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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 April 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 avril 2019

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're going to begin this morning with a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 9, 2019, on the motion for time allocation 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?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I move that the fourth bullet of the fourth paragraph be struck out and the following substituted:

"That each witness will receive up to six minutes for their presentation followed by 14 minutes for questions from committee members, with two minutes allotted to the independent member of the committee for questioning and 12 minutes divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning; and"

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Rickford has moved that the fourth bullet of the fourth paragraph be struck out and the following substituted:

"That each witness will receive up to six minutes for their presentation followed by 14 minutes for questions from committee members, with two minutes allotted to the independent member of the committee for questioning and 12 minutes divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning; and"

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister like to speak to the motion that he just made?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Nothing further at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I know we're here today talking about Bill 87 because the government decided to time-allocate it. The time allocation piece that this government constantly uses as a way to move bills through this House is really becoming a pattern of behaviour when it comes to management.

It's concerning, because when we talk about bills like the health bill, Bill 74—they shrunk down the time that people were able to present to two days. I was in those presentations and only 30 deputants came before the committee. That's the type of parameters that this government

imposed on this bill for consultations. We received 1,564, I believe it was, submissions to present during committee on Bill 74, the health bill, which is the largest transformation of our health care system that we've seen. That speaks volumes about how unengaged this government wants the public to be. From those 1,564 presentations, less than 2% were able to present because of the timelines that were imposed on the committee. That meant 30 presentations were accepted on Bill 74, the health bill. I don't know about you, Speaker, but when we talk about hearing from the people we represent, hearing from different points of view, broadening our minds to understanding other people's experiences and expertise and specialties, that 30 people did not represent all of Ontario.

The other part that was really concerning as well: I think this government has a propensity against travelling a bill so that they can hear a wide range of voices. I get that Toronto needs to be heard; no one disagrees that that is something that needs to be done. But we also need to understand there are voices in southwestern Ontario. I use that as an example because in London, a lot of the health care concerns that drove the Liberal government and that are now driving this Conservative government to pay attention to health care rose up from London. We call it ground zero. The mental health crisis was huge. The long-term-care crisis, Speaker—I think you probably remember when I was in the Legislature bringing up time and time again that it was in crisis and that we needed to address it. The home care system: People were not getting enough home care and were being left to either rush to their doctor—if they had one—or to the emergency room. We called it out. We called it hallway health care. We called that.

So when we're talking about Bill 74, which is going to transform health care in ways we've never seen before, we do have concerns when we say that it's opening doors to unprecedented privatization. I think we need and we deserve and the people of Ontario deserve to have that full consultation. Limiting debate under time allocation in this Legislature does not help that process.

We also had 19,000 pieces of paper that were submitted afterwards because we could not hear all the presentations, and so those were written submissions. The minister said that people could write in their views on this massive transformation on health care, and people did: 19,000 pages. There were boxes in the member from Nickel Belt's office. I don't know if I'll be able to get through those 19,000 pages, because by the time the bill comes for debate, I suspect this government will also shorten debate and will only follow the standing orders to the bare

minimum. That's their right to do that. But I think as legislators, as this government sets the tone for health care in the future, that it's our responsibility.

I was watching something the other day about responsibility. It's two words: "response" and your "ability." The response this government has given to the people of Ontario—and to the people in this Legislature that represent their ridings—to allow them to debate this bill properly, and the ability they have, doesn't match up. I wish they would have taken this responsibility and responded with the ability they have and allowed further, wholesome, more robust debate as well as in the committee process. Limiting the debate in the Legislature—I don't agree with that, as much as I'd like to say that we should have constant debate until members don't want to stand up and speak to something. Yes, there are limitations, absolutely, and you can work with the government that way. That's called a working relationship. But to actually, when it goes out to the public, give them a day and a half to submit a request to present to the committee and then to cap the hours—two days of presentations for 30 people is not realistic to what this bill is going to do, how it's going to impact the health care system. And we have yet to understand and hear from this minister that it's not a way to expand privatization.

0910

We understand there's already privatization in the health care system, but what we're saying is, let's not continue that privatization. Let's say, for an example—which we heard as a recommendation at the committee—that long-term-care homes were going to be not-for-profit; those beds that are being built by this government are going to be not-for-profit beds.

I'm going to share my time with one of my other members, and it's coming to a close, so I would just like to finally say a few comments about the fact that this government has really not paid attention to the real problems of health care, because they haven't listened to other people's voices in the province and they haven't travelled the bill. It would do a world of good for them to understand that they're not the only ones who can contribute to legislation. The public needs to have their say when it comes to what we do in this House.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I rise today to speak in support of Bill 87 and what our government is doing to fix the hydro mess and why we need time allocation.

For many, many years, Ontarians have been complaining about skyrocketing hydro rates. Our families, businesses and public institutions were suffering. Our government promised to clean up the hydro mess, increase transparency in our electricity system and make life more affordable for Ontarians, and that's exactly what we're doing. We've already taken action on hydro and energy. The bill furthers our commitment to the people of this province, a commitment that we will provide reliable hydro at affordable rates for generations to come. We won't drown the province in debt and make our children pay for it to cover skyrocketing bills.

Under our Premier and our Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, we are taking real action. Wasteful energy projects costing taxpayers nearly \$800 million—gone; the Green Energy Act, which introduced disastrous changes to our energy system and increased the cost of electricity for families and businesses while taking away planning decisions from municipalities—gone; the six-million-dollar man from Hydro One—gone, without the \$10.7 million arranged for under the previous government. There will be no six-million-dollar man under our government; the maximum compensation a CEO of Hydro One can receive is now \$1.5 million, under one quarter the previous CEO. And we've amended the Ontario Energy Board Act to require the OEB to exclude executive compensation from Hydro One customer rates. That's action, Mr. Speaker.

We're not for the insiders. We're not for the executives. We are for the seniors, families and small businesses of Ontario. We are for the people.

Our dedication to the people continues today as we discuss Bill 87 and time allocation. Bill 87 will increase transparency, ensure affordability, and restore trust and accountability in our energy system and carriers.

Rather than implement proper conservation programs in a sensible and responsible manner, the previous government applied band-aid solution after band-aid solution to attempt to reduce end costs. By centralizing our conservation programs, we are reducing costs and duplication in the inefficient, ineffective programs introduced by the previous government—quality over quantity.

We're focusing on targeted programs and initiatives that benefit those who need it most. By eliminating ineffective initiatives while still providing programs to the most vulnerable people in our province, we're providing immediate cost savings to the province, saving taxpayers up to \$442 million.

We're also benefiting businesses. By lowering the cost of overhead, we are ensuring that the world knows that Ontario is open for business, open for competition and open for jobs. Businesses were fleeing the province towards the end of the previous government's mandate, as doing business was simply unaffordable. Our government is committed to ensuring Ontario is the best it can be and is home to highly skilled, well-paying jobs. By shifting conservation programs to the IESO, we're removing burdens from the carriers while still allowing them to apply for local funding. Every area has different needs, and we are ensuring that LDCs retain that ability to implement area-specific programs for the benefit of their communities.

Let's talk about the Ontario Energy Board. Our government is also taking steps to overhaul the Ontario Energy Board, the province's independent energy regulator. We are taking action to stabilize costs, promote regulatory excellence and improve governance within the organization. For several local distribution companies, the cost of preparing recent rate applications increased by over 200% or 300% because of increased reporting requirements. A medium-sized local distribution company spent the

equivalent of almost 1,000 business days on its 2016 cost-of-service rate application. That's not efficient. What we're proposing to do is to take steps to improve the governance of the OEB by better separating its management, administration and adjudication roles. Clarity on these roles, combined with performance expectations, will lead to more timely and predictable outcomes for all.

Ontarians have lost confidence in the OEB. Modernizing operations will lead to more efficient and predictable regulatory approvals, more inclusive and transparent consultations, and reduce regulatory burdens and costs, benefiting Ontario consumers and businesses. The proposed structure of the modernized OEB reflects the recommendations made by the OEB Modernization Review Panel after consultations with stakeholders across the whole province. By amending the OEB Act, 1998, we will separate the different responsibilities of the OEB by introducing a board of directors and a CEO that are accountable and responsible to the people of Ontario. OEB executive compensation will be governed by the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act. If our proposed legislative amendments are passed, the ministry would work with the Treasury Board to ensure that compensation is set at levels consistent with government policy for provincial agencies.

The government recognizes the importance of the OEB's role as an energy regulator. The OEB's adjudicative and regulatory decisions must be made and be seen to be made independently and impartially. The governance structure of the OEB should reflect this. Under our proposed legislative amendments, we will enhance the independence of the OEB's regulatory decisions, as the commissioners deciding on applications would not be appointed by the government after the transition period for the changes to the governing structure has concluded. These chief commissioners will report to the CEO regarding the timely and dependable delivery of active cases, creating confidence that the work of the OEB will be carried out in a timely manner.

Further, we will ensure that the OEB is still accountable for delivering its mandate by requiring the new board of directors to report directly to the minister. We also plan to streamline the OEB's consumer education objectives and reduce duplicate responsibilities between the OEB and the IESO. Under the proposed changes, the OEB would still have oversight of the public interest of consumer education in the energy sector, but we are ending duplication in consumer outreach activities, serving Ontarians more efficiently and effectively while reducing costs. We are ensuring that Ontarians have a modernized OEB that works for them.

Now, let's talk about the global adjustment refinancing. Public confidence in the electricity system itself in Ontario was destroyed by policies under the previous government. Ontarians saw through the Fair Hydro Plan, which hid the true costs of their hydro, and elected our government to restore transparency to the provincial electricity system. This plan added approximately \$4 billion in borrowing costs to the people of Ontario that would be passed down

to our children and grandchildren to pay for. We should be supportive of our future generations, not burden them with more debt.

0920

If passed, we will replace the Fair Hydro Plan with a rate relief structure that would take advantage of significantly lower borrowing costs while increasing transparency. We are working to replace the global adjustment refinancing structure with a more transparent, on-bill rebate taking effect November 1, 2019, when the regulated price plan rates are normally updated. Residential electricity customers will clearly see the rebate as a single line item and know the true cost of their power.

We are also ensuring that in the interim, Ontarians have stable rate relief that they desperately need on their hydro bills. Under Bill 87, starting next month, on May 1, increases to the average residential electricity bill will be held to the rate of inflation.

Starting this spring, we will also be consulting with Ontario's industrial sector on electricity pricing to inform new policies to manage electricity costs and help Ontario businesses grow and compete.

Speaker, our government is taking action on our promises to the people of Ontario. We're providing relief in a responsible, transparent and accountable manner. If our legislation is passed, the true costs of rate relief will finally be accurately reflected on our government's books, in a manner consistent with the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry and provincial Auditor General's recommendations.

With today's announcement, not only are we providing direct relief to Ontario families, but we are putting Ontario back on the map as a place to do business in a highly competitive international market, allowing businesses to create jobs for Ontarians, boosting our economy. Our government has already reduced electricity system costs by hundreds of millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, and these changes under our legislation will build on that. We promised to clean up the hydro mess, and that's exactly what our government is doing.

I urge members on all sides of the House to support this important piece of legislation before us today that will restore public confidence in Ontario's electricity system, provide relief and stability to increasing hydro rates for families, and continue to invest in effective and efficient conservation programs, all while reducing unnecessary costs and red tape within the system, sending the message that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs.

Let's get started fixing the hydro mess right now. Support Bill 87 and support time allocation so that we can get started right now.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I just have to say that I'm so disappointed to again be talking about a time allocation bill, because the people of Ontario deserve so much better than a government that thinks that they have all the answers and is not prepared to listen to the people of Ontario.

As my colleague from London–Fanshawe has already said, with Bill 74, the greatest transformation in health care, we had almost 1,600 people apply to speak to that, and how many people did this government allow to speak? Under Minister Elliott’s very own nose, she allowed only 30 people to speak. It’s less than 2% of all the people who wanted to speak to this important bill.

This just shows that this is a government that, again, is not much different than the Liberals. They do not want to listen to the people of Ontario, and they like to move forward with omnibus bills, with time-allocated bills, and that’s really not at all what democracy is all about. I would say that the people of Ontario see this as a continuation of the blatant disregard for government accountability. It’s the kind of politics that makes people feel like they don’t matter, that they don’t matter in this House, and that’s really an unfortunate state for us to be in in Ontario.

I spent a number of months on the Select Committee on Financial Transparency. I sat with the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane on that committee. What could have been a really important exercise to get some important answers for the people of Ontario turned out to be a partisan exercise. The mandate of the select committee was to review the actions of the past Liberal government, and to investigate and report on the accounting practices, decision-making and policy objectives of the previous government, specifically around two pieces: the way the Fair Hydro Plan was constructed and also about the pension treatment.

Let’s focus on the hydro plan. There were many, many questions that were raised, but they were not the kind of answers that we would expect from a committee that took up so much of our time and our valuable resources. The reason that I would say that this time allocation is an indication of this government’s disregard for democratic process is the way the Conservatives behaved on the select committee. They routinely blocked important questions. One of the commissioners that we had was Gordon Campbell. Gordon Campbell, when he was the Premier of BC, instituted a carbon tax, and the economy of BC is flourishing. We wanted to ask some questions about that, but we were blocked.

We wanted to ask some questions about P3s, public-private partnerships, which were at the core of some of the things that went wrong in the hydro file; and also, some of the things that were before the current government. We were not allowed to ask those questions. We wanted to ask the Auditor General about that, but no, those questions were blocked.

It wasn’t just important questions that we weren’t allowed to get answers to. It was also key witnesses that were routinely blocked by the Conservatives on this committee. To start with, it seems unbelievable that we couldn’t call witnesses such as the former CEO of Hydro One, Mayo Schmidt. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, he was the six-million-dollar, nine-million-dollar man. We also weren’t able to call Paul Dobson, who was the chair of the board at the time. And really, when you’re trying to understand how the Fair Hydro Plan went so terribly awry,

why would the government block us from calling a witness that could provide significant answers that would help inform this debate?

It’s also worth noting that right after that, the Avista deal fell apart, and the Premier’s meddling in the governance structure was cited by the regulators in Washington. Those are important lessons that this government should be listening to.

It’s not only that we blocked witnesses; I would say that this government put Ontarians at significant risk. Despite pleas from OPG and IESO not to release confidential, sensitive documents, and despite us, the opposition, saying, “This is really an important thing. We need to make sure we protect the confidentiality of sensitive commercial data,” the government, in their, I have to say—let’s just call it not listening to other people, also perhaps known as arrogance—didn’t listen to IESO, didn’t listen to OPG, didn’t listen to us and made those confidential commercial documents public. The government had to retract that and take them down, but really, at that point, the damage was done. The damage was done to our credibility as well, as a government that understands and listens to people.

The other thing that I want to say with this government is that it’s not just blocking witnesses, not allowing questions, not taking the time to consider the people of Ontario’s opinion, to consider the opposition’s opinion; really, we have a government before us that is repeating the same mistakes of the Liberal government. Not only are they behaving in the same way, which is treating democracy as an afterthought; they’re also, in full, unbelievable irony, essentially adopting the Liberals’ hydro plan. The only difference is that the taxpayers will be borrowing this money. And the cynicism of this government calling borrowing a rebate—it boggles the mind. The only analogy I can think of: It’s like the government reached its hand into your pocket, took your credit card, went out and bought something, and came back and presented it to you and said, “Hey, look, I got a gift for you.” The people of Ontario will understand that this rebate is borrowing; it’s coming directly from taxpayer dollars.

I would have to say that Mike Harris, when he began the privatization of Hydro One—which he has said is his one regret in his term of office, that he didn’t complete the privatization of Hydro One—at least on our bill it said, “Debt reduction,” and we know how long we had to deal with that on our bill. But at least he called it what it is; a debt is a debt, not a rebate.

The people of Ontario deserve so much better. I have to say, does this government think that democracy is an afterthought? It seems like they think democracy is a bothersome thing, something to push aside like red tape. But we deserve so much better. Mr. Speaker, there’s a Biblical expression: “Pride goeth before a fall.” This government’s use of time allocation shows their hubris, and it will, in the end, not be good for the people of Ontario and not good for this legislation. I do not support time allocation in a democratic institution like Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from Oakville North–Burlington.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Good morning, Speaker, and thank you. I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019.

Our government is proposing these reforms to our electricity system to reduce costs, find efficiencies and lower electricity prices for medium and large employers and to help these employers create jobs. This is only a part, if an important part, in cleaning up our hydro system and making it affordable again.

0930

When I was canvassing in my community of Oakville North–Burlington in the election, I heard one thing over and over again: “What are you doing about the high cost of hydro?” Like people all across the province, my constituents have faced rising energy prices under the Liberals. Local businesses have been telling me that when they make decisions whether to stay in Ontario or leave the province, the high cost of electricity is a critical factor.

Ontario once had one of the finest and cheapest electricity systems in the world. Our hydro system helped to make us the engine of the Canadian economy. The rates attracted investment to our province from across North America, and our system was the envy of other states and provinces. But somehow, we lost our way. Under 15 years of the Liberals, hydro became less about delivering power at affordable prices and more of a political football, manipulated by governments for ideological reasons, and the cost of hydro only went one way: up and up and up. That's why fixing the hydro mess is so important.

In the June election, the Premier and our government committed to cutting hydro rates by 12% for the people of Ontario, giving relief to families, seniors and businesses. Since taking office, our government has started to deliver on this commitment. One of the bills we passed in the rare summer session was the Hydro One Accountability Act. This act introduced a number of important changes to deal with the excessive executive and board compensation at the utility.

When we think of the money wasted on energy projects, who can forget the Liberal gas plants? They wasted billions of dollars on plants they announced and then cancelled for purely political reasons. Or what about the failed scheme to establish green energy projects across the province, all subsidized by hydro ratepayers, with wind and solar farms forced into the backyards of communities that didn't want them?

We must not forget that, according to the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Energy System Operator, wind and solar meant almost \$4 billion in added costs to electricity bills in 2017. Wind and solar represent just 11% of total generation in Ontario but make up a full 30% of the global adjustment costs that are borne by electricity customers. Yet in Alberta, somehow the government managed to negotiate a deal for green energy at 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour, while the Ontario Liberals could only manage 13.5 cents.

It's pretty clear, Speaker, that the problem with the Green Energy Act in Ontario was not green energy; it was Liberal mismanagement and incompetence. That's why

we had to bring their plan to an end. As soon as our government took office, we started to cut back on the Liberal waste, cancelling more than 750 wasteful energy contracts, and saved \$790 million for Ontario electricity customers.

We repealed the Green Energy Act, which had led to electricity rates tripling for Ontario families and seniors and had stripped powers from municipalities to stop expensive and unneeded energy projects in their communities. With our changes, now local municipalities will be able to decide for themselves what projects they want in their communities.

