predicated on borrowing amounts unknown, amounts which are short, to make up the difference. That amount is represented in the provincial deficit. Every time the province runs a deficit, it is forced to borrow additional money to finance the cost of the Fair Hydro Plan, thereby making the total cost of the plan not \$45 billion but significantly higher than \$45 billion.

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Of all the evidence I've heard at the committee on financial transparency, that piece of evidence scared me the most. It was when Mr. Novak from the FAO said to me that not only has the cost of the plan exceeded \$45 billion; given the rate at which the province borrows, the likely eventual cost of the plan is going to be somewhere between \$60 billion and \$91 billion. That is astonishing. So I asked, "Are we on track to get there?" He said, "For as long as we continue to borrow, for as long as government continues to run a deficit, the cost of the Fair Hydro Plan is going to escalate."

Colleagues, the most important thing we can do to mitigate the cost of the Fair Hydro Plan is to make sure that we run a balanced budget, to make sure that we no longer borrow whatever it is we're short so we have to borrow additional funds to subsidize the cost of the Fair Hydro Plan. That is going to be our government's legacy. By bringing the budget and the deficit under control, we're going to save the taxpayer and the ratepayer an untold amount of money. I am proud to support this bill on our way there.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity. I just want to commend the honourable gentleman; he clearly has a firm grasp of this.

I also want to ask him some of the questions I've been asking of the opposition. It's actually disappointing to hear that the opposition has given up. They don't believe that their role is to do anything more than be critical and to oppose. They don't believe that they have a responsibility to the people of Ontario to bring legislation forward in this House and to fight for the things that they believe in. They've said that part of the reason they do that is because the government won't listen to them. But honestly, if you bring something forward that we can listen to—we've shown, whether it's a private member's bill and a number

of other pieces of legislation, that we'll look at amendments; we'll look at those bills. I wonder if the honourable member could provide a little bit more information on that, if he feels the way I do: that there is a role for the opposition to play in helping bring forward effective legislation.

I also want him to talk a little bit about, if he can, in his right of reply, about this step, if he agrees with me that this is an important next step in unravelling 15 years of what have been horrendous decisions—if he has some thoughts on what the NDP are calling for.

The NDP are calling for massive increases in hydro rates; they've said that today. They want to immediately end the Fair Hydro Plan. That will result in massive increases. They said that they're against untangling the Liberal scheme, and they're voting against this legislation because they want to keep the costs of the program hidden from the taxpayers. They're talking about not supporting changes to the OEB, which we all would agree has not worked for the people of Ontario. And they also want to maintain conservation programs that do not work and have not led to positive results. So, I wonder if he could comment on those when he gets an opportunity.

Again, I thank him for his thorough knowledge of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: It's a pleasure to rise in this House to speak on this very important issue. The last government made some choices which we're all paying for. We knew it then and we definitely know it now. The privatization of Hydro One was a short-sighted decision, and it's now hurting the wallets of families right across Ontario.

Therefore, the reality is that hydro bills have been skyrocketing for years now, Madam Speaker. Some folks saw their bills double as well as triple. Electricity in Ontario is not a luxury and it should not be priced like one. The people of Ontario are sick and tired of paying exorbitant prices for electricity. Too many Ontarians are still forced to choose between paying their hydro bill or paying down their credit cards, and that is wrong. Some have to choose between heating and eating. That's still continuing under this government.

Electricity should be affordable and accessible. If you look at this bill, it doesn't do much to achieve that. This Conservative hydro bill, basically, if you uncover it, you can see the Liberal hydro scheme with just a new label on it. Under this bill, hydro bills will not go down, contrary to what the government is telling us. Instead, hydro bills will continue to go up.

Due to the Liberals' selling off of Hydro One, Ontario families are continuing to face higher electricity costs. With this bill, Madam Speaker, it will not get any better for Ontarians. Under this bill, every person in Ontario is going to pay the price of hydro privatization.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm proud to rise in this House to a bill that couldn't be any more clear in name and thought and in processes, and that is "Fixing the Hydro

Mess.” It’s so appropriately named because we were left with such a mess.

My colleague from York Centre, being on a committee where we had scathing evidence to show the type of mismanagement that was done by the previous government, quoted the FAO that he spoke to first-hand, who said that we would see an increase in the amount that Ontario would owe from \$60 billion to \$91 billion. It is staggering, Madam Speaker. That is something that the next generation of consumers and taxpayers is going to have to pay up.

That’s one of the reasons you saw the passion that was in the Progressive Conservatives when we campaigned. That is the passion to make life more affordable, to give that hope and opportunity back to Ontario taxpayers. A lot of people were sick and tired of working harder and getting less. They go to work every day. They come back, they see their hydro bill and they’re saying to themselves, “What am I paying for?” What we’re opening up, Madam Speaker, is the transparency. Not only can they see what they’re paying for but they can finally see that they’re paying less under this government.

Under this government, we’re not only stopping this mismanagement, but we’re delivering savings. Our plan taken together is going to save up to \$442 million, Madam Speaker. We made a promise. Promise made, promise kept.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I find it really interesting when we’re speaking about this particular bill, because my understanding is that a lot of what the past government had that caused the chaos of the last 15 years has been kept by a different name in this particular bill. With that being the case, we can spend as much time as we want, Madam Speaker, on talking about what’s happened over the course of 15 years or we can make a concerted effort to work together to look to our future.

The future of privatized hydro will continue and perpetuate the same problems that we’ve been struggling with right now. I think that it’s really, really important for us to be clear about that. A lot of the comments from my colleagues as members of the official opposition have in fact tried to take that up. They’ve tried to point out sections of the legislation that will keep the door open.

I think that sometimes there is a bit of tension. The government believes that there has to be a line in there that says, “We are privatizing,” in order for the door to be open to privatization, and on our side we’re trying to explain that you don’t have to say those words in order for privatization to be the result. As a consequence, we must do better. It’s time for us to think about ways that we can draft legislation that actually does address the mess that was happening under the Liberals and moves us into a place where we’re doing better, not doing the same thing under a different name.

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I think many of my colleagues would agree that as much legislation that crosses our desks that continues to

do this will be the amount of time that we stand up in this House and say no. The same problem with a different name is not what Ontarians have asked for.

If the government says that they’re here for change, then actually do something different. Don’t just say that you’re doing something different in the title and then do the same thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for York Centre.

Mr. Roman Baber: I certainly enjoyed speaking to this important piece of legislation.

Back to my friend from Markham, who commented on some of the proposals by the NDP—who, by the way, still refuse to recognize that the main cause of the mess that we’re currently trying to unravel is the Green Energy Act that they themselves supported. They only talk about hydro, but prices kept climbing from way before that privatization, which, by the way, our party also opposed.

But you ask some of the members of the NDP if they propose to break the entire plan and have bills increase by 25%, and they say no. Then you ask them, “Well, what’s another alternative?” The only other alternative I’m hearing is maybe taking public ownership of Hydro One. Well, unfortunately, the opposition party doesn’t understand the practicality of such a move, of trying to acquire a now widely held company. With us owning less than 47% of it or so, the purchase of the outstanding shares of Hydro One would come at an incredible premium, a premium that would then be absorbed by the ratepayers. We’d also probably be in for what’s called a squeeze-out, because we’re going to be trying to get the last share. It’s impossible and unrealistic.

What is, however, realistic, in response to the member’s question, are two things: Help us to oppose the carbon tax, thereby precluding an additional rise in hydro rates; and help us bring fiscal sanity back to this province. Help us balance the budget, because by balancing the budget, we will no longer have to borrow additional monies to subsidize the cost of the Fair Hydro Plan, something that continues to compound the cost of this plan. A balanced budget is the first and foremost thing we have to try and accomplish to prevent the growth.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It’s always a pleasure to rise in the House. Today is a little bit of a sad day to rise, obviously, with talking about the Broncos and wearing our jerseys. Obviously, I’ve got my IceDogs jersey on. They just happen to be leading their series in the semifinals for Junior A by 2-0 over Oshawa. I thought I’d mention that.

I want to start on my speech. I’ve heard a lot in the last few days about teachers. I want to say in front of all my colleagues that I’d like to thank my teachers, because what they did was, they taught me about history and they taught me about math, my best two subjects. So in part of my speech today, I’m going to talk a little bit about history that I hope the PCs will listen to—

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Bob Rae history.

Mr. Wayne Gates: He’s a Liberal.

So I want to thank you for allowing me to rise today to Bill 87, what the PCs have named the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, even though they know full well that this does absolutely nothing to do that.

Why would they want to fix the hydro mess? Why would they want to? They're the ones that caused it in the first place. They started it.

Madam Speaker, I know you're interested in this. Our hydro mess here in Ontario begins—and this is the history part—with our old friend who was responsible for many messes here in Ontario. You know who that was? Mike Harris.

Are you upset about the fact that the 407 has tripled in value, and we still pay through the nose to use it? Who do you thank? Mike Harris.

Do you dislike the creeping privatization of our health care system? Who can you thank for that? Again, this is history; I thank my teachers for this. Mike Harris.

When you look at the hydro mess, we need to go back to the beginning of this story, and it starts with an old friend. Does anybody on that side know? You can yell it out. Mike Harris.

Madam Speaker, for 100 years in this province, we had a publicly owned hydro system, and the rates were low. As a matter of fact, to the one colleague there—I think he was in Ottawa for a while—it drove the manufacturing sector, because our hydro costs were so low. We had manufacturing right across the province of Ontario. Do you know what happened to it? And I want my colleague who was elected in Ottawa—he can go after me on this, because I might be wrong, but here's what happened. Madam Speaker, do you know what happened under the Harper group up in Ottawa? They decided to have a petrodollar. Do you remember this? And what happened to our dollar? Our dollar went to \$1.10, and we lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs, including in my own riding of Niagara. We shut down plants in St. Catharines. We shut down plants in Oshawa. As a matter of fact, in your riding, Madam Speaker, in Windsor—we shut down plants in Windsor. That's what happened, so when you talk about what we're doing here, we have to go and do history.

That's when Mike Harris began the process of selling off our publicly owned electrical system. It was a mistake, guys. Admit it. The biggest example of this was him leasing the Bruce nuclear site, which was a major loss for a publicly owned system. He then kept rearranging things to sell off OPG. You guys remember this. Let me know if I'm wrong on my history, but I was pretty good in history. You guys remember this: We ended up paying a debt retirement charge for years and years.

At the time, the Liberals campaigned against this privatization, this selling off of our assets and causing our hydro bills to skyrocket. The Liberals did that. Of course, once they took office, once the Liberals came into office, guess what they did? They picked up the ball of privatization. This is typical of the Liberals: They campaign on one issue and then they govern with the PCs. They carried on with what Harris and Eves and, quite frankly, Tim Hudak set in motion, and went further down the route of privatizing our health care system.

Madam Speaker, imagine that: The Liberals and the Tories working hand in hand to take something that was giving the public profit and selling it to their rich friends in the private sector. Everybody knows it on this side. I know there are a couple here who were here when I was here, before the new MPPs got here. You guys know this: 85%—did anybody get that high in their history marks or their math marks? If you did, thank the teacher—of the residents of the province were opposed to it, but they didn't seem to care.

What has happened since? We have seen our rates go up 300% on our bills since 2002. Because of what Mike Harris started, and Eves and the Liberals happily continued, our hydro bills are out of control, and they've been out of control for a while. You can literally see this in the data. You can compare the years it was public with the years after it was sold off, and you'll see the bills are going up every single time. Under your mess, they're going to continue to go up, and you're going to pay about—I'm guessing, because it's not clear in your bill—\$22 billion to \$25 billion in money borrowed.

Do you know what happens when you borrow money? Do you know what I found out? I bought a house—again, lucky for my teacher explaining how that works. I bought a house, and what I did is, I borrowed the money, I paid it off, and guess what happened? I now own a house. Here's the difference in your bill: You're going to borrow \$20 billion to \$25 billion—I don't know the exact amount, and I apologize; maybe somebody can tell me—and after a number of years, you're going to have to increase the rates to the residents of the province of Ontario and the businesses—small business, big business, corporations—to pay it off.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Let me finish, please. Let me finish. I let you guys talk. Let me talk. I'm enjoying myself here.

So here is the issue. When I borrowed my money and paid it off—and I should pay it off, like everybody—guess what happened? I own a house. You guys are borrowing \$25 billion—billion, with a B—and at the end of the time, after he pays more on his bill, she pays more on her bill and he pays more on his bill, do you know what happens? You've paid the debt off. Give yourselves a round of applause. But do you know what happens when you do that? Unlike me—I own a house; if I sell the house, I'm going to make some money on it—when you pay it off, do you know what you own? Can anybody help me? Nothing. That's what you own. After paying \$25 billion, you own absolutely nothing.

That's why this is a mess. That's why the Liberals and the PCs are in the same boat. You guys—I give you credit. You're smart. I'm never going to say that the PCs aren't smart, but here's what they're doing—

Hon. Bill Walker: That's on record.

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Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, they can put it on record, and play the whole clip, because you're going to enjoy it. Here's what you did. I know Madam Speaker will like this

because she's listening too. Here's what they did: They dressed up a pig; they put lipstick on the pig. But guess what, at the end of the day, do you know what it was?

Mr. Jamie West: A pig.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's still a pig. That's what's gone on with the hydro right here. That's what's going on with their hydro bill. Yes.

When did we have low rates in the province of Ontario? When it was publicly funded. But here's what else: I have a boring life, so I actually listened to this debate in my office this afternoon, and nobody has mentioned what publicly funded hydro did for the province of Ontario with the profits. In the last year they had full profits, 100%, it was close to a billion dollars. Do you know what we did with that money? Does anybody know? Help me out. Your side must know. Yell it out. Go ahead. I'll tell you what we did. We used that money for our publicly funded education system, our publicly funded health care system. We took the profits—a billion dollars—and reinvested them back into our province. What are we doing today? We're cutting education because we simply don't have the money. Well, if you didn't sell off hydro, you would have a billion dollars to reinvest into education. You would have a billion dollars to reinvest in education and health care and infrastructure.

You guys can tell me if I'm wrong. I have no problem if you guys stand up and say, "Gatesy, you don't know what you're talking about. That history teacher led you down the golden trail." But I'm going to tell you that's exactly what's going on here.

And who's going to get rich? Shareholders are getting rich on the backs of people—the backs of seniors, by the way, who for a number of years under the Liberal Party—I'm going to tell you, they're awful. I told the Premier, when she was Premier, right to her face, the worst mistake they ever made was selling off Hydro. I told her that. I told her exactly what was going to happen, and it did. Seniors couldn't heat their homes. They had to choose between medication and groceries. Or, in some cases, what the seniors had to do was cut half their medication. I know you're probably surprised at this, at my age, but I'm on some medication. But I know that if I cut half my medication, I may have other health issues. If I can't afford to pay it because I've got to choose between medication, eating and my hydro bill and freezing to death—that's what happened here.

So it is a mess. I'm looking forward to some of the comments. I've still got another seven or eight pages but I didn't get to them. Hopefully, I'll get more time to talk here. At the end of the day—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know; I'll sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Stan Cho: I remember in 1999 I walked past the Gap at the corner of Bloor and Yonge. This is when I was in university. I saw a flat screen TV for the first time in my life. I remember thinking, "Wow, this is amazing. Look

how thin this TV is." I asked my friends, "Have you ever seen this before?" We did a little research and we found out that flat screen cost \$20,000 at the time. Of course, today, you can pick one of those up at Best Buy for 500 bucks on sale, and the technology is far superior to what you had back in 1999. I like to remind everybody why we're in this mess with hydro in the first place. It's because the last government, the Ontario Liberals, went out there and furnished our entire province with a whole set of flat screen TVs from 1999.

When you drive down the 401 through Chatham-Kent and all the way down to Windsor, if you go at nighttime, it looks like landing aliens in the fields in southwestern Ontario. The problem with that is, well, since 1999, or since the windmills were installed in our province, the technology has gotten far superior than what we have across Ontario. The technology has also gotten a lot cheaper.

I think we have a very important lesson to learn from this. The member from Niagara Falls mentioned a pig. Well, we've treated the taxpayers in Ontario not like a pig but like a guinea pig, on their dime. There were no metrics of success for this technology, there were no off-ramps and we were stuck with these contracts.

I'd like to remind all members of this House that as we move forward to fix this hydro mess, it cannot be in the window of just a few short years. The last government—signalled our taxpayer base, and they were wrong for doing so, leaving us with this mess. Let's not repeat the mistakes of the past. Let's fix this mess, move forward and make sure that Ontario is left with a sustainable hydro system.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to thank the member from Niagara Falls. He's right. It's important to go back and talk about history, what has happened and why we are where we are at the moment—and that is 15 years of mismanagement under the previous Liberal government and also the Conservative government of Mike Harris, who, as you know, sold Highway 407 for just \$3.1 billion, and today it's worth \$30 billion. That's what got us here, and the Ford Conservatives today are making things worse. We need better than that.

The member from Niagara Falls is right that turning the publicly owned hydro into privatization and profit maximization is simply not right. Who is going to benefit? As the member from Niagara Falls stated, it is shareholders, and that is not the people of Ontario.

This bill that's fixing the hydro mess is a mess. It is relevant today to talk about Mike Harris and the decisions he made and also the continuation by Liberals Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne in privatizing our hydro and passing on to the next generations that debt retirement.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: We can stand and criticize each other all day, but it doesn't do any good. That's why our minister has put forward a plan to fix this hydro mess.

I can remember when we sat in opposition and we brought forth motions to try to stop some of the things that were going on. The Green Energy Act was one of them. Do you know they were signing contracts for solar out our way for 80-some cents a kilowatt? They were also signing contracts twice as high as they had to for wind energy, and we started to see these rates go up.

We tried through motions, through different means, to get support in this government, and it could have been done because we were in a minority at that time, and every time we brought these motions forward, it was voted down. The NDP supported the Liberals on it, so it kept going. The proliferation of wind towers kept going. Solar kept going up at some of these rates. Now, they brought some of the rates down, but they brought them down maybe by half, 40 cents for solar, somewhere in there. You can't afford to pay those things.

I could stand here for another 40 seconds and blame this, blame this and blame these people, but what I want to do is just give you a few points that our government has put forward. We promised to clean up the hydro mess. We promised to increase transparency in our electrical system and to make life more affordable for Ontarians, and that's what we're going to do.

We are centralizing our conservation approach to reduce costs and duplication and inefficient programs introduced by the previous governments. That's what we're doing. That's what we have already started doing. We need an approach to conservation and energy efficiency that focuses on targeted programs and initiatives that benefit those who most need them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank my colleague from Niagara Falls for his comments, and I can imagine he has seven more pages of comments to make.

One of the ones that stands out for me was purchasing a house, which many of us have been doing. It's probably, for many of us, the biggest expense you ever have. His comments about making payments and payments, but at the end of the day you own the house—a lot of that, I think, reflects on when we talk about privatization and why we push it back. We don't own the public services. The government doesn't own it; the people own it. Our parents, our grandparents and their grandparents have paid into it, paid into it and paid into it, and so it's a slap in the face to all these people when we sell it off. It's like if my colleague bought his house and the government says, "It's our house now and we're going to sell part of it. We're going to take the bathroom and the basement and you can live in the attic." It's just a wrong system.

What we're doing now with these payments—it's called fixing the hydro mess, but it's really straightening up of the hydro mess. It's still a bit of a mess. It's a push in the right direction, but it's not far enough, because all we're doing is putting Band-Aids on bullet wounds. Instead of having the high, high interest rates to pay off the debt and artificially lower the price of hydro, we're having a smaller interest rate. But we're going to pay and pay and

pay, and we're still not going to own it at the end. We're not going to get any closer to where we need to get, and that's what's important.

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It's funny. We always talk about, "Let's not talk about the past" or "Let me make a cheap shot about the past," and I'm not going to go there on it. But I'm going to say that there is a history in government of privatizing public services and it not working out very well, with prices going up and things being more expensive, and then doing one of these and blaming each other but not learning the lesson from it and saying, "Do you know what? The solution would be that we privatize this." We do it again and we do it again and we do it again. That's not sustainable, just like paying off the \$20 billion or \$25 billion and not owning anything at the end.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. I can go on to my eight pages; it's great.

First of all, I want to say thanks to all of my colleagues for their comments. I'm a little surprised that he didn't talk about exactly what my member did here, around the borrowing of it and how much it's going to cost.