As announced by the minister, Bill 87 would accomplish five main tasks: finding savings of up to \$442 million by refocusing and uploading electricity conservation programs to the Independent Electricity System Operator; overhauling the Ontario Energy Board to make the regulatory system more efficient and accountable, while continuing to protect consumers; hold residential electricity rates to the rate of inflation; wind down the Fair Hydro Plan, and as a result, save billions of dollars in borrowing costs; and introduce a new, transparent, on-bill rebate on consumer bills to replace the Fair Hydro Plan.

Uploading the delivery of conservation programs to the operator will promote a consistent approach to conservation across Ontario while avoiding duplication in administrative costs. The conservation changes are expected to lead to savings for medium and large employers. For example, a large employer consuming 50,000 megawatt hours a month would see a bill reduction of about \$30,000 per month, allowing them to invest these savings in modern equipment or expansion and be able to create more jobs.

The bill also proposes changes to modernize the Ontario Energy Board, improving its governance and cutting red tape and overregulation. The OEB would be given a new governance structure, with a board of directors and a CEO allowing it to separate its responsibilities. These proposed changes reflect best practices and support independent decision-making.

The bill would also require action to hold the line on electricity bills, keeping electricity customers' bills stable. Increases to the average residential electricity bill would be held to the rate of inflation starting May 1, 2019. All of these actions are part of the government's plan to increase transparency and accountability in the electricity system while working to make life more affordable for all Ontarians.

The legislation would also, if passed, replace the Fair Hydro Plan with a rate relief structure that would take advantage of significantly lower government borrowing costs, while increasing transparency. The proposal aims to improve accountability and align with the recommendations of the Auditor General and the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry. The Financial Accountability Office estimated that the Fair Hydro Plan added approximately \$4 billion in borrowing costs for the people of Ontario. When the bill to implement the plan was introduced under the Liberals, the Auditor General issued a

special report criticizing its violation of accounting principles. Just think of it: The Liberals were willing to dump the costs on our grandchildren to try to make hydro bills look better for them in the election.

We will take a different path. Our government is proposing to introduce a new on-bill rebate, which would replace the Fair Hydro Plan that hid the true costs of electricity from consumers. Starting in November 2019, residential electricity customers will know the true cost of power and the new rebate will be clearly displayed as a single line item. The full electricity cost, including global adjustment, would be shown on the electricity line of the bill. None of the facts, Speaker, would be hidden from consumers, as they were under the Liberals. What consumers and ratepayers will receive from the PC government are the facts.

Our government believes in full transparency in our hydro system, because the only way to clean it up—to fix the mess—is if everyone can see the problem, and see our proposals for solutions. PC governments have always had to clean up the messes after the Liberal and NDP governments, whether it's hydro or reforming health care or our labour laws. I am proud of the legacy Progressive Conservatives have when it comes to hydro, and I'm proud that our Premier and the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines today are continuing this legacy by working to make hydro available and affordable.

In conclusion, Speaker, our government is working to protect the things that matter most to Ontarians, including fixing the hydro mess. What we must do is make sure that we get on a sustainable path so that we can protect our core services in our health care, in our social services and in our education for the people of Ontario. If we do not protect these front-line programs and services, we in this House would be responsible for causing a great inequity to the next generation.

It is not right, Speaker, for any government to leave its problems or its debts for future generations. What is right is for us to deal with them today, and I am proud to be part of a government that is doing so.

0940

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

Mr. David Piccini: It's a real pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 87. I'd just like to thank everyone for their remarks on this today, and I'd like to thank my lovely colleague in front of me for her very poignant remarks.

I am proud to be part of a government that acts. I'm proud to be part of a government that has adopted a slogan, "Promise made, promise kept," and that lives by that slogan. In fact—

Interjections.

Mr. David Piccini: Oh, wait till you hear the clapping after this one.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, of the 59 campaign promises this party made, do you know how many promises we've kept? It's 38 of 59. We've got 12 more under way. And we're just getting going.

That brings me to what we're doing today. As I gaze in front of me, I see the minister tasked with fixing this

mess—Minister Rickford—the Fair Hydro Plan. There was nothing fair about it.

Again, to talk about promises made, promises kept:

We promised to get rid of the \$6-million man, that ridiculous executive compensation—promise made, promise kept.

We promised to deal with the heinous Green Energy Act, which bypassed the municipal planning process in small municipalities like in my riding, which put solar and wind energy projects we didn't need on prime agricultural land—promise made, promise kept.

We talked about restoring trust and accountability in the billing process. I can't tell you the number of homes I visited on backcountry roads—2nd Line, 3rd Line near Bailieboro—where the families would bring out their hydro bills and show them to me, and it was like we were learning Mandarin together. These bills made no sense. We promised to restore trust and accountability in the billing process—promise made, promise kept on that, saving the taxpayers \$442 million. That's real leadership from this minister, from this government.

I'd like to talk a bit about the past number of months. One of the things that compelled me to run, when we talk about protecting what matters most—what matters most to me, growing up in rural Ontario: our agriculture community; walking down the street, looking at someone in the face and saying good morning; the remarkable community I live in in rural Ontario; everything that I hold dear. When I would take my dog, Max, who is a campaign staple in my office and out in my riding—people know him more than they know me in the riding office—going to where Max grew up with his breeder, and where we would take him to drop him off so they'd look after him on weekends, and talking to Betty, who looks after him, and Betty looking me in the face and saying, "David, I'm sorry, but you can't bring Max here anymore. I'm moving." When I talk about my "why" and why I'm running—looking Betty in the face and having too many seniors, too many locals in my community leaving our community because they can't afford to live in their community any longer, and that's not right. And what did she cite? You can talk about all the pundits and all the experts you want, but at the end of the day, the experts are the people. When I go into their homes and they're telling me why they're leaving, and it's because of the unaffordability of their hydro, or it's because they're looking to rely on a health care system that's broken in this province—another issue we're dealing with—it breaks your heart. That's why I was compelled to act. I was compelled to run. We were compelled to clean up this hydro mess.

If we think of one singular issue that defined a legacy of gross neglect, a legacy of cover-ups, a legacy of pulling the wool over the eyes of the voters of Ontarians, I look to this mess of a hydro file.

If I could just elaborate a bit more on the Green Energy Act—something that defines the hydro file in our community. We're a government that's working with our rural municipalities. Our minister came into my riding. We did a number of round tables. We talked about affordable

housing; we talked about listening to our municipalities. In fact, we just invested \$7 million in my community of Northumberland–Peterborough South to talk about modernization.

Why I want to talk about modernization and how that links to hydro is because we're making a more competitive province. We're letting the experts on the ground lead: our municipalities, from the ground up. We promised to be a government that listens to the people. What did the Green Energy Act do? They bypassed the municipal planning process. They bypassed our municipalities. Our local farmers that give up their evenings, their weekends, to sit on town council were ignored: "What do they know? What does rural Ontario know?" Well, Mr. Speaker, that is why the minivans that I so often see in my community—that is why the Liberals have been reduced to a minivan party, because of a complete neglect and disregard for rural Ontarians, for the municipal planning process, a complete disregard for hydro bills. I know it's not much for their friends in downtown Toronto in their skyscrapers, but for rural Ontarians, for farmers, for granaries, it matters. Every dollar matters.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that has taken decisive action on this file, with a minister that has been honest with Ontarians. There's nothing easy about cleaning up the mess that the previous Liberals left behind, but this is a minister that's being transparent, a government that's being transparent in our process and in our approach, and that's being open and honest with Ontarians about tackling this. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because we promised to be a government that would be open for business and open for jobs.

When I look at one of the most fundamental things limiting, inhibiting, that ability to be competitive in this province, it's electricity prices. When we went around and we talked to businesses, when I held business round tables in my community, what did they say? I met too many high-tech firms—in fact, in my previous job years ago at foreign affairs, we worked on foreign direct investment. We dealt with major car manufacturers out of Germany that were looking to invest. Do you know why they didn't choose Ontario? It's simple: hydro. That's what we heard. That's what we heard. It was so pervasive that countries around the world from Europe to Asia knew about it. They didn't want to invest in Ontario.

So when we talk about restoring trust and accountability, about making this province open for jobs, this is one of the things we need to deal with, the Green Energy Act, and we did. This is one of the things we need to deal with, our hydro plan, and we are dealing with it, making this province more competitive. Why is that so important? We've got a great government doing a lot of great things, and I encourage everyone to stay tuned for a fantastic announcement this morning.

As we look at making this province more competitive and attracting business investment, the key to that is fair and decent hydro prices. So when I talk to high-tech companies looking to invest, we've got Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre taking our agricultural goods, adding

value—our second- and third-generation farming families looking to add value to their agricultural products. What do they all need to do that? They need competitive hydro prices. Too many were looking outside of Ontario. I had granaries coming to me, saying that it costs a fraction of the price to operate a granary on the other side of the border just in Quebec. Now, that's not fair. That's why we needed to take decisive action on this, because we know as a government there is more to this province than just the cities. We've got a vibrant rural community. We've got municipalities, AMO, that were neglected for years under the previous government. We're listening to them. We're working with them. We're working with them to expand broadband. We're working with them on lower hydro prices. We're working with them to make a more competitive agricultural sector, the backbone of my community. Seventy-five per cent of many of my municipalities are agriculture-based. The number one employer in my community: ag. The number one thing killing that industry after that previous government: hydro.

Again, I'm proud to be part of a government that has taken our 59 promises we made during the campaign and acted swiftly on 38 of them, and another 12 more on the way. Look at what we've done. We're not even a year into our mandate, and already we have tackled so much of the neglect. We've restored trust to so much of the haziness that clouded that previous government, the billing process on hydro. We've acted, because at the end of the day, when we make Ontario open for business, when we make this province open for jobs, we give people the dignity of a job, of a meaningful day's work. We employ people in my community, getting them to work. We empower our next generation.

0950

We've got some of the brightest minds in rural Ontario on the farms—our sons, our daughters, who are going to university. In fact, I was just meeting with Guelph the other day—number four in the world and number one in Canada in terms of agriculture.

Applause.

Mr. David Piccini: Yes, that deserves a clap.

Mr. Speaker, they said to me that, as they empower and broaden the minds of our next generation, including a number of rural Ontarians in my community, we needed to be more competitive on the hydro file, that we needed to look at making responsible investments on this file.

Looking at renewables: I toured with my colleague here the centre for green energy at Ryerson, and we looked at renewables and investing. Again, this stems back to the core issue that Ontarians felt. That's the previous government, that felt the answer was to gouge them and then hide it on their hydro bills, that felt that the answer to our environment was to tax the bejesus out of them. That's not what we feel is right in this government.

We've looked at making responsible investments. We know that the core to this, to tackling this, the core to tackling climate change, is through responsible investments in renewables. That's what we're doing. That's going to work hand in hand with this hydro mess that we've cleaned up.

Mr. Speaker, again, if I could draw it back to the core thing: There was nothing more unjust, as I went door to door, from farm to farm, than this hydro mess, than the nastiness of hiding embedded fees on bills, and the pain and the torment and the real issues that that caused people in my community. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that we received more votes in my riding than any predecessor in provincial history, that we received more votes, again, on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, because people wanted change. They wanted a change in the government. They wanted us to restore trust and accountability. They wanted us to deal with that unfair hydro plan. We did it. They wanted us to deal with executive compensation. We did it. They wanted us to repeal the Green Energy Act for energy we didn't need, that bypassed the municipal planning process, and we did it.

This is a government that is staying true to our word, that is going above the pundits and the folks in ivory towers. It's going straight to the people. We're listening to their concerns, and we're acting on it. I couldn't be prouder to stand shoulder to shoulder with members on this and that side of the House to address this.

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

Mr. Rickford has moved an amendment to government notice of motion number 35 relating to the allocation of time on Bill 87, An Act to amend various statutes related to energy: "That each witness will receive up to six minutes for their presentation followed by 14 minutes for questions from committee members, with two minutes allotted to the independent member of the committee for questioning and 12 minutes divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning; and".

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

Are the members ready to vote on the main motion, as amended?

On April 9, 2019, Mr. Clark moved government notice of motion number 35, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 87.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Steve Clark: No further business, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No further business. This House now stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 0955 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I would like to welcome my constituent Stephen Massaro to the House this

morning. Stephen is here with the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to welcome one of the greatest Italian soccer players in history. He played 326 games for Juventus, scoring 129 goals, 42 times for the Azzurri and 48 for the Toronto Blizzard. I would like to welcome Roberto Bettega here today.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Today, I would like to welcome my friend and a wonderful community organizer, Heather Douglas, who has come to shadow me and learn about my new life at Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Will Bouma: It's my pleasure to welcome to our House today Meagan Gordon representing the RPNAO.

Mr. Michael Gravelle: I would like to welcome two guests from my Thunder Bay–Superior North riding. First is Dr. George Macey, a long-time friend and the president of my riding association, and Kevin Thomas, my constituency assistant, who's down for a couple of days. Welcome, George and Kevin.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I would like to welcome David Meekis from Deer Lake to the House, and also Athena and Anne from my office, and the Anishinabek Nation leadership. As a First Nations person, welcome to our House.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I would like to welcome the leadership council of the Anishinabek Nation, representing 40 Anishinabek First Nations. Please welcome Grand Council Chief Glen Hare; Deputy Grand Council Chief for the Northern Superior Region Ed Wawia; Deputy Grand Council Chief for the Southwest Region Joe Miskokomon; Deputy Grand Council Chief for the Southeast Region James Marsden; Chief Scott McLeod, Lake Huron Region; and Ogimaa Duke Peltier, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory. Welcome to this magnificent place.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I would like to welcome a resident from St. Catharines, Evelyn Belchior. Evelyn is here today wearing one of her many hats and representing the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario. Welcome, Evelyn.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to introduce Massimo De Menech from the board of directors of Ciociaro Club, Windsor. Benvenuto to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have two introductions today. I have a friend from Windsor visiting today, Jerry Udell, who is in town for some executive business at the Law Society of Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park, Jerry. And I would like to welcome Linda Keirl to the House today. Linda is a registered practical nurse from my riding. Welcome, Linda.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to welcome all the members of RPNAO here today: Tiff Blair, who is the director of policy and communications; board member Samantha Salatino; and Dickon Worsley, who I met with today. Please welcome them.

Mr. Vincent Ke: It is my honour to introduce my guests from the Fuzhou University Alumni Association of Canada. They are my friends, my alumni, and they were also my volunteers during last year's election campaign. Their names are: Chen Hong, Guo Yun, Jiang Caide, Wang Jiangbin, Chen Jianbin, Zhuo Honghui, Wang Jun,

Shi Panqin, Wei Qingming, Yao Li, Chen Jingjing, He Lixian, Chen Jingliang, Jiang Yong and Ma Lin.

Welcome to Queen's Park, and I hope you enjoy your visit.

Mr. Joel Harden: We have the great privilege to be hosting many people from the disability rights movement today. I'm just going to name a few, but I thank all of them for coming. You have a flyer on your tables, colleagues, about an event later today.

I want to mention the great David Lepofsky from the AODA Alliance. I want to mention Sarah Jama from the Disability Justice Network of Ontario. I want to mention Thea Kurdi and also Justin Scrimgeour and Paula Walker from my own family, from the great city of Alliston, Ontario. Thank you all for coming to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to welcome some of the members of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association to Queen's Park. Visiting today, we have Bill George Jr., Mike Chromczak, Alison Robertson and Gordon Stock.

They'd also like to invite everyone in the Legislature to their reception at 5 p.m. in room 230 to get to talk to them all.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I have two introductions this morning. First, I'd like to welcome Dr. Sean Kidd and his daughter Olivia, who are here for a Queen's Park experience and lunch with me. I'd also like to welcome Stephanie Horner from the RPNAO. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. David Piccini: It gives me great pleasure to welcome a number of constituents to Queen's Park today. I'd like to welcome Adam Bureau, a councillor in Cobourg, who is visiting us today. He's joined by Paul Harding, another constituent from Cobourg; as well, a former councillor we miss every day in Clarington region, Willie Woo, who's up there. Willie, welcome to Queen's Park. It's great to have you here.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As I look over, I'm pleased to welcome my friend Kristen Ellison, who may not be from my riding—she's from Northumberland—Peterborough South—but she is known to us at Queen's Park for being a great advocate for children with autism. Thank you. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I'd like to welcome to the House Dr. Saeed Faizi, the president of the Al-Nadwa centre in Richmond Hill. And all the way from India is a guest, the head of Darul-Uloom Ashrafia, Moulana Muhammad Usama; and Mr. Hafiz Mohammed Shamsad, imam at the Al-Nadwa centre in Richmond Hill. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome Angela Corneil and Stephen and Dianne Martin from the Registered Practical Nurses Association.

I would also like to welcome Jeff Cornett, Amanda Sussman, Nicholas Esterbauer and Shawn Chirrey, who are from the Canadian Cancer Society. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to welcome Gina Vivian, who's from the riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore. She's here with the RPNAO. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to welcome members of the Mississauga Italian Canadian Benevolent Association from my riding of Mississauga—Malton. Benvenuti a Queen's Park.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: On behalf of my seatmate, the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore—we were all so excited to welcome his first guest—I'd like to welcome his two other guests, Lucky Raso and Nicola Tarantino. Thank you for being here today.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm very pleased to welcome Sarah and Ryan Duncan from my riding of Flamborough—Glanbrook. Sarah and Ryan are the parents of Stella, who is doing a fantastic job serving as one of our pages here in the Legislature.

1040

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm pleased to introduce Craig Swatuk from my riding of Oakville, who is here today with fellow representatives from the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario. Welcome, Craig, to Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm delighted to welcome Dianne Martin to the Legislature today. She's not only a constituent of Barrie—Innisfil, but she's also the CEO of the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'd like to welcome Debora Cowie, my constituent, who is here with the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: This morning I'd like to welcome Barbara Hope, grandmother of page Greyson Hope, and Greyson's mother, Chelsea. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I'd like to welcome my good friend Dr. Michael Surkont, who is a pain physician and a big fan of Minister Elliott. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ross Romano: I would also like to welcome all of the leadership from the Anishinabek Nation.

I would also like to remind everyone of the Anishinabek Nation and Union of Ontario Indians reception this evening, which is happening in room 228 from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. I look forward to seeing you all there.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnett): That concludes the time we have available today to introduce our guests. I want to welcome anyone who wasn't introduced specifically to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Minister of Education. Does the Ford government think that 46 students is too many for a high school classroom?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Well, Speaker, let's talk about realities. The fact is, on March 25 the CBC did a fact check and, even with our announcement, they concurred that Ontario, once we take a look at our class sizes—and I'll remind everybody today, from K to grade 3, we're not changing any size. There's no change in K to grade 3. From grades 4 to 8, there could be as many as one more

student added to the class. In high school, with our more mature senior students, we're taking a look at increasing the average class size to 28. The CBC fact check confirmed on March 25 that even with the changes we announced that we're looking at in our plan, we're still one of the lowest class sizes across Canada.