There's one part in the bill that I didn't get to. It talks about how the bill allows the government to include partisan advertising with their hydro bills, just like the Liberals. My colleagues in front of me were here then. You were here then; you were here when they did that. I remember the PCs standing up and going crazy over this. So I thought, in fairness to me so that you don't think I'm making this up, I'd like to read a quote, if I can. It's from May 2017: "Are the Liberals feathering their nest for the next election using taxpayer dollars for partisan government advertising? Of course they are, and they need to stop. It isn't fair."

That quote, at the time, was from the leader of the PC Party, referring to the same partisan advertising that the Liberals were using in that bill and that you guys aren't taking out of this bill. You're going to do the exact same thing. You guys know it. It's going to start in November—I think it's in November. You'll be doing the exact same thing. You didn't take it out.

The funny part about that, and this is new for you guys, is that you gave your leader at that time, going back to 2017—I remember it like it was yesterday—a standing ovation for that comment. Do you guys remember that? You guys were right here. Do you remember that?

The last thing I want to say, because nobody attacked me on my facts, nobody gave me shots about my history, nobody gave me anything about my math skills—

Hon. Bill Walker: It's coming.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It may be coming. But I want to say, as loud as I can: I'm here because of a teacher who cared about me, who made sure that I got an education. I want to say, on behalf of them—I want to thank you and thank the teachers who were kind enough to take care of me.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: It's an honour to rise here today in support of Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, introduced by the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

Our government was elected with a clear mandate to fix the hydro mess, to make life easier and more affordable for Ontario families, seniors and businesses. We acted quickly to cancel the Liberal cap-and-trade scam, saving the average household \$260 a year in energy and fuel costs. We repealed the Green Energy Act, terminating more than 750 wasteful contracts, saving \$790 million. We overhauled executive compensation at Hydro One, removing their board and firing the \$6-million man.

If passed, Bill 87 would build on this record. It would replace the Liberal fair hydro scam with a new, transparent rebate on our bills, saving \$4 billion in borrowing costs. It will centralize energy conservation programs, saving up to \$442 million over the next three years. It would make the Ontario Energy Board more effective and accountable while continuing to protect consumers and holding residential electricity bills to the rate of inflation.

As the chair of the law and economics program at the University of Toronto said, the Liberal record on energy is one of the biggest policy disasters in the history of Ontario. Reliable, stable, low-cost hydro was always one of Ontario's key economic strengths. It helped to build this province and it made Ontario the economic engine of Canada. But over the last 15 years, Liberal mismanagement destroyed this advantage. Hydro rates skyrocketed by 400% as billions were wasted on green energy subsidies to Liberal companies, cancelled gas plants and executive salaries. In total, the Auditor General reported, we were being overcharged for hydro by \$170 billion: about \$12,326 for every man, woman and child.

Our manufacturers paid hydro rates double or even triple the rates in Quebec, Manitoba, New York and Michigan. This is a major reason we lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs over the last 15 years, including many well-paying jobs in the auto industry, where I came from. Like most members here, I've seen first-hand the damage this has done to families and businesses in Mississauga-Lakeshore and across Ontario. As the former Premier herself admitted, because of her mistakes on the energy file, some Ontarians were forced to choose between paying electricity bills and buying food or paying rent. In a province like Ontario, this is simply unacceptable.

In order to gauge public opinion, the Liberals handed their campaign manager \$3 million in a sole-source polling contract.

Mr. Will Bouma: What?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: They did. Not surprisingly, you know what they found? That 95% of families in Ontario did not want to pay more for hydro. In response, the Liberals proposed to borrow at a lower rate in the short term. In 2017, the Financial Accountability Officer reported this scam would cost the province \$45 billion while providing savings of only \$24 billion. The net cost would be another \$21 billion.

What's worse, Mr. Speaker, is that this was \$4 billion more than necessary, because the former finance minister

didn't follow the Canadian public sector accounting standards. Instead, as the auditor explained, the government created a needlessly complex accounting structure in order to avoid showing a deficit in the province's financial statements. In other words, the former finance minister hid this cost from Ontarians by creating a separate entity that would borrow at a higher interest rate.

The Auditor General explained this scam on October 17, 2017. The government was spending more than it had coming in, but "under the government's proposed accounting, you will not see that annual loss on any financial statements in Ontario. The government's proposal is to treat that loss as an asset." That's like treating your credit card debt as an asset in your books. Does that even make any sense? The Auditor General called this "bogus" accounting. She even threatened to issue an adverse opinion on Ontario's public accounts, which would have been a first for any government in Canadian history.

The Auditor General advised against the scam. The FAO advised against it. The cabinet secretary, Steve Orsini, advised against it. The Treasury Board advised against it. Former Supreme Court Justice Binnie advised against it. The Liberals ignored all of this.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 87 will wind down the so-called fair hydro scam; follow public sector accounting standards; save \$4 billion in borrowing costs; and introduce a new, transparent, on-bill rebate starting on November 1. Going forward, consumers will know the true cost of electricity in Ontario. We will follow the recommendations from the Auditor General, the FAO and the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry.

Moving to the second component of Bill 87: If passed, this government will centralize delivery of conservation programs at the IESO to save consumers up to \$442 million over the next three years. We will still meet 94% of our conservation goals and will target benefits and support for those who need them most, including low-income, small business and First Nations.

Where conservation programs don't make sense, where they cost too much or don't deliver any benefit, we won't continue with them. Low-benefit, high-cost programs like the demand management framework and the Industrial Accelerator Program will be cancelled or scaled down.

Medium- and large-sized businesses would see a reduction in their rates as early as this year.

Lastly, Bill 87 would streamline and modernize the Ontario Energy Board. For even minor applications, the OEB sometimes requires thousands of pages of documents. This red tape creates uncertainty and it just adds to the cost of doing business in Ontario.

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Bill 87 will promote efficiencies and simplify regulations for the energy sector. Once again, the OEB will be a fair, comprehensive and transparent regulator, with trusted and reliable rules.

Local stakeholders in my riding of Mississauga-Lakeshore have been asking for this. The president and CEO of Alectra, Brian Bentz, has told us this: "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.”

Bill 87 would also introduce a rule that holds residential hydro bills to the rate of inflation, beginning next month, May 1.

Over the past 10 months, our government has moved quickly to start cleaning up the hydro mess. Cancelling the cap-and-trade scam, repealing the Green Energy Act and reining in executive compensation will help to make life easier and more affordable for families, seniors and small businesses.

Moving forward, we are committed to a better, more effective plan to address climate change, while also respecting the taxpayers and the families of this province.

Bill 87 will build on this record. As the minister said, it is a comprehensive and reasonable approach to build a modern, effective and transparent electricity system that works for the people again.

Madam Speaker, I urge all members to join me in supporting Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It’s always a privilege to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin and just offer a few comments to the comments that the member brought forward. He brought quite a few ideas and a few discussion points forward, some that I’ll be able to take back and think about.

The financial aspect of what is being done in this bill—we’re not going to dispute it to a great extent. We both agree that under the previous Liberal government, it was a mess. They really led this province down the path where it’s going to be generations upon generations that are going to be paying for those mistakes. But, again, this government needs to have the foresight.

I talked about this last week when I had the opportunity to talk about this bill. Stop looking at this as a shiny object: “What can I do today that’s going to get me through the next election in four years?” Have the challenge. Challenge yourselves to look and to have that long-term goal, in order to make the changes that are required within our energy system now, today. One of them—and you’re going to disagree—is returning that asset back into public hands.

Last week, I challenged this government. I’ve been in the House for quite a bit this afternoon, and I’m going to say it again: I’m going to challenge this government to tell me that it’s a bad idea to not get the delivery charges equalized across this province. You tell me that’s a bad idea. I want to hear it. I want to hear some of what you’re offering in regard to your plan. You’re always saying that this side of the House doesn’t offer constructive ideas or points. Tell me that that’s not a good idea in order to help Ontarians save money immediately on their hydro bills.

The time-of-use: Why don’t we eliminate that? That is another idea that has been provided to this government.

Again, I challenge this government: Tell me that’s a bad idea, or implement the idea. I don’t care what you call it. If it’s part of your PC “fixing the hydro mess,” I really don’t care. Just do it. It’s an idea that came from this side, and we want you to implement those changes.

Those are easy, concrete steps that can actually make a substantial change on Ontario bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: When I was campaigning last year, when I would knock on doors, everybody was telling me, “Daisy, I would support you when you get rid of the carbon tax.” When I see the business sector and the manufacturing sector, they’re complaining; they’re saying the same thing.

So I’m so happy that this government, when we came together, the first thing that we did was get rid of the carbon tax. Just now the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore has gone through the different steps that we have made. Not only did we cancel the carbon tax, but we got rid of the windmills and we got rid of the \$6-million man, one after another.

But now we are doing a lot more. Bill 87 is to help all of us to really clean things out. We are taking swift action. We’re taking action to reduce the costs and reduce any duplication, streamlining things so that all the things can be done properly and faster. We are also making sure that anything less effective in driving energy efficiency—those will be phased out. All this will work towards making sure that we clean this hydro mess up. I’m asking the opposition party to support us as we work very hard to clean up this mess. This reduction in costs will lead to immediate savings for business and will also benefit taxpayers as a whole.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m pleased to rise on behalf of my constituents to participate in the debate today on the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act. Speaker, I think we have to be very clear that I don’t think, over the course of this debate, that there has been a single speaker who has defended the Liberals’ Fair Hydro Plan. We are all in agreement that forcing the people to pay for this financing scheme that just moved the debt down the road and caused future generations to be saddled with this \$40-billion repayment was not fair, it was unacceptable and it had to be changed.

The problem with this bill, Speaker, is that it really does nothing to fix the problem that the Liberals created. In fact, it embraces those problems. It merely shifts the burden of the debt from ratepayers to the citizens through acquiring public debt and sharing the load across all taxpayers. It doesn’t deal with the fundamental issue that created the mess in the first place, which of course is privatization.

Earlier, we heard some of the history lesson of public power in this province. Some of you in this chamber will remember our esteemed colleague the member for Trinity–Spadina, who, after 2014, went out on the road and did some amazing graphs showing how hydro rates in this province were kept low for a century until a

Conservative government came into power, and then all of a sudden they started skyrocketing.

This bill does nothing to deal with the problem of privatization, which really is the source of the Liberal hydro mess. Without dealing with privatization, the bill will do nothing to actually fix the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'm just listening here to the member from London West, and I don't know. I'm always perplexed when I'm in here—because I was here, obviously, from 2011 to 2014—just because you talk about how we need changes and yet you're going to vote against this bill. It's always very interesting to me.

I remember when the past government, the Liberal government, had this big hoopla about how they were going to give 25% savings, but the reality was that the true cost of the borrowing plan—nobody knew what that was, because everyone knows it was thrown over to the independent arm, which was the OPG. The reality is, at the end of the day—I guess that's why we have so many—well, not “I guess.” The reason that we have so many on both sides of the House here who are Progressive Conservatives is because people are exhausted and tired from rhetoric and not getting the truth.

I sit here today and I listen about all the things that you want to do, but yet again, why are you not putting an omnibus bill forward with, let's say, the three things that you speak about over and over again:

(1) rebuying Hydro One. I don't know; I think that's roughly around, say, \$7 billion, but don't quote me on that. Where are you getting the money from? I don't know;

(2) immediately raising hydro rates for small, medium and large businesses and also households; and

(3) you want to continue the inefficient energy conservation programs that were supported by the Liberal/NDP coalition back in the past government.

At the end of the day, if you're so sure of all the things that you're saying, then—what is that saying?—“Put your money where your mouth is”. Put an omnibus bill forward so we can debate it in this House. That's what we're here for, not to criticize over and over again all the things that this government is doing. We've got solutions. We all want to work together as a team for the best for the people of Ontario.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank my colleagues and all the members for contributing to the debate today, and again thank the minister and parliamentary assistant for their work on this bill.

I really look forward to this bill coming to a vote.

I can tell you that during the campaign, this was the number one issue at the door. Life was getting harder and less affordable, especially for seniors on fixed incomes.

Over the past 10 months, we have moved quickly to start cleaning up the hydro mess: repealing the Green

Energy Act; cancelling 750 contracts, saving \$790 million; and cancelling cap-and-trade, saving families \$260 a year.

Bill 87 would save at least another \$4.4 billion. It will lower the system costs and will reduce hydro rates. For example, a medium-sized auto sector company consuming 15,000 megawatt hours a month would save \$15,000 each month. A large company consuming 50,000 megawatt hours a month would pay \$30,000 less each month.

Madam Speaker, this will help to create so many opportunities for growth here in this provincial, and help us to ensure that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs once again.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise today on behalf of the great people of York South–Weston, and I want to participate in the debate on fixing the hydro mess.

If there is one thing for sure about this bill, it is that the Ford Conservatives have ripped a page out of the Liberals' playbook. The previous Liberal government turned its back on the hard-working people of this province, which is what got us in this mess in the first place. Now the Conservatives are following in their footsteps and are making things worse.

Let there be no confusion: This bill will, over time, cost taxpayers more money, not less. What the Conservatives are doing is merely kicking the can down the road for another future government to deal with.

Unfortunately, this is not something new with this government. Whether it be the environment, education or hydro, this government seems content to leave future generations to deal with problems they could and should have dealt with.

We often hear ministers from this government talk about the debt that we were left saddled with after 15 years of Liberal rule. Frankly, this bill carries on in that very same tradition. There is nothing in this bill that lowers the cost of electricity. The government is simply borrowing money to subsidize costs—money that will have to be repaid at some point by none other than the hard-working people of this great province.

To make matters worse, the wealthiest are the ones with the most to gain from these subsidies, as they often use more electricity than the average middle- or working-class households—households that are already trying their best to minimize the amount of power they pull from the grid. Again we have the Ford Conservatives helping to keep more money in the pockets of their wealthy friends while leaving the average worker out to dry. From Bill 66 to OSAP to cuts to hydro, it is just more of the same from this government.

Over the past couple of months, many constituents from my riding of York South–Weston have asked me why this government is spending so much money fighting the federal government on climate change. They often wonder why the government is not taking heed and treating climate change as seriously as they should be.

Climate change is real, and so is the need for us to care for our environment. Again and again, the Ford Conservatives have made clear that they do not care about the environment, and it is no surprise that this bill cuts programs that encourage the people of this province to be more energy-efficient. They also cut programs that incentivized builders to build homes to be more energy-efficient. True to form, we have the Conservatives cutting costs on the backs of future generations and to the detriment of our environment.

This bill also does nothing to address the fact that the previous Liberal government sold off much of Hydro One to private interests. As electricity costs increase, private entities will profit from the suffering of the average Ontarian. We have a Premier who often claims to be working on behalf of the little guy, the hard-working, average Ontarian. How about he turns those words into action now and begins working on bringing Hydro One back into the hands of the people to whom it belongs, the people of Ontario? The people of York South–Weston are not for private business profiting off of their skyrocketing hydro rates.

Minister Rickford, responsible for the energy in this province, recently told a Toronto Star reporter, “The games of smoke and mirrors are over.” I think what he meant to say was, “Let the games begin.” What this government is doing is taking broken legislation and slapping a new coat of paint over it before presenting it to Ontarians as all-new. The people of York South–Weston see this bill for what it is and they will not stand for it and neither will the people of this great province.

Again, this bill does not stop the rising cost of electricity in this province. What the government is doing is simply borrowing money to subsidize the cost of rate-payers temporarily and, in doing so temporarily, the government realizes that this is not a solution to the hydro problems in this province. It is a Band-Aid. This Conservative government is merely building on the legacy left behind by the previous Liberal government, building on their selling of Hydro One and turning their backs on the hard-working people of this province.

Bill 87 gets rid of funding to help people reduce their environmental footprint and to work towards ensuring they are as energy efficient as possible. Private entities will continue to profit off of rising electricity costs while average Ontarians will struggle to keep their head above the water. My constituents see this bill for what it is: a rebranded piece of failed legislation made to look like the Ford Conservatives are making things better, rather than making things worse. They are not. They are leaving behind an even bigger mess for the future generations to deal with.

This is the point now, that this government is simply putting forward an agenda of more privatization, and the people of Ontario deserve better.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member from York South–Weston for his comments, but I would

certainly disagree with the premise of his debate. Everyone I’ve talked to in this province has seen such mismanagement from the previous government, and they’re so happy with what we’re doing and getting things rolling with some of the changes that we’ve already made and moving along with Bill 87.

As long as I can remember, Ontario was the manufacturing hub of our country. It was the economic engine of Canada. Our economy was an attractive place to invest for foreign companies looking to expand. They knew that we were an incredible destination to open up and invest in.

This trend started to change about a decade ago. The previous government introduced more and more regulations and increased the cost of doing business, which made us less competitive. The government brought in a feed-in tariff regime, overbuilding generation capacity, which raised the cost of electricity by threefold. They went one step further by introducing the cap-and-trade carbon tax. The cap-and-trade carbon tax increased the costs of all goods in this province, and it hit families and consumers the hardest, making life unaffordable for many. This made leaving Ontario for neighbouring provinces like Quebec and US states that much more enticing. Our job creators rely on a business-friendly environment in order to compete internationally. As a government, we need to ensure that these companies are able to succeed, not punish them.

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When Ontario’s economy grows, Canadians all benefit. We need our economy to grow so we can make the critical investment in our communities and improve the lives and prosperity of Ontarians. We all rely on the collective to build an important infrastructure and make important public investments in our communities. As a result, I would like to thank Minister Rickford for introducing this bill, which will help make Ontario a more competitive place to do business and help return Ontario back to being the economic engine of Canada it used to be.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank my colleague for having brought his comments and his points of view from his constituents in his area of this province. It’s something that we don’t always have the opportunity of doing, especially with this Conservative government where we see a lot of limited opportunity to debate this bill.

The member who just spoke—I want to touch on one of the things that he brought up in his comments. Yes, Ontario was once a manufacturing hub and was leading this country. If we have to look at why we’re not that machine we once were, we have to go back quite a few years, where the seed of challenge was actually put in. That’s the crux of what this bill doesn’t do. It doesn’t address the root cause of why our hydro mess—and I agree with the title of this bill—is such a mess.

If we look at our neighbouring provinces, you look at what they’re doing in Manitoba or you look at what they’re doing in Quebec, what are they doing so differently that is not done here? Well, they’re using their

hydroelectricity. They're doing it in Manitoba; they're doing it in Quebec. Are we doing it in Ontario? Yes, we are. Could we be doing a lot more? Yes, we could. So what is so different? We're just doing exactly the same thing, but the one thing that they're doing differently than we are is they didn't go down the path of privatization.

When you look at a lot of our problems, the root cause is that there was a door that was opened. That was in the Harris years, where new regulation was brought in in order to bring in competitiveness, which we know to this day created the challenges that we have with our electricity system. Then we go with the 15 years of the Liberals who were there and continued on with that deregulation—fast-forward and open an express lane—and brought in privatization. If we continue doing those things, we are not going to deal with the root cause of what our problem is with our hydro system. Somehow, this government has to hear that message.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm all about fair play here. I'd like to correct my record. I may have implied that the NDP did in fact support the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan at third reading, and I stand corrected on that. I do stand corrected on that. It's my sense of fair play here, okay?

However—there's always a “however” or “but” in there, right?—I've heard them say in the past that they want public ownership of Hydro One. Now, the Liberals, they had this deal where you could only buy 25% and, I believe, a total of 60% of Hydro One has been sold—and I could stand to be corrected on that too. However, the government would still maintain majority ownership because no one party could own more than 25%. Having said that, the NDP—especially in their platform back in June—were advocating public ownership of Hydro One. My question is, how much would that cost and where are you going to get the money? It will be on the backs of Ontarians. I don't think that's fair at all. The NDP rhetoric might be good sound bites, but it lacks teeth. There's no teeth in that sound bite. Again, we have to be very, very careful of it. It's just partisan politics.

Again, I want to compliment our Minister of Energy for bringing forth this bill. It's cleaning up the Hydro One mess. Again, we're not going to do it on the backs of ratepayers or taxpayers. We're going to do it thoughtfully. We're going to consult. We're going to ensure that the people get the best what I call bang for their buck.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a privilege to rise in the House. I'm going to correct my friends from across the road. We lost 300,000 jobs. It was under the Harper government; it was the petrodollar. That's what did it, and trade agreements that weren't reciprocal. That's what happened there. It killed Ontario for a number of years and, lucky for us, we're now doing some things differently.

But I want to talk about the second issue that I think is the most important. I've listened to these guys over here—

it's amazing to me. They're saying, “The NDP never comes up with ideas.” Here's an idea for you: We should never, never—you can all say it—never have sold off Hydro One. We should never have sold it off, because we are using that money for what? You're saying the NDP doesn't come up with ideas—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order.