The Leader of the Opposition should be well advised to stop fearmongering, because the fact of the matter is, she's starting to lose credibility with the average parent out there who is tired of all the rhetoric that is coming from the opposition party.

You know what? We're getting it right, Speaker—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. I will remind the members that when the Speaker stands up, your microphone goes dead and you need to conclude your response.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Halton District School Board wrote to the minister yesterday. The Halton District School Board warns that to make the government's new class-size policy work, some classes will swell to as much as 46 kids in the classroom. They warn, "This situation will inevitably lead to eliminating course offerings with low enrolment, even though those courses may be the top choice for some students."

Can the minister tell us how many boards have sent her similar warnings?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I can tell you this: We are never, ever going to play political games when it comes to the success of our students in the classroom.

When it comes to school boards across the province, we want to work with our education partners. As I've said time and again in this House, I introduced our education plan, Education That Works for You, on March 15, and in association with that announcement, we're inviting our education partners to work with us in good faith, come to the table and talk about how we get the education system in Ontario back on track after 15 years of failed experiments and ideology under the Liberal administration.

Again, I'd like to remind everyone: I invite our education partners to work with us. Come to the table in good faith. I'm looking forward to your submissions, until May 31.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, bad education policy is bad education policy no matter how this minister tries to fancy it up. School boards, teachers, students and parents are all warning the Ford government that their classroom cuts are cheating the next generation of young people in our province.

It's not just the Halton board, Speaker. The Durham board wrote to the minister warning that "course options [will] diminish drastically, especially in the area of the arts, trades and specialty subjects."

The evidence is clear: The Ford government's plan means fewer course options, larger classes, and thousands of fired teachers and education workers.

Will the minister tell us what other warnings she has received from experts in the field?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: What's very, very clear, Speaker, is that the opposition party is getting very tired and they're just pulling out old talking points. The fact of the matter is, our education plan, Education that Works for You, is getting well-received remarks in the sense that our math strategy, phasing in a new math curriculum over four years, is getting incredibly well received. Our focus on mental health, the first time ever in Ontario, physical and health education, is going to be incredibly well done and well placed and well-timed, if I might add.

My friend to the left of me mentioned that it seems like, today, NDP stands for "Nothing but Doom Party." That's what we're hearing. Nothing but doom and gloom is coming from the opposition when we should be celebrating that, after 15 years of mismanagement and failed experiments and ideology, we're actually finally putting our students first.

We're focused on student success, we're focused on getting the curriculum back on track, and I'm very proud of that.

EDUCATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Minister of Education. One of the measures from the Ford government that's most concerning to students is their decision to make online learning mandatory for high school students.

Until a month ago, the Ontario eLearning Consortium warned on their website that "e-learning may not be for everyone," a warning that mysteriously disappeared shortly after the minister made her announcement.

If e-learning may not work for every student, why is the minister forcing every student into it?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Well, apparently, based on this question, NDP now stands for "No Digital Party."

The fact of the matter is, this party is absolutely going back in years. I can't believe they're not embracing technology for good. It is absolutely mind-boggling that they do not want to see students in Ontario embracing technology and all the good that it represents.

What we're talking about in our rollout of online classes is that by the time an Ontario student graduates from high school they will need to have taken four online courses. This is something that absolutely is a fit in today's world, based on the realities of jobs—not only today, but into tomorrow as well.

For goodness' sake, there are colleges, there are universities that have the bulk of courses online, and we're just following suit and making sure that our students in Ontario have the—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Notwithstanding the minister's silly name-calling, the vanishing warning is just one issue—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The government side will come to order. Minister of Government and Consumer Services, come to order. Government House leader, come to order.

Restart the clock. I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The vanishing warning is just one issue that's being raised by an academic who has just completed the very first study of online learning in Toronto schools. She concludes, "If the government heads in this direction, students will suffer."

She warns that the government has not invested sufficiently in building capacity and research, and that this e-learning is more about saving money than helping students to succeed.

Does the minister have any evidence that counters the findings in this study?

1050

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Well, absolutely, I do. Just recently, the Harvard Business Review actually touted the merits of online courses. Seriously, we could go study to study all day if you like, Leader of the Opposition. I'll meet that challenge. I'll go study to study.

The fact of the matter is, our students need to be learning the skills they require for the jobs of today and tomorrow. When post-secondary education is embracing online courses, for goodness' sake, the least we can do is make sure our high school students, when they graduate, are prepared for that reality.

Speaker, we are doing an amazing job of getting education back on track. Once and for all, I think the opposition party needs to embrace the fact that we are getting good reviews on our education plan and we're moving forward in a very thoughtful manner that is a result of listening and consulting and, most of all, generating results that will give parents confidence that their kids and their learning environment—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When school boards and parents and young people and educators are all panning their education changes, I think that this minister has a very distorted view of what people think of their education plan.

Here's what students and parents do see: a government that's firing teachers; eliminating courses; cramming students into even larger classrooms; and forcing every single student, regardless of if they can learn very well in that method, into online learning, despite the overwhelming expert evidence that online learning does not work for every student.

This isn't about building resiliency. It's about cuts to the classroom—cuts to the classroom that this party made the last time they were in government, which damaged kids and their education then, and they're about to do it again to our young people. Students will pay the price.

Will the minister back away from these reckless cuts?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Niagara West will come to order. The member for Flam- borough—Glanbrook must come to order.

The minister to reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I think in that last question we finally have hit the nail on the head as to what the real reason is for the angle that the opposition party is taking, and that is because they're doing the unions' bidding and creating fearmongering and absolutely spinning things.

The fact of the matter is, when I'm out and about—when I was out at an education event last week, I had retired principals coming up and hugging me and saying, "Finally, somebody is getting it straight and standing up for our classrooms in Ontario."

I'm telling you, parents are celebrating that we're going to get back to the basics and focus on the fundamentals.

Do you know what? Our business world, our employers, are absolutely celebrating the fact that we're going to focus in on the jobs of today and tomorrow. Skilled trades are a wonderful career. A plethora of careers are enveloped into skilled trades. I can't wait for students to be learning the skills and the—

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Next question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Minister of Health.

For many people living with chronic pain, news that the government is set to make drastic cuts to OHIP-covered pain management treatment is very concerning. It will mean that their conditions could worsen, their symptoms could go untreated, they could lose out on opportunities for their careers and may be forced to stop working altogether because they cannot deal with their pain.

People in Ontario living with chronic pain deserve to know now what crucial medications are being taken away from them by this government. Will the minister confirm which pain management treatments are going to be cut?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the leader of the official opposition for the question, because there was some erroneous information that was printed in a news article, which was based on some discussions that were held in the associated working group between the Ontario Medical Association and the Ministry of Health. There were some suggestions there that have not happened. In fact, that particular issue with respect to pain medications is not on the table. I have not even seen this list myself. This is not something that has been approved by the ministry.

What we are going to do is make decisions based on evidence. Discussions are still concluding, but there is no decision that has been made with respect to those pain medications. We know that people with chronic pain depend on these medications and nerve blocks, and so we will be continuing with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, sadly, Ontarians have seen what happens when this minister doesn't see reports or bills, or when this minister claims that something is not on the table we end up finding out that, in fact, it has been on the table all along.

One of the cuts to pain medication that the government is proposing is to peripheral nerve blocking shots, which are to be reduced to only 16 allowable shots a year, less than a week's worth of medicine for some people. For Ontario patients, these medications are an effective alternative to opioids, Speaker. But if they're forced to go without, there is growing concern from doctors that patients will seek out prescriptions to opioids or, even worse, try to find those opioids on the streets.

Will the minister consider the needs of Ontarians living with chronic pain before she approves any cuts?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, of course patients' needs and priorities are utmost in our minds and that's what we make our decisions based upon. But what I would say, through you, Speaker, to the leader of the official opposition, is I always see documents before decisions are made. In the situation that I believe you're referring to, that was material that was taken from the ministry and provided to you directly, before I had the opportunity to see it, because it was something that wasn't even up for discussion.

In answer to your specific question, of course we are going to keep patients' needs and priorities and we are going to make decisions based on evidence. If patients need the medication and need that for pain, for nerves or whatever else they have, they will be receiving it. We will make decisions that are in the best interests of patients, based on our discussions with them and on the experts who understand exactly what the evidence suggests is best.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question is for the Honourable Minister of Education. I know the minister has announced a number of initiatives to help protect our students and put Ontario back on track when it comes to education. It was obvious that the last government was not only failing our students when it came to basic life skills like math, but that they also had no respect for our parents. When I spoke to parents in my community of Oakville North-Burlington, they told me that they felt their voices weren't heard.

Speaker, can the Minister of Education tell us what our government is doing to protect our students and ensure our parents are being heard again?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I absolutely admire our member from Oakville North-Burlington. She does such a stand-up job and I'm so pleased that we're building a school in your riding. I look forward to that opening day.

Mr. Speaker, back to the question. Over the last few months, we have taken a number of steps to protect our students and ensure parents are being respected. Our government has been very clear. The last Liberal administration thumbed their nose at parents. They absolutely

ignored them, and we are making steps that are very clear-footed. We are consulting and listening, most importantly, to modernize and improve Ontario's education system.

Through our consultations, specifically, we conducted just enormous opportunities for parents to be heard, and we heard a range of opinions. But there was a common thread, Speaker. One thing was always clear: The last government, as I said, never listened to parents. I'm so proud to stand with all my colleagues today, wearing pink to stand up against bullying, and recognize that there's something—

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Through you, Speaker, thank you to the minister for that response. It's refreshing to hear a government that is listening to the people and respecting parents. I know the minister listens because, as she said, she listened to the parents in my growing community when they told her they desperately needed a new school in northeast Oakville. I know that many parents were excited to hear about our modern, comprehensive approach focused on student success and achievement.

But parents also told me that they are concerned about a number of other items that were simply not covered in the previous curriculum. Could the minister tell us more about what she has introduced in this new curriculum?

1100

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Today, students need to know how to respect one another and how to use technology safely, and they need to know what healthy relationships look like. We heard that loud and clear through our consultation.

That is why I'm so proud to stand here today, Speaker, and share with you that, by next September, we'll have a modern, age-appropriate health and physical education curriculum that will reflect the desires of parents, reflect the needs of students and will be supported by teachers across Ontario.

Again, our age-appropriate curriculum will have a focus on student safety, but we're covering a wide array of topics. Starting in grade 1, students will hear about important concepts like mental health, online safety and concussions. By grade 6, our students will be taught about more complex topics, like substance abuse and addictions.

Speaker, I can tell you, we heard from over 72,000 Ontarians, and we've listened. By next year, any parent who feels they need extra resources at home to teach these subjects will have access—

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

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. One of the first acts by this government was to cut \$330 million in funding for mental health and addictions, all the while children and youth needing life-saving mental and addictions care are on wait-lists for years and more than—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The government side has to come to order so I can hear the member who legitimately has the floor ask a question on behalf of her constituents.

I apologize to the member for Parkdale–High Park. Start the clock.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:—and more than three people die every day of an overdose.

Speaker, the people of Ontario deserve better. Will the minister commit to restoring the \$330 million cut to mental health and addictions?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Through you, Speaker, I need to correct an inaccuracy. In fact, our government is increasing support for mental health and addictions by \$3.8 billion over 10 years: \$1.9 billion from the provincial government matched by \$1.9 billion from the federal government. We are using those funds to create a connected, comprehensive mental health and addictions plan for the province of Ontario.

I hope to obtain views from all members of the Legislature—from the government side, from the official opposition side and from the independent parties—because this is an issue that is very important for all Ontarians. It is not a partisan issue, and we all need to get this right. I look forward to having further discussions with you and any other members of your caucus who are interested in providing opinions.

On the side of the addictions piece, this is something that is very important to us. We are actively involved in opening new centres and receiving applications; 15 have been approved, and we have six more to go. We are listening to areas where there is significant need. We want to make—

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Back to the minister: We've heard the minister say it time and time again, but we have not seen the money flow and there has been no concrete action. The only action we've seen so far is the \$330-million cut and the defunding of six overdose prevention sites.

The mental health and addiction crisis that we are facing needs immediate action, not empty words. I ask again: Will the minister commit to restoring the \$330 million cut from mental health and addictions funding?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Again I repeat: We are increasing funding for mental health and addictions services. And that is happening; there has been money already spent from money that was available from last year into housing, into increasing supports for mental health and addictions agencies. That money is flowing.

But what we want to make sure as we go forward is that we need to have a connected and comprehensive system. We don't have that infrastructure right now in mental health and addictions. I'm sure that everyone in the Legislature and all the people in Ontario who are watching today want to make sure that they are the good investments that are actually going to help people.

We are actively working on that plan now. We will be in contact with you very shortly to obtain your views, because we want to make sure that we get this right. It's a lot of money to spend, but it has to be spent wisely to make sure that we help people with mental health and addictions needs.

ENERGY REGULATION

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. The previous government's culture of waste and inefficiency cost the people of Ontario their precious taxpayer dollars. We inherited an electricity system that was not working for the people of Ontario. Our government was elected to bring much-needed change to the electricity system after 15 years of mismanagement.

With Bill 87, we are delivering on our promise to improve the electricity system. This includes the modernization of the Ontario Energy Board, or OEB. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell the members of this House why it is so important to modernize the OEB?

Hon. Greg Rickford: When I first tried this as Canada's Minister of Natural Resources, it was clear that stakeholders wanted change; they wanted modernization. Here in Ontario, they need it. I've never seen a group of stakeholders clamour in desperation for fundamental changes, stemming from the governance structure and undue delays. OEB had come to stand for the Ontario energy bureaucracy, as projects mounted with significant amounts of paper requirements for fairly routine regulations—delays on key projects in regions of Ontario that were desperate for projects to move ahead. I'm thinking, of course, of the east-west tie—a trained workforce, more than 275 Indigenous workers, ready to go on the east-west tie, and communities' energy infrastructure at stake. We broke through for them.

Moving forward, the Ontario Energy Board is going to be modernized and work for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you to the minister for that clear and concise answer. I am certain that our government will ensure that the OEB becomes a competent regulator once again.

It's essential that we can rely on the energy regulator as we continue expanding our electricity system with exciting energy projects. As Ontario becomes open for business, we will have new energy demands, and we need the OEB to be ready to respond. A more efficient OEB will provide an incentive for new businesses to invest in Ontario. They can be sure that our government is ready to meet the energy needs of the new employers.

Can the minister please tell us more about how our OEB modernization will make Ontario open for business?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I mentioned those stakeholders. The Electricity Distributors Association said, "With Bill 87, the Electricity Distributors Association is pleased that this government has decided to listen to industry and stakeholders about regulatory reform and cutting the red tape in Ontario's energy industry."

Susannah Robinson, vice-president of EPCOR, said, “EPCOR ... is enthused about investing hundreds of millions of dollars here for years to come.... We applaud the minister’s efforts”—oh, that’s nice—“to improve the board’s functions and governance and we look forward to experiencing these changes first-hand as we expand our business footprint in Ontario.”

Mr. Speaker, modernizing the OEB puts Ontario in a better position to be open for business and that’s precisely—

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

INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: This question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. This week, the minister spoke about the government’s commitment to making the north open for business and said that the ministry was properly engaging all stakeholders on the Far North Act.

Proper engagement on such an important act should not be rushed, and it involves more than two hearings in northern Ontario. By rushing hearings and making communities travel to give evidence, many community voices will be missed.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister make a commitment today to proactively and fully engage with First Nations on what happens in the Far North? Meegwetch.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for that question. Something that we are absolutely committed to doing is engagement with our Indigenous peoples and First Nations. My colleague the Minister of Indigenous Affairs is looking after that side of it. He will lead those engagement sessions with our Indigenous peoples.

I want to point out very clearly, Speaker, that when the Far North Act was brought in by the previous government, there was no engagement with Indigenous peoples. They did not want it. We heard from all across the Far North, with Indigenous peoples and with every other citizen across the Far North, businesses and otherwise, that they did not want the Far North Act.

We are now committed to improving the situation, bringing jobs and development back to the Far North, giving them an opportunity to enjoy the prosperity that other people in Ontario depend on. I’m going to be working with my colleague the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development and Mines to fully engage First Nations to ensure that they have the opportunities that they deserve as well.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: First Nations and the Far North want to benefit from the resources in their treaty lands, but many First Nations are concerned the minister is undermining the duty to consult when he refers to cutting red tape. First Nations are not red tape. Supporting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

gives the government the path to resource development they need.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I’m here to tell the government that the Far North is not open for business without involvement in development in our territories. Will the minister commit to respecting our treaty rights through meaningful consultation and involvement with communities affected by the Far North Act?

Interjections.

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

Hon. John Yakabuski: To the Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I appreciate the honourable member’s question. In fact, I had an opportunity to discuss this matter with Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler yesterday.

Look, Mr. Speaker, we’re focused on an act here that was never consulted on in the first place for those communities. I haven’t met a First Nations leader in my extensive time living and working up there who liked anything about this act, Mr. Speaker. Designations of parks status on some of their traditional lands and including some of their reservation lands—this is completely unacceptable. It has put a stop to good business opportunities in northern Ontario.

Of course First Nations communities ought to have, as my learned colleague said, every opportunity to develop the resources, participate in the economic activity and see an improvement in the overall economic conditions and prospects in their communities moving forward. That’s exactly what we intend to deliver.

GOVERNMENT’S AGENDA

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Since the Ford government came to power, we’ve seen devastating cuts for workers, families and children in Ontario. Premier Ford and his hatchet team have cut jobs and slashed public services that people depend on.

This made me wonder: Is Doug Ford the anti-Marie Kondo? Because if it sparks joy, Doug Ford cuts it. Joy that students feel in classrooms with engaged teachers—Premier Ford fires 3,500 teachers. Joy that parents of autistic children felt knowing that their child is getting the treatment that they need, when Doug Ford made dramatic changes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’ll remind all members: We refer to each other by our riding names or our ministerial responsibility.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member for Mississauga East–Cooksville will come to order. The member for Northumberland–Peterborough South will come to order. The member for Niagara West will come to order. We’re going to allow the member for Scarborough–Guildwood to ask her question in a manner that I can hear her.

Please restart the clock. The member for Scarborough–Guildwood has the floor.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: The Ford government made dramatic cuts to autism services, sending families into panic and turmoil. Joy that low-income students—

Hon. John Yakabuski: How can you say that? Wow. Wow—oh, sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry will come to order. Did anybody over there hear what I just said?

Interjection: I did.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Some of you did. I appreciate it.

Once again, the member for Scarborough–Guildwood has the floor.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Tomorrow's budget will be more of the same, with attempts to distract from cuts with beer at sporting games—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Pick a lane, lady. Oh, my God.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock again. The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services will come to order.

Restart the clock. Again I apologize to the member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question to the Deputy Premier, through you, Speaker: What will the anti-Marie Kondo Premier cut next?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: To the member opposite: She takes the most circuitous route to actually ask a question in this House so that we don't know what she's asking. At the end of the day, I can tell you with great certainty, though, that this government, led by Premier Ford, will be bringing subways to Scarborough and it will be a direct route that everybody can take, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Bill Walker: And we won't be cutting schools there.

Hon. Todd Smith: After 15 long years of inaction from the Liberal government, of which the member opposite was a part of, a government that cut 600 schools across Ontario under her watch, we will be making investments in Ontario, whether it's with transit, education, health care. We're going to get Ontario moving back on the right track, and today's announcement announcing subways to Scarborough is step number 1 in doing just that.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: We welcome the subway actually being built in Scarborough.

Marie Kondo has inspired a decluttering movement telling people to get rid of anything that doesn't spark joy. The anti-Marie Kondo Premier has done the opposite. If it sparks joy, he cuts it, like the joy that communities felt knowing that energy conservation programs—now cancelled—were making the air cleaner to breathe for children. The joy that the basic income pilot gave to families as they planned for a brighter future is now taken away under this government. The renewed joy in the supports

found in the wake of violence or abuse, with the cut to the rape crisis centres—that joy taken away.

Even the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the FAO is warning finance minister Vic Fedeli about reckless cuts, reminding him that Ontario already has relatively—

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

The question has been referred to the government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you, it's with great joy that I get to stand in my place here again today, and it was with great joy this morning that the Premier and our Minister of Transportation and a number of members of our GTA caucus stood there and talked about the investments that our government is going to be making for the people of Scarborough, for the people of north Toronto, for the people of downtown Toronto, for the people of the GTHA—and that's on top of the investments that we announced earlier this month and last month when it comes to transit right across Ontario.

All of our communities are going to benefit from the work that our Premier and our Minister of Transportation are doing to make Ontario move again. That's not just getting people from here to there; that's ensuring that we're allowing our economy to move again, an economy that has been stuck in gridlock—over 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs under that member's government. We're going to get the economy moving again. We're going to get people moving again. We're going to get Ontario moving again, making sure that it's in its rightful place as our leader in Confederation when it comes to the economy.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. Toby Barrett: My question is for the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, our government is committed to delivering on our promise to end hallway health care. I've heard time and time again from my constituents across Haldimand–Norfolk that building a public health care system centred around patients is very important for them. That's why I'm quite heartened our government has introduced The People's Health Care Act so that patients and families will have access to faster, better and more connected services.

1120

Would the minister please inform the members of this Legislature why our proposed changes are so desperately needed for our health care system?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for the great question. I can tell you that I have heard from thousands of Ontarians on this issue, including patients, families and caregivers, and from these countless hours of conversation, I've heard the same refrain: Our health care system is broken.

The health care system is facing capacity pressures, but it does not have the right mix of services, beds or digital tools to be ready for a growing and rapidly aging population with increasingly complex health care needs. That is

why we are building a public health care system centred around the patient and redirecting money to front-line services where it belongs, to improve the patient experience and to provide better and more connected care.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I thank the minister for that response. As the minister has just indicated, there's no doubt our health care system needs immediate attention.

It's no secret the former Liberal government left us with a health care system on life support. I, along with my colleagues in this Legislature, have been hearing dozens and dozens of unfortunate stories from people on the state of our health care system in the province. My constituents, and as you've indicated, Minister, so many people in Ontario, would certainly benefit from a patient-centred health care system.

My question, Speaker: Could the minister please inform this House how The People's Health Care Act, if passed, will address the pressures facing our health care system? And secondly, how will this act improve patient care?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you again to the member. Our government is making the necessary changes to build a modern, sustainable system that will improve access to care and emphasize a patient-centred approach.

If we expect real improvements that patients will experience first-hand, we must better coordinate the public health care system so it is organized around people's needs and outcomes. This will enable local teams of health care providers to know and understand each patient's needs, and provide the appropriate, high-quality, connected care that Ontarians deserve and expect.

By relentlessly focusing on the patient experience and on better connected care, we will reduce wait times and end hallway medicine.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Joel Harden: My question today is for the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. Today, people with disabilities from across Ontario are converging right here at Queen's Park because we're hosting an open forum for them. They are fed up with our province's agonizingly slow progress towards making this province fully accessible and the barriers that are preventing them from living their lives to the fullest.

In his report on the third review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the Honourable David Onley said the following: "For most disabled persons, Ontario is not a place of opportunity but one of countless, dispiriting, soul-crushing barriers."

My question to the minister: Do you accept the findings of the Onley report?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'd like to thank the member for raising that question. First of all, I'd like to thank the Honourable David Onley. He did a marvelous job; I read the report.

I'd like to refer that question to the Liberal Party. They were in government for 15 years and the accessibility is not done even 30%.

By the way, I will drop by your town hall meeting.

Our government is open for business for everybody, even people with disabilities, and I'll try my best as minister.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you to the minister for that answer, but 1.9 million Ontarians with disabilities actually deserve better. This is a human rights issue. Stalling any further and only looking backwards is not an option.

The AODA sets a target for this province to be fully accessible by 2025, but the Onley report says we are nowhere near achieving that goal. Mr. Onley has 15 recommendations—Speaker, to the minister—for improving accessibility through stronger enforcement, new standards for buildings and making sure public money is never used again to create new barriers. Will the minister be releasing a plan of action and response to the Onley report, and if so, Speaker, when can we expect that plan of action?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you again for the question. After the Honourable David Onley completed his review, we tabled the review. I talked to him—three times, I went to see him—and he emphasized getting jobs for people with disabilities is most important. That's why we're going to focus and I'm going to hold my own town hall meeting with the business community. Thank you for the question.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Minister of Health. Last year, Jennifer Wheeler took her son, Nicholas, to CHEO for care. Eleven-year-old Nicholas suffers with Lyme disease. Nicholas also receives treatment for Lyme by a physician in New York because our outdated standards of care are not working. Because Nicholas goes to the US for treatment, the physician at CHEO lodged a complaint with the children's aid society against Jennifer and her family and filed a complaint with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario against their family doctor.

Minister, Ontario's health system often treats people with Lyme in a reprehensible and atrocious manner. Will you meet with Jennifer Wheeler and her team of professionals to discuss a pilot project to reform these outdated attitudes and harmful practices and help people who are suffering with Lyme disease?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. I am sorry about the troubles that Jennifer and Nicholas have gone through, but I want you to know that our ministry does take the issue of Lyme disease very seriously. We are constantly consulting and reviewing areas of risk, including certain geographic risks in the province of Ontario. I would be happy to meet with Jennifer and Nicholas and their team to discuss the situation and to discuss the pilot project they have in mind. We

are looking for solutions and we would be happy to hear from them about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you for that response, Minister. I'm sure Jennifer and her family will appreciate that response. Fortunately, Alex Munter, CEO of CHEO, also stepped up to the plate for the Wheeler family when he heard of the abuses that had happened, and I commend him for his actions as well. Ontario needs significant reforms on how we diagnose and treat Lyme disease. If it was left to our current standards of care, Nicholas would have continued to suffer as he did before receiving care out of country.

Alex Munter did the right thing. You're doing the right thing. I would like to see you also direct the appropriateness group to investigate the state of Lyme disease diagnostics and treatments so that Nicholas and thousands of people with Lyme are not treated as unimportant or, in the case of the Wheeler family, as criminals.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I agree with you that Alex Munter is doing a wonderful job at CHEO, and I'm glad that he was able to provide some assistance to Jennifer and to Nicholas. Certainly it is an issue that can be referred to the appropriateness group to discuss, because there is more work to be done, there's no question, on the issue of Lyme disease in Ontario.

But it's also an issue of public health. I have had some conversations with our public health officials about Lyme disease and what else we need to do. It is an area that is under study, but I think the more eyes we can get on it and more opinions we can hear about it from people who know what the solutions are and have that evidence—we are certainly open to hearing from them, including Jennifer, Nicholas and her group of people as well. Absolutely we want to hear from them. Thank you.

REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Mr. Vincent Ke: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Minister, over the past several months, our government held consultations on modernizing the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act. Real estate is a major part of our province's economy, and ensuring rules are up to date, efficient and effective is key to ensuring our province is open for business and open for jobs.

1130

Speaker, I know that constituents in my riding of Don Valley North are very interested in this review. They want to know they are protected when buying, selling or renting a home.

Could the minister update the Legislature on the input he received from Ontarians about REBBA and the rules and regulations governing the real estate industry?

Hon. Bill Walker: I want to thank my colleague from Don Valley West, Vincent Ke, for his excellent question and the excellent work he does on behalf of his constituents.

My esteemed colleague is correct: Public consultations on the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act closed on March 15. I'm pleased to say that we received over 6,500 responses from industry professionals, former and current realtors, and the people of Ontario.

Sadly, like so many areas of government, the previous Liberal government allowed real estate laws and regulations to stagnate over the last 15 years of their reign. Of course, over that time, the market has changed dramatically.

Our goal in reviewing REBBA, as with everything we do in government, is to ensure the rules and regulations governing businesses and members of the public are clear, modern, fair and efficient. That is exactly what this review is allowing us to do.

Mr. Speaker, we are currently in the process of reviewing those 6,500 submissions, and I will be pleased to update this House on the findings once we've completed that review.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Vincent Ke: I would like to thank the minister for his answer.

I know how important this issue is to so many of my constituents, and I know many of them were shocked to find out that in the ever-changing real estate market—which the previous Liberal government allowed rules and regulations.

I'm very pleased to hear that over 6,500 Ontarians made their voices heard by taking part in the minister's consultations. Could the minister outline what he has heard from Ontarians during these consultations and highlight some of the out-of-date rules the Liberals kept on the books for the previous 15 years?

Hon. Bill Walker: Again, thank you to my colleague from Don Valley North for the great work he's doing.

We're currently reviewing those 6,500 responses we received from industry professionals and Ontarians buying, selling or renting their homes. We heard a wide range of views, and we're taking time to develop the right solutions for the people of Ontario.

Our review is looking at areas such as consumer protection, greater transparency in the offer process and improved disclosures. We're also considering enhanced professionalism, modern regulations and creating a strong business environment.

Mr. Speaker, the real estate sector is a major part of Ontario's economy. I heard loud and clear that Ontario needs rules governing the real estate industry that are modern, fair and effective. We are committed to doing just that, and I will provide this House with an update on our government's plan of action once we've completed those 6,500 reviews for the people of Ontario.

EDUCATION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My question is for the Acting Premier. Last Thursday, 100,000 students in Ontario walked out to protest the proposed deep cuts to our education system by this regressive Conservative government.

In my riding of Humber River–Black Creek, students from C.W. Jefferys, Emery, James Cardinal McGuigan, St. Basil's and Westview came out in the hundreds.

I dropped by the walkout organized by Emery Collegiate Institute students. A senior student approached me and shared his worries about the cuts to post-secondary education. He told me that eliminating OSAP grants and the grace repayment period would influence whether or not many of his friends would have a chance at going to college or university. He wants to know how, exactly, these cuts will help him and his friends get a world-class education.

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Our government was elected with a strong mandate to create good jobs in Ontario. As the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, my focus is on making sure that the people of Ontario are prepared for those jobs. We want everyone in Ontario to have an opportunity to succeed and prosper, and post-secondary education is a critical part of preparing Ontario for the future.

Speaker, as we grow the economy, we need Ontarians who are skilled in sectors across the economy. As minister, I will support programs and efforts that help students to get the skills they need to find employment and to help fill the skills gap. Post-secondary education is a critical—

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This government is doing the exact opposite of what the minister is saying. Thousands of educators and people who care deeply about public education gathered on the front lawn of Queen's Park this past Saturday to protest this government's disastrous plan to balloon classroom sizes and eliminate thousands of teaching jobs within the next four years.

Tell me how removing math teachers from our schools is going to improve math scores in this province.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to stand up and speak to the issue at hand because, again, no teacher is going to lose their job involuntarily. I cannot stress that enough. In fact, we're investing in our teachers. I can't wait for the Minister of Finance to bring our budget forward tomorrow because, again, we are taking very strong steps forward to demonstrate how we're investing in the Ontario education system to make sure that we get it back on track, once and for all, after 15 years of failed ideology and experiments by the former Liberal administration.

It's interesting. We need to make sure that our teachers are confident in the subjects that they're teaching, and specifically with math. We're rolling in a curriculum over four years. We're going to be working with our education partners to make sure we get it right. Most importantly, any teacher who wants to improve themselves and are interested in taking an additional qualifications math

course—we will invest in that teacher because we want the best in front of our students.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary? The member London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is for the Minister of Education. Today is the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Sorry, I made a mistake. I apologize. The next question.

TOURISM

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, and Indigenous Affairs. Ontario is blessed with natural beauty and a rich history that draws visitors from all over the world. Tourism is a critical part of our province's economy, and our government appreciates the jobs it creates all over Ontario. This is especially important for the northern regions of Ontario. There are adventures to be had in northern Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and our government is supporting the growth of unique tourism opportunities in the north.

Can the minister tell the members of this House about how our government is supporting tourism in the north and making northern Ontario open for business and open for jobs?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Since coming to government, we have sharpened our focus in northern Ontario, especially through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, for economic development, business development, business diversification and, importantly, job creation, and that extends to tourism, very much, because we want to celebrate our vast and beautiful space with the rest of the world.

We recently invested \$456,000 in Thunder Bay to help SailSuperior.com buy that new catamaran to accommodate larger groups, and NorthWest Helicopters to establish aerial tour and charter operations for visitors to the area. The town of Marathon is also receiving \$140,000 to make waterfront upgrades. Mr. Speaker, these are serious investments. For the town of Marathon, strategically positioned on a natural deepwater port, we see an incredible opportunity. Who knows? Maybe the Love Boat will park there some day, Mr. Speaker. But in the meantime, we want to create economic opportunities for these towns and businesses so people from around the world can celebrate our vast and beautiful space.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Norman Miller: I would like to thank the minister for his response. I'm very happy to hear our government recognizes the importance of tourism in Ontario's north and is taking concrete steps to make sure that this industry continues to thrive and grow.

1140

As I'm sure members of this House will understand, growing tourism in northern Ontario will take collaboration across government. Can the minister tell us what other ministries are doing to grow tourism in northern Ontario and across the province?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thanks to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for giving me the opportunity to speak about how we're growing tourism in northern Ontario. Our government provides strategic support to festivals and events in the north through the Celebrate Ontario program, along with support for planning projects through the Tourism Development Fund.

Last month, we wrapped up our in-person tourism round tables with front-line tourism operators from across the province. Their input, Mr. Speaker, along with over 7,000 online submissions we received from tourists, operators and students, will be considered as we develop Ontario's new tourism strategy. This new direction, Mr. Speaker, will help us continue to grow tourism in Ontario's north, and I look forward to sharing this new strategy later this year with the House.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question today is for the Minister of Education. Speaker, today is the International Day of Pink, a day where communities across the world wear pink to raise awareness to stop homophobia, transphobia, transmisogyny and all forms of bullying.

LGBTQ+ students still face bullying in our schools. In fact, research shows that 87% of trans students have felt unsafe at school and 77% of trans Canadians have considered suicide. One death by suicide is one too many.

Across this House, across party lines, we have a duty to act. On the International Day of Pink, what is the minister doing to ensure LGBTQ+ students feel safe in Ontario's schools?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I am pleased to say that I am standing with all of my colleagues today wearing pink to demonstrate our commitment and our conviction that every person matters, no matter what colour, stripe or relationship that they have.

The fact of the matter is, what we're doing is making sure we have a modern and age-appropriate curriculum in health and physical education to make sure students, right out of the gate, are learning about what healthy relationships look like.

I look forward to working with the members opposite as we release this curriculum, and they'll come to embrace this new, modern age-appropriate curriculum as well. I'm confident of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, it would be nice to hear the minister be able to say the words "homophobia" and "transphobia" on this Day of Pink, because that is what this day is about.

If the minister wanted to make our schools safer for LGBTQ+ students, she would support an inclusive curriculum that all children can access. Statistics show there is a 93% drop in suicide rates among trans youth when parents and mentors accept their gender identity.

The government expresses its values through the educational curriculum, yet this minister has delayed teaching gender expression until grade 8, when we know that LGBTQ+ students need support much earlier than this.

Through you, Speaker: Why is this minister taking away support from LGBTQ+ students during a time when she should be offering more? And can the minister say the words "homophobia" and "transphobia"?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Actually, those words don't exist in my vocabulary because it's about the actions that really matter. I'm thinking of my friend Craig; I'm thinking of my friend Frank. I am thinking about my family members whom we embrace. We don't classify and we don't use terms to label. We embrace relationships. We embrace healthy relationships, and that is what our curriculum is going to reflect when it's released in September next year.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for question period this morning.

Interjections: No, no.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay. I erred. I'll recognize the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

HUNTING AND FISHING

Mr. Mike Harris: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. As government members, we all know the record of the previous Liberal government when it came to hunting and angling. For 15 years, they ignored the concerns of folks who enjoy these great sports, which are part of our heritage in Ontario.

And the NDP are even worse, Mr. Speaker. When they weren't supporting the Liberals, they were busy writing campaign platforms that didn't add up and didn't even mention hunting and angling.

The baitfish industry supports jobs at mom-and-pop-run shops all across this province by catering to the needs of anglers. Can the minister update the House on what our government for the people is doing for the baitfish industry?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for his question. I know he is a passionate hunter and angler and this is an issue that's close to his heart. I also want to thank him for the great work he's doing on our caucus advisory team.

Before I answer, I want to recognize my parliamentary assistant, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, for the great work he's been conducting around the province on round tables. He has heard first-hand from the baitfish industry about the issues facing them.

Under the leadership of our Premier, Ontario is finally open for business and open for jobs. The baitfish industry supports jobs in rural Ontario as part of the \$2.5-billion fishing industry that contributes that much to Ontario every year. There are 1.3 million recreational anglers in this province, and our government will continue to improve the experience for any Ontarian who wants to enjoy these great pastimes.

ANNIVERSARY OF POLISH AIR DISASTER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga Centre has informed me she has a point of order.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I would like to take a moment to commemorate the ninth anniversary of the tragic Smolensk plane crash that took place in Russia in 2010. The crash killed 96 people on board, including former president of the Republic of Poland Lech Kaczynski and Ryszard Kaczorowski, Poland's last president in exile.

I would like to ask for unanimous consent to honour the victims with a moment of silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga Centre is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to have a moment of silence. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to invite all members to the assembly this afternoon as we recognize the Day of Pink to combat bullying, transphobia and homophobia.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Ottawa Centre has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility concerning the Onley report. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for London North Centre has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Education concerning the Day of Pink. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 35, as amended, relating to allocation of time on Bill 87, An Act to amend various statutes related to energy.