Mr. Wayne Gates: —the chirper in the back there. We did come up with an idea. We told you very clearly, “Don't sell it off. It's our manufacturing advantage.” So when you—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please. I'm going to ask the member for Markham—Stouffville to come to order. And if you are going to be making noise, you should be in your own seat to do it. Thank you.

Back to the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. I can tell you, my colleagues in the front here who were here for five years—you ran under Tim Hudak. Do you remember him? Do you remember the white paper?

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Please listen. I want to make sure you guys understand the history. Here's what it is: Tim Hudak and you guys who supported him ran on a paper called the white paper. It was signed by the finance minister—you can't use his name. You ran on wanting to sell it all off—not 60%; you were going to sell it off. That's true.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order.

Mr. Wayne Gates: That's a true statement.

Interjections.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: That's not true.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Oh, it absolutely is true. I've got the white paper. You're lucky, I kept the white paper.

I want to finish off by saying that the \$25 billion it's going cost for you to borrow—at the end of the day, this is what you're going to own: nothing—nothing, after \$25 billion. Come on, guys.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I welcome the comments made by colleagues from Oakville, Algoma—Manitoulin, Chatham—Kent—Leamington and also my friend from Niagara Falls.

This bill, as I said earlier, does not tackle the root cause of the problem, and that is the privatization of hydro. Again, this bill does not stop the rising costs of electricity in this province for the ordinary people of this great province of ours. This is a continuation of previous governments' agendas of privatization of essential services, such as hydro, that we need every day because Ontario is a very cold place to live.

This Conservative government is merely building on the legacy left by Mike Harris. We know what Mike Harris did. He almost destroyed this province. He sold Highway 407, and we know how much he sold it to these private

maximization companies for: \$3.1 billion; today, we know it is worth \$30 billion. That would have been \$30 billion that we would have used for things that we need for this province.

It is wrong to continue the same agenda as the previous Conservative government and the previous Liberal government. What that means is: from bad to worse. The people of this province deserve a better government and better representatives.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Jane McKenna: So I'm just listening to the member from Niagara Falls before I start off on my speech here, and I'm thinking: You want to spend billions to buy back a public company, and then spend billions to immediately increase the rates for small and medium businesses. So if it's so important to you, why do you not bring it forward to debate in the House in an omnibus bill? I don't understand that.

1700

You say it over and over again, and your back's up, and you're preaching away there that you want to do that, but the reality is that there are no facts behind it. Do it. Put an omnibus bill forward so we can debate it in this House for the good people of Ontario.

Anyway, moving forward: I want again for people to register today at beadonor.ca. I just want to read this: "One organ donor can save up to eight lives and enhance as many as 75 more through the gift of tissue." I just wanted to bring that up again before I actually started out.

I also want to say, the member from Markham–Stouffville, who's sitting behind me today—we come into this House and we listen to a lot of people debate and speak. I have to say this: There are lots of people in here that you have the utmost respect for, but listening to the member who is actually behind me, from Markham–Stouffville—it's an honour and privilege to listen to what he says. He educates the good people of Ontario when he's speaking, and I'm very grateful that he is part of our team.

I'm delighted to rise today to speak on Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, which is a great title, if I might say so myself. The hydro file is a complex one, to say the least. While I'm not in a position to say that I'm overly familiar with it, there are some things that are very straightforward. I am a big believer in using lay terms in government. Having survived raising five kids, my mantra is, "Simplify, simplify, simplify."

We are challenged every day by complexities. It keeps life interesting, Madam Speaker. But there is an important knack that every one of us needs to develop throughout our lives. I'm talking about identifying the problem and coming up with a solution. It sounds simple, but the more complex the problem, the harder it becomes to hone in on the core, the root, the heart of the problem. This legislation is an important piece of the work this government is doing to solve the problem of disposable incomes shrinking while costs continue to skyrocket. Hydro; groceries; gasoline, under the federal carbon tax; going to the movies; hockey gear; transit; housing; Internet; cable and cell-phones—all rising costs. We are committed to reducing

the cost of doing business in Ontario and the cost of living and raising a family. We are cutting excessive and wasteful red tape and modernizing our education and health care delivery. This government is focused on making Ontario more competitive and productive.

Just a few years ago, I was reading a Maclean's magazine, and they were talking about businesses—medium, small, and large—holding onto billions of dollars because they didn't want to reinvest into Ontario because they were so unsure of all of the things going on here. They were just hanging on, which is an absolute travesty.

So that we can reclaim our position as the economic driver of the national economy, we cancelled the provincial cap-and-trade carbon tax, thanks to the Minister of the Environment, and as a result, removed the cost burden to Ontario's businesses and job creators. Mister—oh, pardon me; we've changed seats there, Speaker. Sorry. I was going to say "Madam." I apologize. 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. Our government has repealed the Green Energy Act and saved Ontario electricity customers \$790 million. Can you imagine? Seven hundred and ninety million dollars. We passed the Hydro One Accountability Act, which reduced and capped the ludicrous compensation packages that Hydro One executives were receiving.

With Bill 87, we are taking steps to fix some crucial systemic problems with our hydro system. On the hydro file, following years and years of Liberal mismanagement, problems were stacked on top of other problems and called solutions. But we all know that there are consequences for bad policy decisions. Some of the consequences we, the people of Ontario, experience in our daily lives more quickly than others. The quick consequences of bad Liberal energy policy were skyrocketing hydro rates, business failure, municipality and community unrest and a loss of faith—which is so important—in government to do the right thing, to manage our hydro system like it was one of the most valuable public assets the Ontario government was ever entrusted with.

The long-term hidden consequences were intended for your children and grandchildren. The Fair Hydro Plan, the previous government told us, would cost the province \$45 billion, while providing an overall savings to electricity taxpayers of only \$24 billion. The overall results of this smoke-and-mirrors Fair Hydro Plan, according to the Financial Accountability Officer in their 2017 report, would be a net cost to Ontarians of \$24 billion.

The Auditor General said that the plan could result in Ontarians paying up to \$4 billion more than necessary in interest. Can you imagine that, Speaker? All members in this House are familiar with the details, and they don't bear repeating today.

Interjection.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I agree with the member from Markham–Stouffville, and the NDP are voting against it.

Suffice to say that over 15 years, the previous government made a mess of the hydro file, made hydro rates unaffordable and then told the people of Ontario they

were going to fix it with a scheme that would make rates even more expensive in the future.

In all honesty, hydro rates were the single most talked about issue at the door during the 2018 election campaign, Speaker. I actually had seniors ask me why the government was suggesting they get up in the middle of the night to do their laundry and run their dishwashers. It was heart wrenching when you were at the door.

The seniors I spoke to—the beautiful city of Burlington is fortunate to have the wisdom of a large seniors' community—wanted to talk about how much pride everyone in Ontario used to take in our hydro system. Many knew someone who worked at Hydro. It was a celebrated public asset, and it gave Ontario the competitive edge among Canadian provinces and eastern seaboard states because our hydroelectric power was plentiful, and it was cheap. Our manufacturing costs were kept down by lower hydro rates, our growing population had more disposable income, and no one—and I repeat, no one—worried about their heat being turned off in the middle of winter.

Ontario Hydro played a big role in making Ontario the economic engine of this nation. Back then, in the Bill Davis era, people knew how lucky we were to have plentiful and cheap electricity. They were proud of the system and how it was managed. The situation is much more complicated now, but with proper stewardship, we will turn this around.

Bill 87 paves the way for the refinancing of the global adjustment. This is very important. 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 legislation 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 rate structure, the government would continue to fund a portion of the 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.

I have lots more to say. My time is up, but thank you so much for listening to me, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Parm Gill): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Once again, I'm happy to continue the debate on this bill. As members here of the official opposition, we are here for the little guy. We have stood and we will continue to stand up for the average Ontarian. The members on the opposite side of the House will continue to blame the Liberals for this whole hydro mess. However, it's important we take a step backward, Madam Speaker, and see where this whole mess began.

1710

Yes, it was the last Liberal government that sold off Hydro One, and that privatization led to higher and higher

hydro bills for Ontarians. However, this mess began even before the 15 years of Liberal government. If we look, in reality, the mess began under the eye of the Harris government. He brought in the deregulation of our hydro system as a whole. Those changes in turn opened up the door for deregulation and the ongoing privatization. It was the actions of that government that kick-started this mess that Ontarians are dealing with today.

All we have to do is look to what the same government, the Conservative government, did in selling off Highway 407. What are we left with, now that it has been privatized? We're left with high bills, gridlock on our streets and foreign ownership of the 407, in which they can charge whatever they want and we're stuck with paying the bill. This is what's going to happen with the hydro situation as they continue to privatize it here in Ontario.

If we want to solve this mess, we actually need to have control of Hydro One. Without control of Hydro One, we are just trending towards increased privatization and even higher hydro bills for Ontarians. What we saw with the last government is a band-aid solution to save face. Enough is enough. We need solid, concrete and permanent—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Roman Baber: I enjoyed listening to the member from Burlington. There was a number that I haven't heard in a while that piqued my attention. Specifically, the number was \$24 billion worth of interest. That is the interest component of the \$45-billion Fair Hydro Plan. It's just astonishing. And \$4 billion out of \$24 billion is the additional interest expense that wasn't really necessary, that was only there because the province decided to borrow through a subsidiary of OPG instead of the Ontario electric finance authority or the Ontario Financing Authority.

But here's the kicker; here's what's very important. The Liberal members are walking around and they're telling everyone that this was a policy decision that they've made. They have decided to ascribe the debt onto the ratepayer as opposed to the taxpayer, and the members of the government have to hold them to account and not let them get away with that supposition, because we have a history of collecting against debt from ratepayers to pay for capital investments. We've done that through the debt retirement charge. So you could go ahead and finance equipment and then collect through the ratepayer through something like the debt retirement charge, using the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. You don't need to go off-book to use the ratepayer to pay back.

This is a very important distinction, Madam Speaker. Truth is a virtue, and we have to hold the previous Liberal government to account. They could have borrowed through the province and had the ratepayer repay the plan, but they haven't. They decided to put it off-book for no reason other than trying to make the debt appear balanced.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to address the comments from the member from Burlington, who, by the way, was

part of the Tim Hudak caucus, who supported the white paper, which was all about privatizing all of Hydro One. She also supported and ran on a 100,000 job loss in the province of Ontario.