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

The division bells rang from 1149 to 1154.

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

On April 9, 2019, Mr. Clark moved government notice of motion number 35, relating to allocation of time on Bill

87. All those in favour of the motion, as amended, will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Sattler, Peggy
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Shaw, Sandy
Berns-McGown, Rima	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Gurratan
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Sara
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutila	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fife, Catherine	Kernaghan, Terence	Stiles, Marit
Fraser, John	Lindo, Laura Mae	Tabuns, Peter
French, Jennifer K.	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Gates, Wayne	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	West, Jamie
Glover, Chris	Morrison, Suze	Yarde, Kevin
Gravelle, Michael	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 62; the nays are 35.

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

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I would like to start today by thanking the OSSTF, ETFO, OECTA, AEFO, CUPE and all of the other labour groups who organized the largest rally I've seen in a very long time this past weekend. With nearly 30,000 protesters here at Queen's Park, I can't think of a clearer demonstration of how educators,

school administrators, board trustees, parents and, of course, students feel about the proposed changes and cuts to our public education system.

Recently, my office was contacted by a student from Orchard Park Secondary School in Stoney Creek. The student was selected by his peers to communicate with my office. He is a clarinet player in Orchard Park's instrumental band, which recently won the CBC's Canadian Music Class Challenge. From across the nation, thousands of secondary school students took part in this competition. It was Stoney Creek's very own Orchard Park that took first place, with their rendition of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah."

The potential loss of programs like this will be devastating to the skills development of our students. The loss of these programs will result in a loss of real-life-learning experiences that many of our young teenagers may be experiencing for the first time. These vital skills are sought after by colleges, universities and employers. They are the skills that allow each student to stand out and to determine their paths in life, to gain the confidence that comes from victory and to learn the lessons of hard work, loyalty, teamwork, sacrifice and tenacity.

We must realize that for every teacher we lose to the cuts, we could lose the wonderful sports teams, the clubs, the bands and the programs that are the lifeblood of our educational system. Teachers are the reason these programs exist, and we must not pull the rug out from underneath them.

I would like to thank the students of my community for voicing their concerns, the labour unions for their strong support, and the teachers of this province for the immeasurable dedication and professionalism they display every single day.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Robin Martin: Today is a great day for the residents of my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence. Our government has announced an ambitious and historic transit plan for the greater Toronto area, a total of \$28.5 billion.

I'd just like to take a few moments to highlight two projects which will be of particular benefit to my constituents. The Ontario Line, to be built by 2027, will help relieve dangerous congestion on the Yonge subway line that my constituents face each and every day they ride the subway downtown. Ensuring the construction of this important transit line is a priority for my constituents. I am so proud that our government has developed a plan to build a line that will serve more people and have more stations than the city's current plan, and deliver it two years earlier.

The second project that is really important for my constituents is the western extension of the Eglinton Cross-town LRT, a large portion of which will be built underground, and which will provide residents with rapid transit access to the Toronto Pearson airport. That's a huge benefit.

Our government will also move forward with a three-stop subway extension to Scarborough and a northern

extension of the Yonge subway line to open after the Ontario Line is complete.

Mr. Speaker, we've said that we would get subways built in the city of Toronto, and today we have taken a giant step towards making that happen.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Families in the north feel ignored by this government's latest autism plan. Solutions to the lack of available providers and the high travel costs in the north aren't there. Announcements are made on the fly, but few details are provided. Parents have questions, and no one has answers for them.

A constituent of mine in Atikokan, Brittany Smith, has a three-year-old son, Wesley, who is newly diagnosed on the autism spectrum. Brittany has questions about the government's new plan, but no one seems to have an answer for her family, particularly the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. I've written to her myself several times, with no reply.

Under the new system, Brittany believes Wesley will never receive most of the services he needs. Her family simply won't be able to afford them. Brittany says that if she could, she would pay for those services out of her own pocket, but that's just not possible, and it's not possible for almost any family in Ontario to afford.

On top of that, there are the travel costs of northern families. For a parent in Atikokan like Brittany, getting Wesley to appointments takes time and money, but the minister hasn't announced any extra money for this. That means northern families will be spending more of their family budgets on mileage, hotels and food, and that's not equitable—yet another example of why parents in the north feel that their concerns are being ignored.

VAISAKHI

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Today, I would like to talk about the historic festival of Vaisakhi. This day is observed as the Punjabi thanksgiving day by farmers, where they pay tribute, thanking God for the abundant harvest and also praying for future prosperity. This day also signifies the Sikh New Year, originating in the year 1699. Vaisakhi has traditionally been celebrated around the world on April 13, and for all Sikh communities this day holds great religious significance, as it marks the 10th Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh, and the foundation of Khalsa.

I wish to recognize that there is a very successful and prominent Punjabi population in Canada who contribute to our diverse and multicultural heritage, economy and great voluntary service to our province. In Ontario, the Vaisakhi parades are held in April in Toronto and Mississauga. There are cultural events, such as yoga; pagh, or turban tying; and food fairs.

On April 4, we celebrated Sikh Heritage Month here at Queen's Park and the 550th anniversary of the birth of the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji. This day holds great

importance in my life as, although the year is still not confirmed, my husband, Ashwani, was born on this day of Vaisakhi in India. Needless to say, no one forgets his birthday.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment to wish everyone around the world a very happy Vaisakhi.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS

Ms. Suze Morrison: Business improvement areas in my riding of Toronto Centre exemplify the best of what small businesses can do for their communities. In addition to strengthening local economies, BIAs in my riding are integral to the fabric of our communities. I'd like to share a few examples of the great work that BIAs are doing in my riding.

Every June, the Church-Wellesley Village BIA hosts VillageFest on the weekend before the Pride Parade. This event brings together LGBTQ+ folks and their allies from across Toronto Centre and across the world to celebrate Pride with pop-up vendor spaces, drag shows, musical guests and 13 patios along Church Street. This is a weekend that's surely not one to be missed.

In Corktown, their BIA is actually a really unique model that is a combined residents' and business association. Their united voice enables them to take on ambitious projects, like running their own community newspaper where I proudly contribute as a quarterly columnist.

With spring upon us, many BIAs are organizing local park clean-ups, including the St. Lawrence BIA. Their annual clean-up, which is coming up at the end of month in David Crombie Park, even includes a pancake breakfast.

I wish I had more time to talk about all of the business improvement areas in Toronto Centre. They are a cornerstone of small businesses and community building in my riding. I am forever grateful for all of the work that they do.

1510

EVENTS IN ORLÉANS

ÉVÉNEMENTS DIVERS À ORLÉANS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Since the early days of March, in collaboration with my federal counterpart, Andrew Leslie, my office has been hosting free tax clinics for Orléans residents who may not otherwise have the financial means to file their taxes. We have had an incredible outpouring of support in providing this service. Registered accountants have selflessly volunteered their time to provide in-person support for our six tax clinics. We all succeed when the community pulls together to help those in need.

Also, on March 23, bright French students gathered to participate at the regional Orléans-Gloucester spelling bee competition hosted by Épelle-Moi Canada. J'aimerais profiter de cette occasion pour remercier l'école secondaire publique Gisèle-Lalonde pour leur accueil, leurs nombreux participants, bénévoles et juges et, plus particulièrement, les organisateurs, Mariam Fany et Gabriel Ngameni. Leur

dévouement à la promotion de la langue française et leur soutien à un programme éducationnel de littératie via Épelle-Moi Canada sont remarquables.

Mr. Speaker, building on the importance of supporting young people, I had the privilege of attending the 30th annual concours du Club Optimiste St-Joseph d'Orléans. J'aimerais remercier les jeunes de 14 écoles élémentaires et quatre écoles secondaires francophones d'Orléans, et leurs parents, pour leur participation. Je me dois aussi de remercier M. Serge Mongeon et son équipe pour leur dévouement envers nos jeunes.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Ross Romano: What brought me into getting involved in politics was a problem that we've had in Sault Ste. Marie ever since I was a young person in my early teens, and that was the issue of Sault Ste. Marie's youth leaving the Soo. The out-migration of youth is a problem in so many different places, especially throughout the north, but certainly was a major problem that plagued my community and has plagued it for nearly three or more decades now.

After dealing with that and moving back to Sault Ste. Marie, being one of the fortunate people who was able to return to my hometown, I found it so problematic. I wanted to find a way to get involved, and my wife suggested to me that I should run for politics, run to be an MPP, so that I could try to help end the out-migration of our youth and find a way to keep our kids—four, five and six years old—in Sault Ste. Marie.

I came up with this idea as a result of having a number of businesses that I had toured in my community suggest to me that it was really important that they find a way to fill their positions. They had a hard time filling numerous, numerous positions that were available within those businesses. Having toured a lot of them, I thought, "They look so cool. Let's bring the students directly to these places." So I brought a student committee I created of 12 students representing all of our high schools and our university and college to our principal local businesses—five of them in particular.

I'm just noting the clock, Mr. Speaker. I know it took a bit to start, so I'm going to assume I still have a minute, unless I'm otherwise corrected. Thank you.

I brought this group of 12 students to our five principal businesses, being Algoma Steel, JD Aero, Arauco, EACOM and OLG. The students were absolutely floored by what they saw at all these different businesses, and at all the job opportunities they saw. We referred to that process as phase 1.

In phase 2, I will be going into the schools to speak to all the students individually at the high schools.

In what we call phase 3, we are hosting the first-ever student-led job fair in Sault Ste. Marie, where we will have a lot of our businesses and thousands of jobs available, up for grabs.

I just want to be very—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much for your co-operation. I appreciate it. I appreciate your statement as well.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, two years ago, London became the first Ontario city to join the UN safe cities initiative, a worldwide effort to deal with the sexual violence experienced by women and girls in public spaces. Today, I am proud to share another significant first for my community, one that I hope charts a path for every other municipality in this province.

On April 8, London moved one step closer to becoming the first Ontario city to make improving safety for women and girls a stand-alone focus of its strategic plan. This was the result of the leadership and advocacy of two local organizations: Anova, our women's shelter and sexual assault centre, and the London Abused Women's Centre. Both organizations have seen a twofold increase in demand for services since 2017 in the face of provincial funding that is completely inadequate to meet community needs.

I want to publicly applaud London's mayor and council for voting unanimously to make the safety of women and girls a strategic focus. Special thanks to Mayor Ed Holder and Councillor Elizabeth Peloza, who movingly shared their own personal experiences with gender-based violence, showing both the pervasiveness of the problem and the devastating impact it has. I look forward to the final vote on the strategic plan at the end of the month.

Speaker, London understands that enhancing the safety of women and girls improves economic and social well-being for all of us; it's time for this government to understand it too.

REGISTERED PRACTICAL NURSES

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I rise today to pay tribute to Ontario's 40,000 registered practical nurses, many of whom are here at Queen's Park today for the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario annual lobby day.

Registered practical nurses, or RPNs, are health care professionals who work anywhere in this province that health care is provided: in hospitals, homes for seniors, nursing homes, retirement homes, public health units, community nursing agencies, clinics, private practice, industry, schools, child care centres, and children's camps, among others.

RPNs study from the same body of nursing knowledge as other nurses, with a focused body of knowledge across all areas of nursing practice.

RPNs comprise the fastest-growing group in the community care sector and the largest group of nursing care providers in the long-term-care sector. We look forward to working with them as we work towards our commitment of creating 15,000 long-term-care spaces over the next five years.

I want to thank Ontario's registered practical nurses for their hard work and continued dedication to building a stronger health care system for all Ontarians. Thank you for all you do to keep us healthy.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Lindsey Park: I rise in anticipation of tomorrow's budget.

I have been elected as Durham's representative at Queen's Park for a little over nine months, and I remember the 2018 election campaign like it was last week. We made promises to put money back in people's pockets, clean up the hydro mess, bring jobs back to Ontario, end hallway health care, and restore trust and accountability in the government's finances. We have delivered over 200 initiatives to date with those objectives in mind.

In spite of all this positive progress, I have to be frank, Speaker: The fiscal mess left by the previous government still puts Ontario's future at risk. The Liberals were spending \$40 million a day more than they were taking in, and they saddled the people of Ontario with a \$15-billion deficit and left \$346 billion in public debt. The issue is not the 346; it's the nine zeros that come after it. It's an unacceptable burden to leave our children and grandchildren in Durham, and it's a fiscal and moral imperative that cannot be ignored.

I expect that budget 2019 will be a thoughtful, measured and forward-looking plan that will restore fiscal balance in a reasonable and responsible manner while protecting the critical public services like health care and education we all cherish.

Speaker, together, we can build up Ontario as a place to grow and a place that is once again the economic powerhouse of Confederation. Together, we can make Durham a better place to live, work and raise a family.

I look forward to tomorrow's budget.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans has informed me she has a point of order.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to ask my colleagues again for UC, with your indulgence, since we have two ministerial statements and we would like to share our time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans is seeking unanimous consent of the House to share time in response to the ministerial statements. Agreed? Agreed.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 74, An Act concerning the provision of health care, continuing Ontario Health and making consequential and

related amendments and repeals / Projet de loi 74, Loi concernant la prestation de soins de santé, la prorogation de Santé Ontario, l'ajout de modifications corrélatives et connexes et des abrogations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Based on the balance of probabilities.

Call in the members. This will be a 20-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1521 to 1541.

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

Ms. Tangri has moved the adoption of the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hogarth, Christine	Piccini, David
Baber, Roman	Jones, Sylvia	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Karahalios, Belinda	Rickford, Greg
Barrett, Toby	Ke, Vincent	Roberts, Jeremy
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Khanjin, Andrea	Romano, Ross
Bouma, Will	Kramp, Daryl	Sabawy, Sheref
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova, Natalia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecca, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Cho, Stan	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Coe, Lorne	McDonell, Jim	Tangri, Nina
Crawford, Stephen	Miller, Norman	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Downey, Doug	Nicholls, Rick	Tibollo, Michael A.
Elliott, Christine	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fee, Amy	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
Ford, Doug	Park, Lindsey	Walker, Bill
Fullerton, Merrilee	Parsa, Michael	Yakabuski, John
Ghamari, Goldie	Pettapiece, Randy	
Hardeman, Ernie	Phillips, Rod	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Arthur, Ian	Horwath, Andrea	Schreiner, Mike
Berns-McGown, Rima	Hunter, Mitzie	Shaw, Sandy
Bisson, Gilles	Karpoche, Bhutla	Singh, Gurratan
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Singh, Sara
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Lalonde, Marie-France	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fife, Catherine	Lindo, Laura Mae	Stiles, Marit
Fraser, John	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
French, Jennifer K.	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Vanthof, John
Glover, Chris	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	West, Jamie
Gravelle, Michael	Morrison, Suze	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Harden, Joel	Natyshak, Taras	Yarde, Kevin
Hassan, Faisal	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 58; the nays are 41.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 27, 2019, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr7, An Act to revive 665395 Ontario Limited.

Bill Pr8, An Act to revive Good Fortune Corporation.

Bill Pr9, An Act to revive All Trade Quantities Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to standing order 111(b).

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Thanigasalam presents the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: No, thanks.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 111(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUNSHINE PROTECTION ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA PROTECTION OFFERTE PAR LA LUMIÈRE DU SOLEIL

Mrs. Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 98, An Act to amend the Time Act / Projet de loi 98, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'heure légale.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Orléans like to give a brief statement explaining her bill?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: The bill amends the Time Act to make the time now called daylight saving time the standard time year-round.

ELECTION FINANCES
AMENDMENT ACT (CHARGES
FOR FUND-RAISING EVENTS), 2019
LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS
(DROITS EXIGÉS POUR LES ACTIVITÉS
DE FINANCEMENT)

Mr. Schreiner moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 99, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to charges for fund-raising events / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections en ce qui concerne les droits exigés pour les activités de financement.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Guelph care to give a brief explanation of his bill?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: This bill amends the Election Finances Act to provide a \$100 limit on the amount that a single person may be charged to attend a fundraising event. It does not apply in respect of an annual general meeting, policy conference or similar meeting.

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**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES**

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker, and good afternoon.

Today, as parliamentarians, we together can send a strong and clear message that bullying of all kinds—cyberbullying, physical bullying, name-calling and harassment—is unacceptable in Ontario, whether it's in our classrooms, workplaces, recreational facilities or online. In particular, today we take a stand for those who are most likely to be targeted as a result of homophobia, transphobia, religious or ethnic background, or because of special abilities.

As the minister responsible for gender issues, including LGBTQ+ issues, and those with developmental disabilities, I'm proud that our government is working today and marking today as Day of Pink, and that we will hear from members of this assembly on how we can best address this region by region, throughout our province, so that all children and youth, regardless of who they are or where they live, feel protected and know that they live in a safe environment.

Over the years I've had the privilege of serving in this assembly, I've had the opportunity to speak about bullying and raise awareness. In fact, I recall my first statement in the 40th Parliament, over eight years ago, being about Jamie Hubley, on what would have been his sweet 16.

Jamie, as members who were present at the time would know, was a beautiful young man. He was a figure skater. He was an advocate for acceptance, and his father is a good friend of mine, Ottawa city councillor Allan Hubley—a very close ally of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Jamie was also gay. And Jamie was intensely bullied. Today, I have to refer to Jamie in the past tense. I have to do so because the real consequence of Jamie's bullying, which was homophobic in nature, was that he died by suicide—a young life that was cut short because the bullying was so intense that it was easier to never wake up than to face his tormenters—and torment they did Jamie. One of the worst examples of homophobic bullying I have ever heard of was when Jamie's dad, Allan, shared with me one of Jamie's experiences. Jamie was held down in his school bus, and because he was gay, batteries—ACDC—were shoved down his throat.

Jamie's life and death have impacted me so much that a lot of the work I did in this Legislature between 2011 and 2014 revolved around anti-bullying, acceptance and suicide prevention. Sadly, as time passes we recognize that bullying in all of its forms has not been eradicated. It still exists. It's in our schools. It's on our playgrounds, at our arenas and around our children, day in and day out. It's online, and it's physical assaults. It's targeted harassments, it's vicious taunts, and it's particularly cruel toward our marginalized populations. But the silver lining is this: We in this assembly are leaders, and we're talking about it. As policy makers, we are making changes. As community builders, we're raising awareness—and we have community partners.

I think of those over the years I have been fortunate to work with, including members on all sides of this aisle. I was proud to work with the former member from Ottawa Centre, the former government House leader, Yasir Naqvi, on these very issues. I was pleased to be able to work with members of the NDP while in opposition. But I'm also more proud of the people who stand up and do this, day in and day out.

I want to share with you about Maria Hawkins. She's an Ottawa-based singer who spends times with students in our schools so that they can better understand that anti-bullying in our schools is also about school spirit. Parent advocates over the years, like Karen Sebben, Corrina Morrison, and Jeff and Julie Stauffer, have helped to inform me on these matters.

And then I think of those who started the Day of Pink. The best advocates, in my opinion, are peer advocates, particularly in our education system, and particularly on the schoolyards and the playgrounds across this province. The story of the Day of Pink is inspiring, and as it would happen, it started in my native province of Nova Scotia. By now, it's well known that a student who was bullied because he was wearing a pink shirt was supported by fellow students David Shepherd and Travis Price at Central Kings Rural High School in Nova Scotia. They decided that the best way to combat bullying was to

encourage everyone at their school to wear pink the next day. They did, and as they say, the rest is history.

Today, the world over, governments just like ours are taking a stand. Today, we join together to share stories of bullying, just like those stories we heard about Jamie. Today, we thank those advocates, especially the student leaders, who work toward acceptance. Today, we think of those who are living in fear. Today, we wear pink—all of us—to send a clear message: Bullying in all of its forms is wrong, it's unacceptable, and those who are targeted have the support of this government and, just as importantly, of this entire assembly.

GÉNOCIDE RWANDAIS RWANDAN GENOCIDE

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: J'aimerais tout d'abord souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les gens ici présents aujourd'hui pour commémorer le 25^e anniversaire de la tragédie qui était le génocide au Rwanda. Notamment, j'aimerais saluer Théophile Rwigimba un membre du comité organisateur de l'évènement; Shakilla Umutoni, chargée d'affaires à l'ambassade de Rwanda à Ottawa; William Deluce, consul general of Rwanda in Toronto; Jim Karygiannis, Toronto city councillor; Caleb Mabano, president of Rwandan Community Abroad Toronto; and the Honourable John Ruku-Rwabyoma, Rwandan member of Parliament; ainsi qu'Adolphine Mukamanzi, Chantal Mudahogora et son fils Christian. Welcome. Bienvenue.

Monsieur le président, chers collègues, au nom du gouvernement de l'Ontario, je tiens aujourd'hui à souligner la commémoration d'une tragédie qui nous interpelle toutes et tous. En effet, il y a 25 ans, le 7 avril 1994, débutait le terrible génocide contre les Tutsis au Rwanda qui a vu le massacre de plus d'un million de personnes, dont des Tutsis, des Hutus modérés et d'autres. Pendant plus de trois ans, hommes, femmes et enfants ont été exterminés sans pitié par des milices aveuglées par la haine.

En adoptant à l'unanimité une résolution établissant le 7 avril journée de réflexion sur la prévention du génocide, le Parlement du Canada a voulu qu'on prenne le temps de se souvenir des victimes et qu'on s'assure qu'une telle tragédie ne se reproduise jamais. Ce drame innommable, qui s'est déroulé sous les yeux d'une communauté internationale sidérée, aurait pu anéantir à jamais la cohésion sociale du Rwanda.

Or, après avoir initié un courageux travail de réconciliation qui a permis une coexistence apaisée entre les ethnies Hutu et Tutsi, les autorités rwandaises ont mis en place des mesures qui ont transformé le pays socialement et économiquement. Ceci n'aurait pas pu être possible sans la résilience et la détermination du peuple rwandais, qui force l'admiration et le respect de toutes et tous.

In recent years, Rwanda has made strategic investments aimed at strengthening the education and health care systems, improving the road system and digital infrastructure, increasing the number of energy projects and boosting the tourism industry.

Our two countries now collaborate on a number of challenges, such as peacekeeping, investment and economic development, and we work together within multilateral organizations such as the Commonwealth and the International Organisation of La Francophonie.

L'Ontario, membre observateur de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie depuis 2016, compte d'ailleurs travailler en étroite collaboration avec la nouvelle secrétaire générale de l'OIF et ressortissante rwandaise, M^{me} Louise Mushikiwabo.

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Ontario encourages Rwanda to pursue an ongoing national reconciliation process and to create conditions that will foster the development of a multicultural society based on respect for human rights which will allow for peace and harmonious relations.

Nous ne pouvons pas, malheureusement, revenir en arrière et prévenir les atrocités du passé. Toutefois, aujourd'hui et demain, nous pouvons et nous pourrions soutenir les Rwandais, et notamment les jeunes, en les aidant à construire ensemble une société juste, prospère et garante d'un avenir prometteur.

Monsieur le Président, en mon nom et en celui du gouvernement de l'Ontario, j'invite tous mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative à observer une minute de silence afin de rendre hommage au peuple rwandais, dont la prise en charge individuelle et collective est inspirante pour l'Ontario, le Canada et aussi l'humanité tout entière.

Applause.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: May I have unanimous consent for a minute of silence?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The Attorney General has asked for a moment of silence. Agreed? Agreed. May we all please stand together?

The House observed a minute's silence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): You may be seated.

Further ministerial statements? There being none, responses?

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour to stand in this House today to recognize the International Day of Pink, a time where communities all over the world wear pink to raise awareness about the need to end homophobia, transphobia, transmisogyny and all other forms of bullying and discrimination.

The Day of Pink started after two students in a Nova Scotia school witnessed one of their LGBTQ+ peers being bullied for wearing a pink shirt. It wasn't just about the pink shirt, though. They realized that what they saw was wrong. No student or person should experience bullying or harassment based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or choice of clothing.

These two students spoke with their classmates and, on the following day, they all arrived at the school wearing pink to send a clear message to the school's bullies: Homophobia has no place in our schools.

The International Day of Pink stems from their compassionate day of action and has since been championed by LGBTQ+ activists and organizations, like Jeremy Dias and Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity. This call to action remains sadly relevant in Canada and in Ontario. Research suggests that LGBTQ+ students still face more bullying and discrimination in schools than their heterosexual peers. In fact, 87% of trans students have stated that they have felt unsafe in their schools and classrooms.

We've watched, in this Ontario Legislature, as educators, if they discussed the 2015 health and phys ed curriculum, were threatened with the notion of being told upon using a snitch line. We know that the Ontario government could support LGBTQ+ students by including them in the Ontario curriculum, yet we're seen the opposite; we've seen them be erased.

This lack of safety has real consequences for the well-being of LGBTQ+ students and severely impacts their mental health. Tragically, LGBTQ+ students and youth are 3.5 times more likely to consider suicide than their straight classmates.

We can fix that within this House. However, there are steps we can all take to support the LGBTQ+ community outside of this House. In fact, statistics show that there's a 93% drop in suicide rates among trans youth when parents and mentors accept their gender identity.

I'm heartened to hear the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services use the words "homophobia, transphobia and transmisogyny" here in Ontario's Legislature, but was utterly shocked that the Minister of Education categorically refused to use those same words this very morning. Student safety depends on your acceptance, caring and government officials who stand up for what's right.

RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I am honoured to rise and speak once again about truly and authentically paying homage to those who survived the Rwandan genocide and those who did not.

Twenty-five years ago, survivors of the Rwandan genocide fled their homes in search of safe harbour. They arrived at international borders with terrible trauma and with few remaining assets. Countries had to make a choice: Would we shelter these people? Or would we see them as a burden and turn them away?

It's a choice that we have made before. Would we perpetuate racism during the slave trade on Canadian and American soil? Would we perpetuate anti-Semitism during the Holocaust? Sadly, history has shown that we too often fail to make the right choice. We must do better for the people who continue to arrive in Ontario fleeing violence and persecution on any continent.

Twenty-five years later, will we offer refugees health care services in order to address their unique needs? In short, will we provide the trauma-informed care that a survivor of a genocide needs in order to begin to heal?

In my riding of Kitchener Centre, the Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre serves over 3,000 patients and currently provides up to six months post-arrival health care to over 300 Ontario newcomers. They warn us that refugees present a significantly vulnerable population. Bill 74, under the Conservatives' leadership, will further marginalize these very courageous community members.

Today, will we offer refugees the legal services they need in order to be treated fairly within our justice system? The Ontario Coalition of Service Providers for Refugee Claimants has raised the alarm that legal aid will be slashed by the Conservatives and warns that this puts at risk the lives of thousands of people.

We can and must pay true homage to the legacy of the Rwandan genocide, not with our words but with our actions. History will judge us by how we treat those who seek safe harbour within our borders.

RWANDAN GENOCIDE

GÉNOCIDE RWANDAIS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Au nom du caucus libéral, we join the people of Rwanda and the international community to commemorate this solemn anniversary. On April 7, Rwandans began 100 days of mourning. One hundred days is the time it took for a tenth of Rwanda's population to be massacred.

In those 100 days, more than 800,000 innocent people—Tutsis, moderate Hutus and others—were brutally murdered in an organized campaign of genocide. We offer our sympathies to their families and loved ones, as well as those who survived these atrocities but still live with the trauma and pain caused by their memories.

Le 7 avril marquait le 25^e anniversaire du génocide des Tutsis, aussi appelé le génocide rwandais. Aujourd'hui, je veux réitérer la solidarité des Ontariens et des Ontariennes au peuple rwandais.

La diversité et le multiculturalisme sont au cœur de notre société. Je salue le courage de ce peuple et je me permets de citer l'honorable Roméo Dallaire, qui a vécu le génocide. Il dit que nous devons nous élever « au-dessus des races, des croyances, des couleurs, des religions et de l'intérêt national, et nous placerons le bien de l'humanité au-dessus du bien de notre propre groupe ».

Mr. Speaker, this genocide was sown out of the seeds of division and hatred. In remembering the victims, we must also commit to fight division and hatred, whatever it is, so that tragedies like the Rwandan genocide can never happen again.

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ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: A number of people have already spoken eloquently about the impacts of bullying on young people. When kids are bullied, they are more

likely to commit suicide; they're more likely to harm themselves; they're more likely to feel isolated, to lose confidence, to achieve less and to struggle more in their lives.

David Shepherd and Travis Price, in 2007 in Nova Scotia, took a stand for equity against homophobic bullying, and they changed the world for millions of students in schools across Canada, North America and beyond. Their act of compassion and love was important to the families and the schools that have adopted the Day of Pink.

But we're not done. The homophobic angry outcry about the updated sex ed curriculum in this province reminds us that the journey towards love and tolerance is not over. There are still politicians, teachers, doctors, construction workers, athletes—people from all walks of life who remain closeted for fear of discrimination.

I'm going to draw from my own personal experience. I didn't come out until I was 37. It took me a while to figure out exactly who I was, but when I wear pink today and I look at everyone in the Legislature and the schools around the province where the kids are wearing pink, I can't help thinking what a difference it would have made in Richmond Hill in the 1960s, when I was at high school at Richmond Hill High, if we had created a safe school environment and culture for my close friend Doug Bonnell. None of us knew he was carrying a secret. None of us knew that he felt alone. In fact, many of his friends didn't know that he was gay until they found out that he was dying of AIDS before our 37th birthday. When everyone found out, obviously it was traumatic, but in the 1960s, there was no permission in the suburbs of Toronto to talk about being gay. The words were not even used in anything but a derogatory fashion.

We owe David and Travis a debt of gratitude. Their decency and their kindness prompted a visible demonstration of love, and love literally saves lives. Day of Pink is an important expression of support, and on behalf of the Ontario Liberal caucus, I want to commend every school, every workplace and every individual who stood up against bullying today. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like, again, to thank the ministers and the respondents for their thoughtfulness in response to ministerial statements.

PETITIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Michael Mantha: Here's a petition from a couple of hundred people who are from the Sault Ste. Marie area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Alliance Against Ontario Autism Program: Autism Doesn't End at Ford.

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

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

I completely agree with this petition and present it to page Saniya to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

CAMPUS RADIO STATIONS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Thunder Bay—Superior North.

Mr. Michael Gravelle: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I have a petition that's sent to me by Tiina Flank from the campus radio station at Lakehead University.

"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;

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

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

I've got hundreds here, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Will Bouma: I have a petition here entitled "Animal Protection in Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all animals in Ontario deserve our protection but are largely going unprotected at this time;

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) is the only agency in Ontario authorized to enforce animal protection laws;

"Whereas the OSPCA has continually cut back services, including the recent decision to stop investigating incidents involving farm animals, including horses, as well as failing to fully investigate poorly run zoos, dogfighting

operations, puppy and kitten mills and even documented cases of dogs being tortured in the city of Toronto;

“Whereas the OSPCA has made itself completely unaccountable to the public by eliminating annual general members meetings and board elections as well as eliminating a government representative from their board meetings;

“Whereas the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services provides an annual grant to the OSPCA of \$5.75 million of the public’s dollars, for which the OSPCA is to provide province-wide coverage and other services which the OSPCA has failed to deliver;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to exercise its authority, through the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services under the current funding transfer payment agreement and the OSPCA Act, requiring that:

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

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

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

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

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

I completely endorse this petition, will sign it and give it to long-patient page Katie.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition signed by many residents of London West on affordable housing. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing. Whether a family wants to rent or own, live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;”

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

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

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Amy Fee: I have a petition on animal protection in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all animals in Ontario deserve our protection but are largely going unprotected at this time;

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) is” largely “the only agency in Ontario authorized to enforce animal protection laws;

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“Whereas the OSPCA has continually cut back services, including the recent decision to stop investigating incidents involving farm animals, including horses, as well as failing to fully investigate poorly run zoos, dogfighting operations, puppy and kitten mills and even documented cases of dogs being tortured in the city of Toronto;

“Whereas the OSPCA has made itself completely unaccountable to the public by eliminating annual general members meetings and board elections as well as eliminating a government representative from their board meetings;

“Whereas the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services provides an annual grant to the OSPCA of \$5.75 million of the public’s dollars, for which the OSPCA is to provide province-wide coverage and other services which the OSPCA has failed to deliver;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to exercise its authority, through the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services under the current funding transfer payment agreement and the OSPCA Act, requiring that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jeff Burch: This is a petition regarding temperatures in long-term-care homes.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario requires a minimum but no maximum temperature in long-term-care homes;

“Whereas temperatures that are too hot can cause emotional and physical distress that may contribute to a decline in a frail senior’s health;

“Whereas front-line staff in long-term-care homes also suffer when trying to provide care under these conditions with headaches, tiredness, signs of hyperthermia, which directly impacts resident/patient care;

“Whereas Ontario’s bill of rights for residents of Ontario nursing homes states ‘every resident has the right to be properly sheltered ... in a manner consistent with his or her needs’;

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

“Direct the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations amending O. Reg. 79/10 in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to establish a maximum temperature in Ontario’s long-term-care homes.”

I affix my signature and give it to page Katherine.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I have a petition titled “Animal Protection in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all animals in Ontario deserve our protection but are largely going unprotected at this time;

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) is the only agency in Ontario authorized to enforce animal protection laws;

“Whereas the OSPCA has continually cut back services, including the recent decision to stop investigating incidents involving farm animals, including horses, as well as failing to fully investigate poorly run zoos, dogfighting operations, puppy and kitten mills and even documented cases of dogs being tortured in the city of Toronto;

“Whereas the OSPCA has made itself completely unaccountable to the public by eliminating annual general members meetings and board elections as well as eliminating a government representative from their board meetings;

“Whereas the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services provides an annual grant to the OSPCA of \$5.75 million of the public’s dollars, for which the OSPCA is to provide province-wide coverage and other services which the OSPCA has failed to deliver;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to exercise its authority, through the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services under the current funding transfer payment agreement and the OSPCA Act, requiring that:

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition and sign my name to it and give it to page Erynn.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Pauline Villeneuve from Hanmer in my riding for sending these petitions. It reads as follows:

“Whereas, when we face an emergency we all know to dial 911...;

“Whereas access to emergency services through 911 is not available in all regions of Ontario but most Ontarians believe that it is; and

“Whereas many Ontarians have discovered that 911 was not available while they faced an emergency; and

“Whereas all Ontarians expect and deserve access to 911 service throughout our province;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To provide 911 emergency response everywhere in Ontario by land line or cellphone.”

I support this petition, will sign it and ask page Saniya to bring it to the Clerk.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Vincent Ke: My petition is “Animal Protection in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all animals in Ontario deserve our protection but are largely going unprotected at this time;

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) is the only agency in Ontario authorized to enforce animal protection laws;

“Whereas the OSPCA has continually cut back services, including the recent decision to stop investigating incidents involving farm animals, including horses, as well as failing to fully investigate poorly run zoos, dogfighting operations, puppy and kitten mills and even documented cases of dogs being tortured in the city of Toronto;

“Whereas the OSPCA has made itself completely unaccountable to the public by eliminating annual general members meetings and board elections as well as eliminating a government representative from their board meetings;

“Whereas the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services provides an annual grant to the OSPCA of \$5.75 million of the public’s dollars, for which the OSPCA is to provide province-wide coverage and other services which the OSPCA has failed to deliver;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to exercise its authority, through the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services

under the current funding transfer payment agreement and the OSPCA Act, requiring that:

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition. I will sign this and give it to page Nicholas.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE PEOPLE’S HEALTH CARE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LES SOINS DE SANTÉ POUR LA POPULATION

Ms. Elliott moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act concerning the provision of health care, continuing Ontario Health and making consequential and related amendments and repeals / Projet de loi 74, Loi concernant la prestation de soins de santé, la prorogation de Santé Ontario, l’ajout de modifications corrélatives et connexes et des abrogations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I will now look to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to lead off debate.

Hon. Christine Elliott: It gives me great pleasure today to rise in the House to begin third reading debate of Bill 74, The People’s Health Care Act, 2019. I will begin by acknowledging that I will be sharing my time today with the member for Eglinton–Lawrence and the member for Oakville North–Burlington. I want to thank them for joining me in third reading and for all the support they do in serving as parliamentary assistants. They’re doing an excellent job, both of them, so thank you very much. I have asked them today to share with all of us the specifics of how this proposed legislation is going to help us modernize our public health care system.

But before they do that, Speaker, I want to talk a bit about why these changes to our health care system are so desperately needed and what our government envisions for health care in Ontario. The fact is that Ontario’s health care system is on life support. We have patients who are forgotten on wait-lists. We know that more than 1,000 patients every day are being treated in hospital hallways and storage rooms. In 2003, the average wait time to access a

bed in a long-term-care home was 36 days. Today, the average time to access a bed in a long-term-care home is 146 days. That is over a 300% increase. It is simply not acceptable.

In fact, over the last five years, Ontario has spent 30% more than the Canadian average in administrative expenses on its health care system. I don’t know about you, Speaker, but I certainly have not seen a 30% improvement in health care. We know that, in Ontario, health care represents 42 cents of every dollar that government spends. That’s every taxpayer-paid dollar. Yet we rank poorly on critical factors such as wait times, quality of care and system integration compared to our provincial counterparts.

Patients and families are getting lost in the health care system, falling through the cracks, and are waiting far too long for care. This has a negative impact on the health and well-being of patients and their loved ones both physically as well as mentally. The reality is, our health care system is facing capacity pressures, and it does not have the right mix of services, beds or digital tools to be ready for a growing and rapidly aging population with increasingly complex health care needs. We know that hallway health care has only continued to become more commonplace over the past number of years, and this is a practice that should be anything but commonplace.