Interjection: You're going to have to correct your record.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, it's true. And 85% of Ontario said no to selling off hydro. The PCs supported and ran on it, through Mr. Hudak's white paper.

But let me tell you, I'm not sticking up for the Liberals either. Their thing is a mess. It's a mess. It's the worst. I told them straight out. I'll say it again, and I'll say it again, and I'll say it again: The worst thing we did—it doesn't matter whether you're the PCs or the Liberals—was sell off hydro. It makes absolutely no sense—no sense.

When you're saying what I'm saying over here, get it right and pay attention. I'm saying clearly that the mistake that was made by the PCs and the Liberals was selling off Hydro One. That's what I'm saying. I've said it all afternoon. Unfortunately, the member from Burlington didn't understand it; I had to repeat it again. So I'm going to repeat it again for all of you: My issue is that we should never have sold Hydro One at all.

And why would you do that? You're making a billion dollars—you said the same thing once—a billion dollars in profit, and where were you going to put it? You were going to put it into health care—not a bad idea. You were going to put it in education—not a bad idea. You were going to reinvest it in infrastructure—not a bad idea.

Instead, what we're doing today, as we're borrowing \$22 billion to \$25 billion—what are you doing today? You might not like to hear this, but it's accurate. You're laying off teachers, you're laying off health care workers and you're increasing class sizes instead of taking that hydro money and reinvesting it into our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Let's go back to the speech from the member from Burlington. I feel she did an excellent job in explaining how critically important fixing this hydro mess really is, on behalf of families who work so hard and businesses that are doing their best to try to create jobs and boost our economy.

The member summarized a number of points. Obviously, our goal is to keep electricity affordable and to improve transparency. We have a program to reduce costs by centralizing and refocusing conservation programs. We'll leave those programs in that are most effective and provide the most benefit, but so many of them will be gone if they're not necessary. Our goal is to build a modern, efficient and effective energy regulator for all of us.

Speaker, taken together—we've heard this in the House today—our plan is looking at savings of up to \$442 million.

We are planning on making the regulatory changes to the Ontario Energy Board to make it more efficient, to make it more accountable, and to hold electricity bills to the rate of inflation—that's our commitment—and to save billions of dollars in borrowing costs that previously had

been tied to the Liberals' failed Fair Hydro Plan. We also have to replace that failure with a new and very transparent rebate to those of us who use electricity.

Overall, the goal is to reduce costs and reduce duplication, to streamline. We still have a patchwork of what I consider inefficient electricity conservation programs. A lot of them just aren't cutting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Burlington.

Ms. Jane McKenna: First of all, I just want to thank the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, the member from York Centre, the member from Niagara Falls and the member from Brampton North.

I want to say two things, though. Listening to the member from Niagara Falls, I was so confused with what—it was just nonsense, repeating what you were saying. I literally sat here and thought, "I'm trying to hear what you're saying," but it was nonsense.

Nevertheless, the toothpaste is out of the tube. What do you suggest doing with it, once it has been done? The reality is, when you look at the hydro mess, that's why we're doing Bill 87.

Just before the election, they came out, rah-rah, "We're going to give 25% savings for your hydro bill." The reality was, where were they hiding that? It was with the OPG so that people wouldn't see it was on the books. It sounded great, but the average Joe was saying, "Okay, where is that actually going?"

I'll tell you this: You can't keep standing up in this House and keep talking about the things you want to do—buy back Hydro One; immediately raise rates for small, medium and large business and then continue the inefficient energy conservation programs—unless you're prepared to talk about it in this House.

1720

I'm so confused with why you don't bring an omnibus bill forward. Put your money where your mouth is. Stop standing there and saying all these things that you want to be able to do, but you're not doing absolutely anything to debate that in the House, for the good people of Ontario who have brought, I think, 40 of the NDP in.

I also want to say this: I'm grateful to have this opportunity. I support this thoroughly. I think it's about time that we actually listened to the good people of Ontario, which we're doing on a daily basis. This has been an honour, to be able to stand up here today. Thank you for letting me have the opportunity, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order. Further debate? The member for Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the members opposite for the standing ovation. I appreciate that.

It's always a good opportunity to stand here and speak on behalf of the people of Sudbury. I just want to clarify, if anyone is just tuning in or they're watching a clip later on, about the Skim Monkey hockey jersey. Earlier today,

we had unanimous consent to wear hockey jerseys inside the chamber as a tribute to the anniversary of the Humboldt Broncos tragedy. I originally considered wearing a Sudbury Wolves jersey, but my colleague from Niagara Falls and I have a bet, and I want him to be the first to wear the Sudbury Wolves jersey in here when we beat him. So, instead, I'm wearing my Skim Monkey jersey.

Eventually, I'll explain what a Skim Monkey is; it actually relates to hydro. We'll get back to that.

I think we can all agree that the Liberals really screwed up hydro. We're all allied on that. I'm not saying it to be mean; it's just factual. It's not a cheap shot. They privatized it. People didn't want them to privatize it, and they did it anyway, and people really got angry about that. And then they privatized it some more, and people really, really got angry about that.

Then they went to the government, and they said, "Premier, government, Liberals, it's a crisis. Our rates are through the roof." And the government said, "No, it's not." But eventually, the Liberal government had to admit it was a crisis, because the evidence was there. People are entitled to their own opinions, but they're not entitled to their own facts. When people started posting pictures of their bills, it was clear that it was unaffordable.

You had grandparents, people who had worked their whole lives and who were retired and had a full day available to them, and they had to wait until the middle of the night to do laundry for these off-peak hours. It didn't make any sense. You had people who were freezing, Speaker. They were making a choice between heating and eating. People were going to freeze to death.

So the Liberal government came up with a "plan"—and I say "plan" in air quotes, because it was more of an idea. They created the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act. Basically, they offset the cost of hydro by borrowing money to pay for part of the high cost of hydro. It didn't do anything to bring rates down; we just borrowed money so it didn't look as high.

This is literally treating the symptoms instead of treating the cause. The symptoms were the high costs of hydro—it was the highest in Canada—but the cause was privatization. But they didn't want to treat the cause, so they stuck a Band-Aid on a bullet wound and they treated the symptoms instead. Speaker, that's kind of what we're seeing with the Conservatives. It's a bigger Band-Aid, but it's not treating the cause.

What's even worse than not treating the cause is that it was an election year and they didn't want it to show up as debt. There was a large debt, as the government keeps reminding us. But it was a debt, so they created this financing scheme to keep billions of dollars off the government's books.

At the time, my colleague from Nickel Belt—I think she nailed it when she described it as paying off your mortgage with a credit card. Because it was paying into this, but the rates were so high that it made no fiscal sense to do this.

Spoiler alert, Speaker: The Conservative plan doesn't address privatization. They're not using the credit card to

treat the symptoms, but they're using a credit line. But at least they're being transparent about it.

For hydro, businesses were taking a beating as well. For example, how do you run a 9-to-5 business and take advantage of the time-of-use? You can't. It's impossible. What about businesses and operations that run 24/7? I was reading in the paper, the Sudbury Star, last week about fundraising towards a second MRI machine, because our MRI machine is running 24 hours a day. You can't tell people coming in that we're just going to run MRIs in the evening. We would be backlogged forever.

What about mining? In Sudbury, we do all of it when it comes to mining. We extract it from the ground. We drill, we blast, we muck and we skip it to surface. So picture this, Speaker: You're more than 4,000 feet underground, and every breath you take is air that's pushed from the surface down to you with these giant electric fans. Every person and every piece of equipment is moved there and brought there by an electrically hoisted cage—an elevator, but we call it a cage. Every ton of ore is brought to surface by an electrically hoisted skip, and every drop of water—because if you don't get water out there, it will fill with water—is moved by electric pumps. We crushed the ore into powder. We used electric ball mills, rod mills and cone crushers—these are massive pieces of equipment that use a ton of electricity—and then we de-water the slurry by electrically-run filters. They basically suck the water out and put the water to the side. All of this runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Now we're getting to the Skim Monkey shirt, because we melt it and that's smelting. Basically, smelting is when you melt it and you remove the waste product. You keep the valuable stuff. Prior to coming here, I worked in mining. I was a flash furnace operator at the Copper Cliff smelter. We removed molten metal from the furnace. The furnace, Speaker, is basically the size of this chamber—not as high, but about the size of this chamber—and filled with molten metal. We knock a hole in the side, and slag comes out one side through the skim end, and then matte, the valuable stuff, comes out the sides. That's the valuable stuff.

There's a giant copper cooler along the edge of the skim end—almost like if you looked at the building like this—a giant copper cooler that protects the brick from melting, with water rushing through it. It's called the skim monkey. The skim monkey is really, really important because if it doesn't have water going through it, you're going to melt and you're going to spill hot metal everywhere. That's where the Skim Monkey hockey jersey comes from, and I want to acknowledge the people from the flash furnaces. This is a name that we gave ourselves in memory of our foreman Dan Henry, whose logo is on the side here. Dan passed away that year. He was the foreman for shift 1.

Speaker, the electric pumps that keep that water moving through the skim monkey and all of the other coolers run 24/7, 365 days a year. In fact, the entire smelter complex—the smelter, the nickel refinery—all depends on electricity. We've got 60-ton cranes that are running on electricity. We have motors that move converters and roasters and

conveyor belts and screws and pumps. That doesn't even include the electric furnace at Glencore. If you think it's expensive to heat your house with electricity, imagine trying to melt rocks until they become molten metal using electricity.

So I was excited to learn about this bill. I was excited for the industries in Sudbury. I was excited for the homeowners. I was especially excited for the grandparents who were talking about how late they were staying up to do laundry and to run the dishwasher. And honestly, I went through this and the best part of this bill is the title, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act—because I was looking for fixes. I think a more accurate title would be the “slightly tidying up the hydro mess act.” It's better than the Liberal plan; don't get me wrong. It's better, but really anything would be. But I don't think it's what anybody in Ontario is looking for.

The plan has three legs. I want to get through all of them. The first one is to reform the Ontario Energy Board, the second one is cutting conservation programs and the third one is to replace the Liberal refinancing scheme with a different refinancing scheme.

Starting with reforming the Ontario Energy Board: It's probably not going to get anyone's grandparents excited, but it seems reasonable. It's got to help, right? As long as we get it right. If all we do is replace Liberal patronage appointments with Conservative patronage appointments, then we don't get anything right out of that. It's not going to work. But I'm an optimist. I'm always looking for the right way forward. But if that's all we do, we're just rearranging chairs on the Titanic.

The second pillar is that we're going to cut conservation programs. They're going to cut them by about a third. The remaining conservation programs will be targeted at low-income households, to First Nations and to businesses. Except there's not any detail about this, about how much businesses or households will get or how we're going to target. That's kind of up in the air.

The final pillar of fixing the hydro mess is that they're going to replace the Liberal scheme with a new scheme. But the root of the problem, Speaker, as I said earlier, is privatization. The Liberals privatized Hydro One. They came up with a “use your credit card to make your mortgage payment” plan. Here's how the Conservative plan is slightly different: The global adjustment rebate will now be shown on bills, so it's transparent, which is good, instead of being hidden. But they're only lower because of a temporary subsidy. We're paying in, we're paying in, we're paying in, but we're not getting anything back.

The act also allows them to add partisan advertising on the hydro bills. We talked earlier about how when they were in opposition, it was the worst thing in the world, but now that they're in power it's Liberal, Tory, same old story.

The government says we will make regulations such that the bill increases will be held to the rate of inflation starting in May 2019, same as the Liberal commitment—Liberal, Tory, same old story. But the government doesn't say how long the bill increases will be kept at the rate of

inflation. It doesn't say how or whether the rebate will be eventually phased out. The government is proposing to change the eligibility criteria to receive the rebate, but there's no details about who will be eligible.

1730

So what's missing out of this? First of all, what's missing is details, lots and lots of details. There are a lot of good ideas, but it's kind of up in the air. I think, door to door, people are looking for facts.

What you're doing, basically, is you're slapping a new PC label on the old Liberal hydro borrowing scheme. We're going to get temporary debt finance relief, but it's not going to be permanent savings. Hydro bills will go up, not down, and they'll go up by a little, and then they'll go up by a lot. There's nothing in here, Speaker, that gets private profits off hydro bills or lowers the actual cost of electricity. That's what people want and that's what businesses want—lower prices.

There's nothing about putting privatized Hydro One back into public hands. They can't wait to spend billions on subsidizing debt. Why not invest it in getting it back to us so that the money is working for us?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Madam Speaker, our government promised to clean up the hydro mess, bring transparency to the electricity system and make life more affordable for all Ontarians. The previous Liberal government destroyed our electricity system through their misguided ideological policies that forced families and businesses to pay far too much for their hydro bills.

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 also 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 systems.

Madam Speaker, we need an approach to conservation and energy efficiency that focuses on the most cost-effective initiatives and targeted programs to those who need them 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 more money back in the pockets of the families and businesses that pay their electricity bills every month. This is another step we're taking to make Ontario open for business.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, it's always a privilege to stand on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

I want to tell my son Roch: I saw your call. I'll call you right back in five minutes. I've got to do this, son. I promised that I would always take your call, but I'm sorry, the Speaker wouldn't want me to answer my phone in the House.

When you listen to the member from Sudbury—I enjoy the passion that he has, and I enjoy just the passion that he

brings on behalf of the people of Sudbury. I also enjoy the fact that the individual comes from an environment that is so rich in the mining sector, and he brought a very good explanation of how people in Sudbury really feel, how they see their day-to-day operations, and how they're impacted, not only by the bad decisions that were done with this government but also the previous government, and how it's affecting their day-to-day activities. He spent a good, considerable amount of time talking about how you're really not dealing with the root cause of what this problem is.

Again, I'm going to challenge this government—and I said it about four times last week and I've said it already twice again today. I'm going to be here for the rest of today. But I want to challenge them: If they're going to be spending billions of dollars, as the member just told me, on nothing, why wouldn't you spend those same billions of dollars on trying to own something? Have the vision. Have a vision—not a four-year vision but a long-term vision. Why is it impossible to do the impossible? I don't believe in that. We can bring back hydro under our ownership. We can use it. It can become one of those gems that we've had for the longest of times.

I will agree wholeheartedly with this member, and I will use a different analogy. The Liberals have created a big wound in this province. We agree with that. But the Band-Aid that you're using—you've taken off their Band-Aid, you've put a little bit of ointment on there, but you've put on the same darn infected Band-Aid that was there in the first place. Come on. Let's change our ways here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I've been hearing a few times from the opposite side that hydro bills are unaffordable. They also agree with us and they also use the same terms: that Ontarians have to choose between eating and heating. I encourage the opposition side to also agree with our Bill 87, to support us when we clean up this hydro mess.

Cleaning up the hydro mess—have you seen all the actions that have already been taken? So far, we have already found \$442 million in savings in the electricity system. Not only did we get rid of cap-and-trade and do all these other things, but we are taking real action to make sure that the hydro mess is being cleaned up. I want you to support us and see what we're doing. This reduction in costs is already leading businesses—reviving—and our economy is doing better and better. The programs that we have been introducing are supporting businesses as well.

I urge you all to see what we're doing, join hands together with us to support this Bill 87 and clean up this mess with us. Cleaning up a mess is not easy, but working together will make things a lot easier.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to offer some comments on the speech by my colleague the member from Sudbury on this bill, creatively entitled the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act.

Speaker, it's interesting that we're having this debate as the shadow of April 11 looms large over this province, as Ontarians are looking at a government that is so obsessed with deficit and debt that it is willing to compromise the health and well-being of citizens in this province—their health care and their education—across a range of policy fields. The reason that that is interesting is because this bill does nothing to address the debt that the Liberals saddled the people of this province with. It merely shifts the debt. This government, apparently, is okay with requiring Ontarians to pay \$2.5 billion a year in interest costs to allow the continued private generation of power as they support a privatized Hydro One.

This government had choices. This government could have introduced some structural changes which would actually have done something helpful to fix the hydro mess. They could have ramped up conservation programs instead of dramatically reducing conservation programs. We know that conservation is the cheapest form of energy that we have. Supporting businesses and consumers to reduce their energy consumption will go a long way to reducing hydro costs, but no, this government didn't go there. This government was fine with what the Liberals had planned and they are merely tinkering around the edges.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank the members from Brampton West, Algoma-Manitoulin, Richmond Hill and London West for their comments.

I've heard all afternoon today, "Come support us" and "Where are your ideas?" We've given you our ideas. Just as a reminder for everybody, and people watching, across from us is the eagle and across the government is the owl. The idea is a reminder for the government to make wise decisions and wise plans. I love that it's being transparent about the interest. I love that it's going to be lower interest rates. I think it's a really good thing, but it's not enough. And we, as eagles, are looking for things to improve it. So every time we stand here and say, "Here's an idea we have about improving it," it's not fair for the government to scream out, "I think you're fact-mongering and letting people know what's really going on."

I want to go back to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, who talked about mining—because it's near and dear to my heart and his as well—but also when he talked about spending billions and billions on nothing versus billions and billions on something. One of the things they're saying is, "Your New Democrat plan to buy back hydro—what would you get?" We would get hydro back. We would get the money that is now going to private pockets, to investor pockets—it would be in our pockets. It would go to our schools and our roads. It would help four-lane Highway 69, so when I would ask the question, the member opposite would say, "Absolutely, because we got that hydro money because we bought it back." Instead, what we're doing is we're borrowing and we're borrowing and we're borrowing to artificially lower the cost. But at the end of the day, we have nothing. We have nothing at all, at the end of the day.

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The member from Richmond Hill talked about heating versus eating. We've all heard that at the door. People were very clear with us. Hallway medicine and hydro: That's what people are angry about. So we want to help clean up the hydro mess, but the title doesn't match what we're doing. We're straightening up the mess, but we want to clean it up, and that's what we're committed to as New Democrats.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Jill Dunlop: It is my great honour to rise today on behalf of the people of Simcoe North to speak to Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act.

Before I speak to this bill, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm wearing an Orillia Terriers hockey jersey today on behalf of myself and my constituents, as today we were honouring in the Legislature the Humboldt Broncos players who lost their lives a year ago, as well as honouring their families.

I'd like to thank the member from Sudbury for his story on the Skim Monkeys. It's always interesting to hear about our lives before we were politicians here at the Legislature.

For decades, irresponsible energy policies have negatively affected families and businesses in Ontario, with the ultimate effect of eroding public trust in this vital utility. During the last election, nearly every door I knocked on and every business I visited came with a heartbreaking story of people squeezed by expensive hydro; stories of mom-and-pop shops closing down their operations due to crippling overhead bills; hard-working manufacturers forced to remortgage their homes just to keep the lights on in their factories; and families petrified by the one day every month where their electrical bill dictates if they can afford to send their kids to camp or go out for a family meal. These are people fed up with bearing the brunt of bad legislation. They are aggravated, paying increasingly bloated hydro bills, while the salaries of those on energy boards became more bloated every year.

Government after government has promised fantastical schemes to revive the sustainability of this sector, only to implement plans that shift the burden onto our children and our grandchildren. This was especially the case under the previous government, where the word "fairness" was tossed around as a distraction for unsustainable and reckless policies.

Inevitably, the energy policies of the past have triggered a breakdown of trust in Ontario. Our hydro system used to be the pride of our province. Now it is one of the largest targets of public distrust. A 2017 poll commissioned by the Ontario Energy Association found that 70% of consumers felt unsatisfied with the reliability, price and quality of their electricity service.

I rise in this assembly today to speak to our plan to restore trust in our energy sector. Bill 87, entitled the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, is our province's best chance to clean up the bad policies of the past, restore the effectiveness of our energy regulators and return public

trust to our hydro system. This important legislation brings much-needed reform to our electricity system. It tidies years of bad policy and institutes reform that will drive efficiencies in the sector, reduce costs, and lower rates for job creators.

I would like to use my time today to speak to two amendments included in this bill that will reform our electrical system to better reflect the public's interests; these are dismantling the Fair Hydro Plan and modernizing the Ontario Energy Board.