We have heard from across the province how frustrating and exhausting transitioning from one health care provider to another is for patients and families. We’ve heard from many health care providers about the daily issues they face caring for those who need them. But I’ve also learned that some providers have been using forms of integrated care to put those in need front and centre. Through extensive consultations with different health care providers and organizations across the province from Burlington to Ottawa to North Bay to Durham region, I have been listening and learning a lot more about the great collaborative work that organizations have already done to support patients and families transitioning from one health care provider to another. They’re shifting patients’ needs to the forefront by working together and tearing down the silos that exist. Hospitals, family doctors and in-home and community care providers are talking to one another, sharing information so that the patient will be at the centre of their care and receives the connected care that they deserve.

But certainly we know that this is not happening everywhere in Ontario, not all patients are benefiting. So it is long past time that we spread this innovation across the province and across our entire health care system. It’s time we changed the channel and started to look at the whole person, and not just at their illness or condition.

Integrated care to me, Speaker, is one of the solutions to the problem of patients sitting in hospital hallways, or waiting or even receiving care. To this end, our government is going to build a public health care system centred, of course, around patients, families and caregivers. We are going to do this by redirecting money to the front lines, where it belongs, to improve the patient experience and to provide better and more connected care.

Our government has a vision of a public health care system where patients and families will have access to better, faster, more connected care, a system where family doctors, hospitals, home and community care providers, and long-term-care providers work together as a team, where within these teams providers are encouraged and expected to communicate directly with each other rather than work in silos where they communicate only with the government. They're dedicated to creating a seamless health care experience for patients and their families, a system where patients are supported when transitioning from one health care service to another, because it shouldn't be up to families, patients and caregivers to navigate how to access the health care system. It should be up to the government to put the patient at the centre of care.

That is why, Speaker, our government is proposing The People's Health Care Act with Bill 74. This proposed legislation would transform Ontario's public health care system to improve the patient experience and strengthen local health care services. If we expect real improvements that patients will experience first-hand, we must better coordinate the public health care system so it's organized around people's needs and outcomes. This will enable local teams of health care providers to know and understand each patient's needs and provide the appropriate, high-quality, connected care Ontarians expect and deserve. When health care providers work together and are funded together, care will become integrated and the needs of the whole person will be considered.

As part of our plan, our government is planning to create Ontario health teams. As part of Ontario health teams, local health care providers would be empowered to work as a connected team, taking on the work of easing transitions for patients across the entire continuum of health care. Ontario health teams would be responsible for delivering coordinated care for their patients, understanding their health care history and needs, and directly connecting them to the type of care they require. Patients would have help in navigating the public health system 24/7. These teams would support continuous access to care, and smooth transitions as patients move between one provider to another and receive care in different locations or health care settings.

Over time, Ontario health teams would provide seamless access to various types of health care services, which could include primary care, hospitals, home and community care, palliative care, residential long-term care, and mental health and addictions supports. Ontario health teams would be funded and held accountable for improving the patient experience and for improving people's health.

As Ontario health teams are established, people would continue to be able to choose who provides their care and would have more care choices available through the use of technology. These teams will also improve access to secure digital tools, including online health records and online appointment bookings with doctors and specialists, a truly 21st-century approach to health care.

Ontario health teams will be established in phases across the province. This is not something that can be done

overnight. It needs to be done keeping the patient experience first and foremost in our minds and making sure that their care remains seamless. Ontario health teams will focus on existing local health care providers partnering, or working together, to provide coordinated care; or teams of providers serving a specialized patient population, such as specialty pediatric or patients with complex health care needs.

1640

To connect our entire health care system that places patient needs at the centre of care, we must enable collaboration and co-operation from top to bottom, and that includes looking at how to best structure and leverage the great work of our health care agencies. Many of these agencies, such as Cancer Care Ontario, have established world-class standards that our government wants to replicate and amplify across the health care system.

Over the past several years, the system has continued to add but not integrate, or coordinate, new agencies and health care programs. This approach to system planning has led to the development of many discrete agencies, each working towards a separate vision, following a distinct work plan and embracing, at times, divergent views on how to deliver the best-quality care to patients.

Our proposal would provide more value for taxpayers' dollars and enable more people to work together instead of in silos. The legislation we are debating today, if passed, would allow for the consolidation of multiple health care agencies and organizations within a single agency, that being Ontario Health. The legislation would give Ontario Health a mandate to oversee health care delivery, improved clinical guidance, and provide support for providers to enable better-quality care for patients.

As a single, accountable crown agency, Ontario Health would enable the expansion of the current exceptional clinical guidance and quality improvement practices in existing agencies into other critical areas of the health care sector. It would enable the application of current, best-in-class models to parts of the health care sector historically left behind, such as mental health and addictions supports, which don't have that infrastructure as of now.

It would also provide consistent oversight of high-quality health care delivery across the province. This would include a more efficient approach to coordinating health care services for patients, improving the patient experience, and enabling innovation, which is so important in all areas of government but, I would say, particularly in health care.

Ontario Health would also allow for the advancement of digital-first approaches to health care. It would allow for the greater use of virtual care and improve the integration and efficiency of digital health assets across the entire health care system. This would support more evidence-based advice on delivering health services and clinical care.

Ontario Health would also allow for clear accountability for monitoring and evaluating the quality of health care services being provided. It would provide clinical leadership, consistent clinical guidance, knowledge sharing and support for health care providers. This single agency

would also allow for more efficient use of public health care dollars by eliminating duplicative back-office infrastructure and administration.

If this proposed legislation is passed, the consolidation of agencies and provincial services and programs into the Ontario Health agency would be implemented over a number of years and would include Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario, Health Quality Ontario, the Trillium Gift of Life Network, Health Shared Services Ontario, HealthForceOntario Marketing and Recruitment Agency and the local health integration networks. This transition, of course, would roll out in phases in order to allow for seamless patient care.

We do have a genuine opportunity here, Speaker—in fact, I would argue, a responsibility—to amplify the strength of what's working by pulling our resources together and comparing what ideas and successes can be translated to other programs to bring a consistency of approach to our health care system, a common vision, a single point of oversight, a united effort to get from where we are to where we need to be with Ontario health teams and Ontario Health.

Our government recognizes that the modernization of our health care system is going to take some time, but we will continue to listen to our doctors, nurses and other front-line health care providers who work with patients as we implement our health care strategy. Most importantly, we will continue to listen to patients, to families and caregivers. That is so important. As part of our plan, the Minister's Patient and Family Advisory Council has become a permanent advisory body. This council provides me, in my capacity as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, with advice on key health care priorities that have an impact on patient care and experience.

As we bring forward desperately needed and overdue improvements to health care in this province, Ontarians will continue to access reliable public health care through OHIP. Our government believes our plan will fix and strengthen our public health care system so that people will have access to better, faster and more coordinated public health care, where it's needed, when it's needed. The people of Ontario have been and always will be our government's primary focus. With Ontario patients foremost in our minds, we will create a public health care system that works for everyone. The people of Ontario deserve a connected public health care system that puts their needs first. They deserve peace of mind that the system is sustainable and accessible for all patients and their families, regardless of where you live, how much you make or the kind of care that you require. The future of health care in Ontario depends upon us getting this right. I am confident, Speaker, that we have the team and the plan to get this done right. I encourage all members to support the passage of The People's Health Care Act for the betterment of patients, families and caregivers in this province.

Now, Speaker, I would like to turn things over to my parliamentary assistant, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now recognize the member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Through you, Speaker, I would like to thank the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for sharing this important opportunity to speak on this legislation, which is so important to our province. I know that the minister has been busy consulting with patients and with health system leaders across the province to hear what they have to share about how we can better integrate our health care system. On behalf of all Ontarians, I want to thank her for all of her hard work and her dedication to this important effort.

The fact is—and we all know it—that Ontario's health care system is struggling. It's struggling with capacity issues. Patients, who are our loved ones, are forgotten sometimes on waiting lists that last forever. As the minister pointed out, more than 1,000 patients are receiving care in hallways every day. It's a really serious thing. It's very difficult, especially for an elderly person, to be in a hallway with lights, noises, not getting any sleep, while their health is impaired. It's not a good situation for anybody. A thousand patients every day in Ontario are stuck in hallways. Also, the average wait time to access a bed in long-term care is 146 days. That's a very long time. It's far too long. Patients and families are getting lost in the health care system. They're falling through the cracks, and they're waiting far too long for care. This whole system, the way it is now, has a negative impact on our health and well-being, on the health and well-being of patients and their loved ones, both their physical and their mental health, frankly.

The Deputy Premier has just shared with us our government's overall plan to fix and strengthen the public health care system. The proposed piece of legislation before us for debate today, The People's Health Care Act, 2019, would, if passed, enable and support the modernization of Ontario's health care system and place patients at the centre of service, delivery and care, where they should be. Upon passage of the bill before us, the bill would enact a new statute entitled the Connecting Care Act, 2019, which would enable several key things to happen.

1650

First among those is the creation of Ontario Health, a crown agency with a mandate that includes managing health service needs across Ontario. It would also ensure the quality and sustainability of the Ontario health system through a variety of other means, such as—and I think the minister mentioned this—access to secure digital tools, including online health records and online appointment booking with doctors and specialists. I would say that this is a 21st-century innovation for health care and something which is long overdue here in Ontario.

Second, it would support the implementation of Ontario health teams, a new model of integrated care delivery. Speaker, my colleague the member from Oakville North—Burlington will speak to the Ontario health teams in just a few moments. What I want to do today is to walk everyone here through the legislative changes that we are proposing as part of our plans for Ontario Health.

Currently, there are multiple provincial agencies that offer clinical guidance, evaluation, public information and

health sector analysis. Many of these agencies have established world-class standards that the government is seeking to replicate, emulate or scale up all across our health system, taking the best of what we have and using it in other areas. Each of these agencies also has a full senior management team and back-office support, and, over time, some of this has become duplicative. To achieve true integrated and coordinated care, our government is proposing to streamline the important work of these health agencies so that the work performed can be done more collaboratively and effectively, provide more value for tax dollars, and enable people to work together instead of in silos.

The proposed legislation before us today, if passed, would enable the transfer of multiple provincial agencies into Ontario Health over a number of years, and, as I have said already, through the proposed legislation Ontario Health would become a crown agency. If passed, the bill before us would also set out the objects and powers for this new agency, Ontario Health.

This proposal would see Ontario Health implement health system strategies developed by the ministry and manage health service needs across Ontario to ensure the quality and the sustainability of Ontario's health system through various means. These means include health system operational management and coordination, as well as health system performance measurement and management, evaluation, monitoring and reporting.

It includes responsibility for health system quality improvement, clinical and quality standards development for patient care and safety, and the dissemination of knowledge in conjunction with the agency's mandate. It would require Ontario Health to engage with specified Indigenous and French-language health planning entities, as well as with the Minister's Patient and Family Advisory Council.

Ontario Health would be responsible for patient engagement and patient relations, digital health, information technology and data management services, and supporting health care practitioner recruitment and retention. The agency would assume responsibility for planning, coordinating, undertaking and supporting activities related to tissue donation and transplantation, in accordance with the Trillium Gift of Life Network Act; supporting the Patient Ombudsman in carrying out functions in accordance with the Excellent Care for All Act, 2010; and supporting or providing supply chain management services to health service providers and related organizations.

Finally, the agency would provide advice and recommendations to the minister and other participants in the Ontario health care system in respect of issues related to health care that the minister may specify. The agency would also promote health service integration to enable appropriate, coordinated and effective health service delivery. The proposed legislation leaves it open so that further objects of Ontario Health could also be prescribed by regulation in the future as necessary.

This bill also proposes to establish the parameters for Ontario Health's activities. For instance, it requires that the agency must carry out its operations without the

purpose of gain, and that it use all money and assets only to further the objects that I just outlined. It also proposes to limit certain powers of the agency, making them subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. This would limit the agency's ability to, for instance, invest money, generate revenue, borrow or lend money, or make real estate transactions, other than leasing space, for any reason outside of the purposes of the agency.

Under the legislation that we are proposing, the board of directors for the agency would be limited to 15 members, and the agency will employ a CEO who will not otherwise be a member of the board.

Speaker, the proposed legislation also includes necessary mechanisms to ensure the provision of funding to Ontario Health in order to fulfill its mandate. It would establish the funding and accountability relationship between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Ontario Health. The legislation would provide the minister with the authority to provide funding to Ontario Health, and it would require both parties to enter into an accountability agreement in respect of that funding. It would also allow the minister to set the terms and conditions for the funding that Ontario Health would receive. Finally, the legislation would require Ontario Health to provide the minister with any reports or information, not including personal health information, that the minister may require for the purposes of administering this proposed statute.

Speaker, this proposed legislation also gives the minister the authority to issue binding directives to Ontario Health or a person or entity that receives funding from Ontario Health, in those instances where the minister considers it to be in the public interest to do so. A directive could be general or it could be very specific in its application.

1700

There's one other important piece of the proposed legislation which relates to ministerial directives, and this is the requirement that the minister must ensure that every directive be published on a website. This provision would help ensure that the directives are accessible and transparent.

Another critical aspect of this proposed legislation is how it would enable Ontario Health to deliver funding to other organizations to provide health care and to support the provision of health care. For instance, the bill before us includes provisions that would allow for Ontario Health to provide health service providers, as well as integrated care delivery systems—otherwise known as Ontario health teams—with funding in respect of the health services that they provide.

Speaker, our government believes very, very strongly that anyone receiving funding from the province of Ontario or through its agents needs to be accountable for the tax dollars that they are entrusted with and to spend that money wisely and for the services that they deliver.

Interjections.

Mrs. Robin Martin: As you can see, that's something that I and my colleagues take very seriously. The taxpayers entrust us with their money, and we need to make sure that that money is spent wisely and that it delivers the services that they need and that we have contracted for.

That is why this proposed legislation would require Ontario Health to enter into a service accountability agreement with any organization the agency proposes to fund to deliver services.

This proposed legislation also includes other avenues to ensure accountability. It would give Ontario Health the authority to require that these funded persons or entities provide plans, reports, financial statements and any further information—other than personal health information, of course—that it requires.

I think that that accountability point is very important. Up until this point, it's surprising, for such a huge health system as we have, that we don't have a lot of insight or a direct line of sight into how the money that we spend is paying for actual services and what the taxpayers are getting in return. That is something that we really need to have a clear line of sight on, and these agreements are a tool to make that happen.

Speaker, the final but no less important pieces of the proposed legislation that I will speak to today are related to the legislative tools that will help Ontario Health take shape. I'm referring to the tools which will take all of the various existing provincial agencies and bring them together under Ontario Health. This bill would give the minister the necessary authority to make an order that would transfer all or part of the assets, liabilities, rights, obligations and employees of specified organizations to Ontario Health, a health service provider or to an Ontario health team.

Under the proposed legislation, the list of these specified organizations includes Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario, HealthForceOntario Marketing and Recruitment Agency, Health Shared Services Ontario, Ontario Health Quality Council—also known as Health Quality Ontario—the Trillium Gift of Life Network and any of the 14 local health integration networks.

This bill would also address the various issues relating to legal rights, obligations and liabilities of both those organizations that are the subject of a transfer order and transfer recipient organizations as a result of the minister's transfer order. It also specifies, expressly, that employees of an organization that are subject to a transfer order immediately before the transfer become the employees of the transfer recipient, such as in the case of Ontario Health, as of the date of transfer, without changes to the terms of their employment.

If passed, this proposed legislation would also give the corollary authority to the minister to dissolve a specified organization as a result of having been the subject of a minister's transfer order.

Speaker, our government appreciates the hard work and dedication that the leadership of these various agencies, or specified organizations that I have listed, have done in the service of the people of Ontario. There are many, many examples of excellent work having been done by those agencies and the people who work there, and their commitment to the people of Ontario is commendable. But if we are to see real improvements that patients will experience first-hand, we must better coordinate the public health care system so that it is organized around people's

needs and their health outcomes. That is why the proposal for Ontario Health is so important.

I want to close by thanking our Deputy Premier for the opportunity to speak to this important piece of legislation. Once again, I want to take this opportunity to encourage all of my colleagues to support it, because this legislation is for the betterment of patients across Ontario.

Hon. Greg Rickford: For the people.

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's for the people; exactly.

Our government is hard at work building a connected and sustainable health care system centred on the needs of patients, families and caregivers. By relentlessly focusing on patient experience and on better-connected care, we will reduce wait times and end hallway health care. Ontarians can be confident that there will be a sustainable health care system for them when and where they need it, and Ontarians can be confident in our Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to make that happen.

I am now going to turn over the discussion to my colleague the member for Oakville North–Burlington, who will speak a little bit more as to how this legislation is going to be able to enable Ontario health teams to ensure truly coordinated care across our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing with the debate, I now turn it over to the member from Oakville North–Burlington.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for sharing her time with me here today, and most importantly, for her vision, her leadership and her compassion in ensuring Ontarians get the health care they deserve.

I'd also like to thank my fellow parliamentary assistant, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, for outlining the important elements of this proposed legislation as they relate to Ontario Health. But, Speaker, Bill 74 is much more than this.

1710

Other elements, such as the proposed Ontario health teams, are important parts of our government's plan to build and preserve our publicly funded health care system, a system centred around the patient and one in which we will redirect money to patient care, where it belongs.

We speak of health care as a system, and I know we have to manage it and work with it that way, but we can never forget that the system is made up of people: patients who need care, and the families and friends who love them and want to help them, and the doctors, nurses, personal support workers and other staff who want to help patients get well, to heal and to return to their lives as soon as they can, or if they cannot, to help them get the care that preserves their quality of life and their human dignity. To help individuals, we must fix the system, but it will only be fixed if it works for each individual in the system, providing them care and comfort.

Speaker, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, I have been meeting with stakeholders from across the health care sector: patients, doctors, nurses, support workers, managers, friends and

families. I hear from them over and over again about how the previous government failed our front-line workers and those they care for. I hear from patients and families who are forced to navigate a system that seems to work against people just trying to get the help they need—a system that works magnificently in many of its parts but that seems to be broken in its whole.

Bill 74 aims to mend this broken system, fixing the mess left behind by the Wynne Liberals.

The proposed legislation will support the establishment of Ontario health teams, referred to in the bill as “integrated care delivery systems,” with the goal of improving the patient experience and providing better and connected care.

These teams will be made up of health service providers, so let’s look at what services could be included. A health service provider may be a hospital or a psychiatric facility or a long-term-care home. It could be a not-for-profit that operates a community health centre, a community mental health and addictions service, a family health team, a nurse practitioner-led clinic or a First Nations health access centre. The definition being proposed is expansive enough that it would also cover organizations that provide services under the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994, and not-for-profits that provide palliative care services. As you can see, the term “health service provider” covers a broad range of providers.