This is why we are here. Ontarians are tired of the mess, chaos and disorder in their hydro system. They brought us here to change that. In the name of restoring your constituents' trust in Ontario's electrical system, I implore all members of this House to support this legislation. If passed, Bill 87 will wind down the Liberals' Fair Hydro Plan and, by effect, save the province billions in borrowing costs. When introduced in 2017, the Fair Hydro Plan was lauded by the governing party at the time as the innovative solution to soaring hydro costs. As the Auditor General said in 2017, it was more "creative accounting" than innovative policy-making. The central premise to this legislation was a poorly conceived idea to reduce short-term rates by shifting payments and debt onto a new entity overseen by the Ontario Energy Board. Their plan was to, after a number of years, finance this debt by passing it on to ratepayers. As the Canadian Taxpayers Federation commented at the time, "Spreading the cost ... over more years doesn't solve the problem."

In May 2017, the Financial Accountability Office estimated that this plan would cost Ontario \$45 billion while saving the province a relatively meagre \$24 billion. This Fair Hydro Plan left the people of Ontario footing a \$21-billion bill. What the Liberals didn't understand, Madam Speaker, is that fairness is not myopic. What appears to be fair now, but deliberately inequitable for future generations, is a deception.

Bill 87, Madam Speaker, will revive Ontarians' trust in the hydro system by restoring accountability and transparency to its operations. Under this bill, the Fair Hydro Plan will be dismantled and replaced with a new on-bill rebate, effective November 1 of this year. Consumers in Ontario will be able to see in clear ink the full amount of their rebate and the real cost of power in this province.

Starting May 1, Bill 87 will also ensure that any increases to a residence's electricity bill will be held to the rate of inflation. These measures will save the taxpayers billions of dollars while returning transparency and stability back to their monthly hydro bills. Our government is not solely concerned with your hydro bills today and tomorrow, but your hydro bills 10 years from now, and your children's bills 20 years from now.

Bill 87 also calls for sweeping reforms to the Ontario Energy Board—the way it operates and the way it is governed. Last year, the Honourable Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines tasked the Ontario Energy Board Modernization Review Panel with studying ways on how to bring effectiveness, accountability and efficiency back to the regulator. In their thorough report,

the panel presented a principal conclusion that is at the heart of this bill. They recommended “to improve confidence in Ontario’s regulatory system and point towards opportunities to strengthen public trust.”

Since its creation in 2003, the OEB has taken on more and more responsibilities that have distanced the organization from its original purpose: to regulate the utilities in its public interest. Operating under a web of overregulation and contradictory responsibilities, the OEB became distended. The lights were out at the OEB, and we were all left in the dark.

The panel also wrote that in order to face the challenges of a rapidly transforming industry, “the OEB will need to rely on a significant amount of public trust—an essential ingredient for institutions that have delegated authority from government. Public trust in the context of a regulator requires that all interested parties—the regulatory community, the public and public representatives—have confidence that the regulator will develop policies and issue decisions that are fair, well-reasoned, and responsive to their concerns.” To summarize the panel’s concerns, the OEB’s inability to innovate and respond to Ontario’s energy needs has eroded public trust in its work.

Our government, in response to this report, has introduced a number of important reforms that will modernize the OEB, protect consumers and ultimately rebuild public trust. These amendments will separate the board’s management, adjudication and administration responsibilities, require the OEB to report on its efforts to simplify the sector, create a board of directors accountable to the minister and institute a CEO to provide executive leadership. In practical terms, this overhaul means that distribution companies in Simcoe North and across Ontario won’t have to wade through a rainforest of red tape and pay a thousand business days’ worth of earnings just to get an application through the OEB.

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As one stakeholder remarked, the OEB can now “establish the right regulatory and market conditions that are conducive to innovative and technological change. For innovation to occur, the energy landscape needs a clear, predictable, efficient and transparent regulatory system.” Bill 87 proposes modernizing reforms that will enforce stability, transparency and efficiency at the OEB.”

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions or comments? The member for—somebody? Anybody? The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. I always enjoy being in the House. You listen to the members who really bring their views on behalf of their constituents back home.

I want to thank the member from Simcoe North. I was actually engaged in a conversation with one of her colleagues in regard to where the common issues are, where we do agree on certain challenges that we have with our hydro system. We both agreed, in general, that a lot of this mess that we’re in came from the previous government. On that there is no disputing. That’s a fact. We both agree on that.

We have sat in this House. We talked about the challenges that were there and the fights that had been brought forward by both parties when we were sitting as the third party and you as the official opposition then. There are a lot of things that I recall, as the official party, that you were arguing, and now that you’re the government, it sounds a lot—I’m sorry, but I’ve got to put it out there. It sure sounds like the same window dressing that was there under the previous Liberal government.

If you’re going to come out and call things with beautiful titles like the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act—it sounds great, and also that there are going to be initiatives in there included in this bill in regard to conservation. It sounds great. It really sounds great, but just like the previous Liberal government, there are a lot of missing details. But it sounded great. It got you that sound bite in the morning paper. And you know what? If that’s going to be your goal, I don’t think that’s going to fly with Ontarians as a whole.

We need to do more. Again—I’ve said it about five times, and I’m going to say it one more time: Challenge yourselves to having a long-term vision in regard to returning that gem we had that made us a powerhouse in this country—returning Hydro One back under public hands.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Calandra: I want to thank the member for Simcoe North for her speech. In many respects, the member for Simcoe North highlights a lot of the issues that have been the problem with hydro and the cause and effect. She has a very strong agricultural community in her riding, and a very strong small, medium and large job sector, which have all been hurt by the decisions made by the government.

I’ve said this in the past: Ontario is rich, but it has been impoverished by bad decisions from a Liberal government. That’s what we have to change.

The bill deals with a number of things as a next step. Of course, it talks about untangling the scheme—you can’t say it any other way. It was a scheme that the former Liberal government brought in to try to hide the costs of some of the disastrous decisions they made on hydro. That scheme cost Ontario taxpayers billions of dollars. This phase of our returning to prosperity is about disentangling that mess, being honest with taxpayers, showing the partial costs of the Liberal mistakes. It will save \$4 billion. That is huge. It’s \$4 billion. I know that the member would appreciate all of the things that that would do for the people of her riding.

It talks about restoring confidence in the Ontario Energy Board, which, we’ve seen, has been diminished by bad decision-making and by interference by the former Liberal government. It also talks about eliminating conservation programs that weren’t doing what they were supposed to be doing.

The member for Algoma–Manitoulin highlighted some of the areas we agree on. That’s great. We will disagree—I will say this vociferously. I would never support spending billions of dollars to buy shares in a private company.

I just would not do that. I think Ontario taxpayers deserve better than that. But there are a lot of other things that we agree on.

In this bill, surely we can agree that saving taxpayers money, restoring confidence in the OEB and focusing on energy conservation programs that work are worth supporting.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to comment on the member from Simcoe North's presentation this afternoon. Where we disagree is the agenda of privatization. This bill, entitled Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, does not address that. We know that the last 15 years, life has been harder and harder for most Ontarians because electricity has been very expensive, and it still is. This bill, entitled Fixing the Hydro Mess, does not address that. This government seems content to leave future generations to deal with this debt. They are now basically borrowing a line of credit rather than actually bringing it back and making hydro ownership central, that the people of Ontario own it. That is a mistake that the previous Liberal government had made by selling hydro to the private companies.

The problem of this: This bill does not actually address the action of what we need, the idea of making the ownership of Hydro One the people of Ontario. That is why, also, we strongly disagree with the agenda of privatization, Madam Speaker.

The people of Ontario want electricity that is affordable—but this bill will not do that. It will simply follow the mistakes that the previous Liberal government has made for the past 15 years, which actually makes things from bad to worse. The people of Ontario deserve a government that addresses the most important issues and solves the issue of hydro.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Will Bouma: It's great to rise in the House, Madam Speaker, and to be able to offer a few comments on the excellent words by the member from Simcoe North. Her tireless advocacy for her community is just second to none, and I feel wholly inadequate to be able to add anything onto the great words that she has spoken this afternoon. Especially what I really appreciated was her ability to expand a little bit on what we're actually doing with the OEB reform. There are a lot of issues there.

Just listening back and forth to the comments going on this afternoon, it's amazing how much we actually agree on with the opposition. We want OEB reform. We want to see lower rates in hydro. But what we cannot do in this province is to increase the debt and the deficit even more.

We already talked earlier this afternoon about the \$7-billion hole in the forecast for the budget that was in the election platform for the opposition. Then, by adding another \$6 billion in debt onto that by buying back a portion of Hydro One, it's just completely unsustainable. What that would have made, Madam Speaker, is a

situation where we would actually be doubling our deficit at this point. So we would be going from the \$15 billion that we inherited from the previous government and making that \$30 billion in this coming year. That's just completely unsustainable. So we would see a doubling of the deficit. We would see, as a result of that, the rates of hydro going through the roof.

The only solution being to buy back Hydro One—as has been mentioned earlier this afternoon, that ship has sailed. We have a sustainable small part, the beginning of a plan to return hydro rates to where they should be. Since we agree on so much, I'm wholeheartedly looking forward to the absolute, unconditional support of the opposition on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Simcoe North.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Markham–Stouffville, York South–Weston and Brantford–Brant—a great discussion today. I must say that there has been a lot of back and forth, things that we have agreed on, things that we don't agree on. But the one thing we did agree on today was our hockey jerseys. It's great to see the support of our local minor hockey teams, our local OHL teams, and some of our NHL teams as well, and the importance of organ donation and making sure that people sign up for that.

Just to summarize Bill 87 today: We've discussed it back and forth. For decades, taxpayers and hydro consumers have been forced to pay for politicians' bad policy ideas. As it stands, the current hydro system does not work for anyone, but instead burdens ratepayers with high costs and debt. We are committed to removing this burden from families and businesses.

We are committed to fixing Ontario's hydro mess. Bill 87 is a logical approach to constructing a 21st-century electricity system that is accountable, modernized and effective. Its measures to inject transparency and stability into our constituents' hydro bills, and efficiencies into our regulators, will bring much-needed relief to the people of this province.

In order to restore public trust in our hydro system and ensure its sustainability for years to come, we must take comprehensive and practical action.

As I said, we have agreed and disagreed on many things. I think the one thing we all agreed on is that when we were out campaigning, knocking on doors, we were hearing from all of our constituents that the number one issue was hydro rates.

Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, is this necessary action to make the change. I encourage all members to support this legislation and support an effective hydro system in Ontario with Bill 87.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
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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
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Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
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Lorne Coe, Michael Coteau
Mike Harris, Faisal Hassan
Jane McKenna, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
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Goldie Ghamari, Jim McDonell
Norman Miller, Suze Morrison
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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

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Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
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Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
John Fraser, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
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