Returning to our discussion on the Ontario health teams: Ontario health teams are a new model in which a group of health care providers would voluntarily come together and partner and be supported to work as one coordinated team for their patients. For instance, a team could be comprised of primary care, hospital services, mental health and addiction services, home care and long-term care. These integrated teams will provide a full range of health services to patients and help people get the right care they need. The team would be held clinically and fiscally accountable for delivering a coordinated continuum of care to a defined community or communities.

Health care providers within a team will work together and be funded together through one envelope. In this way, the care a person receives will become integrated and the needs of the whole person will be considered. These teams will also improve access to secure digital tools, including online health records and online appointment-booking with doctors and specialists—a real 21st-century approach to health care.

The bill proposes that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care would have the power to designate organizations as members of an Ontario health team. It states that this designation cannot be given unless these organizations can deliver, in an integrated and co-ordinated manner, at least three of the following types of services:

- hospital services;
- primary care services;
- mental health or addictions services;
- home care or community services;
- palliative care services; or
- any other health care service or—and this is an important inclusion—non-health service that supports the

provision of health care services that may be provided for in the regulations.

As you can see, Speaker, a large number of potential partners could join an Ontario health team, and we recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all model that is going to work universally across the province. The needs of the people in my own community of Oakville North–Burlington can vary greatly from the needs of communities in northern Ontario or other parts of southern Ontario. Each community, whether it’s a small town, city, First Nations community or even a cultural community within a city, needs the appropriate medical care for its people. Our objective is to put patients, families and communities at the centre of our health care system, wrapping health services around them and providing them with the quality care and dignity they deserve.

Key to this will be our Ontario health teams. These teams will be designed and driven based on the needs of patients and communities, and will meaningfully engage and partner with patients, families, caregivers and communities. We envisage that all these partners will come together to actively shape how local health services are delivered and managed.

The providers who form Ontario health teams will be free to determine the model that works best for them, their patients and their communities. It will allow for the necessary flexibility to ensure, for instance, health service providers in northern Ontario can deliver services in a way that best meets the needs of their communities, which could be very different than the needs of those living here in the GTA. It’s a proposal that recognizes the unique nature of these communities, both culturally and geographically, and respects the deep experience of our health service providers to develop their teams in the way to best serve the needs of their patients.

The proposed legislation also provides that any obligation, power or decision that is applied to an Ontario health team would apply to and be binding on all members of the team. Our government is firmly committed to ensuring our health care system is accountable to the people of Ontario.

Bill 74 would allow Ontario Health or the minister to appoint investigators to investigate and report on matters such as the quality of care given by an Ontario health team or health service provider, and it provides for measures to be taken if there are concerns. Every report of an investigator would go to Ontario Health or the minister and to the local health provider or the team, but most importantly, every report would be made available to the public. This proposal would ensure openness and accountability for patients in Ontario who need to know if there is a problem and how and where it’s being addressed. Ontarians can be confident that there will be a sustainable public health care system for them when and where they need it.

This bill, if passed, would also grant the minister the authority to appoint a supervisor of a health service provider or an Ontario health team if the minister considers it to be in the public interest to do so.

1720

Now, again, there are a few exceptions which need to be clarified, because there are already other provisions in place to cover certain circumstances. For instance, a supervisor could not be appointed for a licensee under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, because there are already provisions under the act to deal with those sorts of situations. As well, under the proposed legislation, only the Lieutenant Governor in Council, on the advice of the minister, could appoint a supervisor for a public hospital or for an Ontario health team that includes a public hospital, consistent with the process for supervisors appointed under the Public Hospitals Act.

The proposed legislation would give the minister the authority to give directions to the supervisor, and once again, it would require a supervisor to produce a written report that would have to be made public, with any personal health information in the report being kept private and confidential.

Ontario health teams are part of our goal of integrating the health care system. We need an integrated system to make it easier for patients to get the care they need. Patients and their families shouldn't be left stranded seeking appropriate care.

If this bill should pass, then Ontario Health and each of the Ontario health teams and health service providers would be required to identify opportunities to integrate the services of the health care system in an effort to provide appropriate, coordinated, effective and efficient services. It would give authority to Ontario Health to integrate the health system by providing or changing funding to a health service provider or an Ontario health team, or negotiating an integration among health service providers, Ontario health teams or organizations which support the provision of health care.

This proposed legislation would also give the minister the authority to issue an integration order in the public interest. This could require one or more health service providers or Ontario health teams funded by Ontario Health to provide all or part of a service or cease providing a service; or to provide a service to a certain level, quality, or extent; or to transfer a service from one location to another.

The minister would also be given the authority to require health service providers or Ontario health teams to cease operating or dissolve operations, to amalgamate with others funded by Ontario Health, to coordinate services with or partner with another person or entity funded by Ontario Health, to transfer all or part of their operations to another organization funded by Ontario Health, and to do anything necessary to achieve a directed integration.

The proposed legislation would also protect the religious rights of organizations under section 1 of the charter. The minister's ability to issue integration orders would be restricted if such an order required a religious organization to provide a service that is contrary to the religion related to the organization.

This proposed legislation would also prohibit integration decisions—and I want to stress this next point—in any

instance where a transfer of services would result in an individual having to pay for these services, except as otherwise permitted by law.

The public would also have an opportunity to comment. Bill 74 would require the minister to provide a minimum of 30 days' written notice of intent to issue an order and publish the proposed order on a website. Members of the public would then have an opportunity to make written submissions to raise their concerns, to make suggestions or share their support for the order.

Only after considering any written submissions would the minister be authorized to issue a final order, and that order could differ from the order that was initially proposed. This gives the minister the flexibility to consider public concerns and make any adjustments deemed necessary before making a final decision.

The bill also provides for a health service provider or Ontario health team who wishes to integrate its services with those of another person or organization. Bill 74 proposes that unless the regulations provided otherwise, a health service provider or Ontario health team which is proposing to integrate services funded by Ontario Health with those of another organization would be required to give the minister notice of the proposed integration. If the minister does not consider an integration to be in the public interest after written submissions, the minister can say no. This helps to ensure all decisions are being made in the interest of the patient and not just in the interest of health service providers.

Our vision of our public health care system is one where patients and families will have access to faster, better and more connected services; a system where family doctors, hospitals, homes, community care providers and long-term care work together as a team in the interests of their patients, with providers in the teams working and talking directly with each other—rather than working in silos and communicating only with the government—and creating a seamless care experience for the patient and their families; a system where patients are supported when moving from one health care service to another, a service that truly puts the patient at the centre of care wherever it's needed. A system that must always put the patient at its centre, indeed putting them first, will be better able to offer quality care and speedy care to each patient and will result in improved patient experience and health outcomes.

In my role as both MPP and parliamentary assistant, I've been honoured to engage with and listen to many health care providers from across Ontario. It's clear that Bill 74 will help our front-line care providers by transforming the community hospital models through new models of care, sharing best practices, specialized services and innovative technology. Working together, these new ideas can be assessed, adopted and integrated into Ontario's health care system.

In my riding of Oakville North—Burlington, we are privileged to have the new Oakville Trafalgar hospital. Part of Halton's rich history, this state-of-the-art new building has a long-standing tradition of providing quality care to resi-

dents of our community. Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington serves that city and neighbouring areas. Under the leadership of Eric Vandewall, president and CEO, the hospital serves Burlington and neighbouring communities.

I was proud to join with the Premier and our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care last November as we celebrated the completion of the hospital's \$200-million expansion project. My constituents are fortunate in the excellent hospital system in these communities, and I know that Bill 74 will help to better connect this system with other health care providers for the people of Oakville North–Burlington and for Halton.

Modernizing the health care system will take time, and the proposed legislation we are debating here today is just one part of that process. It's the first step on a path to transform our health care system and put patients at its heart. We will continue to listen to the people who plan and work on the front lines, including nurses, doctors and other care providers, as we build the new system. As we move forward, we will do it at a pace that means Ontarians will continue to access reliable public health care through OHIP. Our plan will improve the health system so that people have access to faster, better-coordinated public health care where it is needed and when it is needed, because we know that to improve health care for each patient and their family, we have to reform the system.

But we are not reforming for the system. We are reforming for the patient and for the people.

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We on this side of the House, Speaker, know what we are here for. The people of Ontario have been and always will be our government's priority and focus. Our government is working to protect the things that matter most to Ontarians—including fixing health care. We will create a public health care system that works for everyone.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm very pleased to be able to speak today on this so-called people's health care act, on behalf of the residents of Davenport.

I had a couple of points that I wanted to raise, but the first thing is just how incredibly disappointing it is—the way this government has approached what is such an important issue and such a massive reform of a system that so many Ontarians and residents in my community depend upon. Obviously, we all know that there have been many issues with the system as it works currently. But what I think is concerning to many of the folks who have contacted my office in my community is the way this government has concocted this scheme behind closed doors, even going so far as to deny that the legislation, which was almost identical to what was eventually presented, was actually real when we revealed that legislation. As well, pulling all of the new board members of this giant agency together to, again, concoct the plans around this behind closed doors is very concerning.

What Ontarians are asking for is transparency and accountability from government, and that has been seriously lacking here, and we know that because 1,594 Ontarians

asked to present to the committee on this legislation—no wonder. This affects so many; it affects every one of us. There are so many people invested in that, and the fact that only 30 were chosen, that the government refused to extend the opportunity for people to participate—and to travel around the province and allow people who might want to participate from northern or rural communities, is really, really upsetting.

I really would urge the government to take the time to consider Ontarians' interests in this, and take a more democratic and more accountable and transparent approach.

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

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: There's no doubt that Ontario's health care system is on life support. Every single day, thousands of people across this province spend the day in hallways across this province. Action was needed after 15 years of waste, mismanagement and scandal—and that's exactly what this piece of legislation is doing.

It's about putting the patients first. It's about centring health care around the patients and our front-line workers in the system.

It's unbelievable that the previous government was spending, on average, 30% more on administrative expenses for health care than any other province in Canada. That's not going to the more important resources in health care, like our front-line workers.

We need to make sure that the patients are first, that front-line care is given the priority, so residents across this province can get the access to health care that we so desperately need in this province—family doctors, hospitals all working together to ensure that we have the best health care system, a connected system that connects entire communities together to deliver these services in a much better way.

That starts with the great work that has already been done by the Minister of Health and her great parliamentary assistants, who have been consulting with patients and front-line workers across this province for so long and have done a great job in putting together this piece of legislation that will desperately fix a health care system that is broken and continues to be on life support, that they are so desperately trying to change.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. Oh, I needed to get up. I needed to stand. I needed to talk to the pages. How did you like that last hour, right? Was that—ooh—just filled and riveting and everything?

I need to talk to the people of Algoma–Manitoulin who just spent the last hour listening to what this government has to offer to you. Let me put it to you in simple terms, all right? They talk about integration of services. We've done it. Look at Espanola, a community of about 5,000 where they've done this. You're going to be recreating a wheel that doesn't need to be recreated. You're going to be taking this community, which is going to be swallowed

up by others, and completely devastate what they've worked hard at getting accomplished and getting done.

Here's the other thing they're not telling you, because this is not going out to the public, to the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin: They're opening up the door, they're taking the doors off the hinges, they're opening up windows—and guess what? Privatization and for-profit is what's going to happen. You need to know that because this is what's happening. Mark my words. I'm going to be here for a while, for the next four years, and I have hope that the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin send me back here, because somebody is going to have to correct the mess that this government is actually opening up the door to.

Now, pages, when you're sitting in class and the teacher says, "We're going to be changing some things and we want your input," what do you do? Do you raise your hand? How would you like it if we say, "You know what? You can raise your hands all you want, but we're not going to listen to what you're talking about. We're not going to listen to the ideas."

This is what this government is doing, because we have thousands of people across this province that have ideas, that have worries, that have questions to put to this government, and do you know what? "We know best. We're going to do what we believe is going to happen, and we're not going to go out and listen to Ontarians. We're not going to listen to their views. We're not going to listen to the organizations. We're not going to listen to all different corners of this province."

That's what this government is doing, and that is wrong. You're opening up the door to privatization and for-profit service. That is wrong.

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

Mrs. Amy Fee: It's my honour to rise here today to talk about The People's Health Care Act and the hard work of our Deputy Premier and our health minister, as well as her two parliamentary assistants, the members from Eglinton-Lawrence and Oakville North-Burlington.

The whole point of this bill is to make sure that we have a strong public health care system in Ontario. What I have heard from families in Kitchener South-Hespeler is that they are desperate for patient-centred care. I have heard from people in my riding who are sick of telling their stories over and over again when they go to a different practitioner or a different appointment, and having to start all over again and explain the symptoms, the timelines for what has gone on in their lives. They need that wraparound support, and that is exactly what our health minister has seen in her work as the Patient Ombudsman and why she has brought forward this bill.

We know that we have a health care system that has been in crisis in this province, and that is why she has moved forward to make sure we fix this. We cannot continue on having patients being treated in hallways. A thousand patients a day is far too many; even having one patient a day being treated in a hospital hallway is too many. That is why we are moving forward with this bill, and that

is why I'm so proud to be standing here and talking about the work we have been doing.

In my life, Mr. Speaker, I have watched my own family members struggle to get that connected-care piece, to find community care, to find long-term care, to find those supports that they need, and again, like my constituents were saying, telling their stories over and over again, not knowing where to go. That is why these Ontario health teams are so vital. I'm so excited to see what the bill will do for Ontario health care.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Speaker. I would like—

Interjections.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you for all of that enthusiastic applause. I would like to thank the members from Davenport, Brampton South, Algoma-Manitoulin and Kitchener South-Hespeler for their very interesting and concise comments.

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I would also like to respond to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, who suggested we are centralizing health care and that his constituents won't have a say. He is completely mistaken in the legislation. In fact, Bill 74 focuses on letting local health services providers decide for themselves. It focuses on allowing them to come together to form these integrated health service units. In fact, the decentralization will allow for patients to actually have integrated care, be at the centre of care in their communities, and truly not have to be left in silos, in hallway health care.

Interjection.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Cut loose by Bob Rae; exactly.

I ask the opposite members to actually focus on voting and supporting us in this legislation because I think that you'll find—having consulted with many, many health care providers across the community and across Ontario, they're all supporting Bill 74. They see it as a positive way forward for our health care system and, more importantly, for our patients.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to start the first 20 minutes of my hour lead on Bill 74.

Just so that everybody remembers what we're talking about: Bill 74 is the biggest transformation of our health care system since medicare, when Tommy Douglas brought us medicare—

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —except that it goes in the wrong direction. When Tommy Douglas brought us medicare, he wanted care to be based on need, not on ability to pay, and we built a strong and robust health care system.

When I hear members from the other side, including the minister, telling us that our health care system is on life

support—this is not true. Do parts of our health care system need improvement? Absolutely. I agree about many of the problems that were brought forward. The problem of hallway health care, which has been growing for some years, needs to be fixed. The problem of long waits to get into long-term care—absolutely. The problem of our broken home care system that fails more people than it helps—absolutely. But does that mean that Ontario's health care system is on life support? Absolutely not.

You can all be very proud that Ontario has one of the best health care systems on the planet. You can all be proud that the people who work within the health care system in Ontario are some of the best.

I live up north, but I work in Toronto. From my office window, I look at University Avenue and I see the best tertiary care centres in all of Canada; I see people coming to Toronto, coming to those hospitals because they are the best that Canada has to offer.

Don't worry; our health care system is not on life support. Our health care system is strong. It is robust. It will help you in your time of need. Does it need to be improved? Yes.

My hospital, Health Sciences North, only had 18 days last year when they were not at more than 100% capacity. I have not been able to go visit any of my relatives, of my family members who have taken sick enough to be admitted to Health Sciences North—and every time I have gone to see them, none of them got a room. I visited with them in the ER for days at a time. I visited with them in the basement—much too close to the morgue for my liking—with no windows. I visited with them in TV rooms, where five of them were crammed in a room with no windows, no bathroom, no privacy. Does this need to be fixed? Absolutely.

But what this bill does is, it creates a super-bureaucracy. Really? How can you say that getting rid—and I'm not supposed to say "getting rid"; I'm supposed to say "dissolved." In the bill, they dissolve Cancer Care Ontario. Cancer Care Ontario is the jewel, the pride of all of Ontario. Every other province looks at the outcomes that Ontario has for cancer patients. If you look at the outcomes as to—some of the words are technical, but for how long you live after cancer, Ontario is through the roof. If you look at how we are able to implement best practices throughout all 100 of our sites that deliver oncology and cancer treatment, we are the best. Why? Because we have Cancer Care Ontario. And what are they doing? They are dissolving it.

How does that have anything to do with helping Health Sciences North with the overcrowding, or the 50% of our hospitals that have overcrowding every single night? I agree with the other side: 1,200 very sick people—sick enough to be admitted to our hospitals—will sleep in a hallway, in a broom closet, in a TV room, in a patient lounge, in anything but a room. This has to change; I agree with them. But what does creating a super-bureaucracy have to do with that? Nothing.

Mr. Ross Romano: We're taking the money out of the offices and putting it into the front lines, where it matters.

M^{me} France Gélinas: When the member says that they will take the money they save to reinvest into the front lines, it is rather interesting, because one of the 82 amendments that the NDP put forward was to put it in the bill. If there are economies of scale to be made by creating that super-bureaucracy, then put it in the bill that the money will be reinvested into front-line care. How do you figure they voted on this amendment, Speaker? The member just said that's what they're going to do. They're going to take the money that they save and reinvest it, so they should have been proud to put it in the bill. How do you figure they voted on the amendment?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dave Smith): Order, please.

M^{me} France Gélinas: They voted it down. They voted it down. They say the right thing, but when it comes to going from saying it in the House, in public, on Twitter and everything else to actually doing it by putting it in legislation, they voted it down.

If they were serious that they wanted to reinvest it, you could have put it anywhere in the bill. Put it into the preamble. There were many opportunities to do this. They voted those down.

At some point, if you are serious about something, you have to go from shouting it across the aisle while I'm trying to speak to actually putting it in the bill. They did not do this. Shouting it across the aisle does not make it true. It does not make it a plan that you can count on. It's just bad behaviour.

I wanted actual actions to be put in the bill. I submitted an amendment; the NDP submitted an amendment. We debated it. They said the right things. They said that they want to reinvest, but they didn't put it into the bill. So that's what the bill does. It creates the super-bureaucracy—I will talk more about this—and then it creates 50 of what the PA to the minister called health services units, what the bill called integrated care delivery systems.

But let's look a little bit as to what's in the bill. When we started to talk about this bill, there came a point where the people had an opportunity to speak. That point came and went really quickly. In less than 36 hours, 1,594 people asked to speak. Why? Because medicare is a program that defines us as Ontarians. It is something that everybody cares about. We've all had opportunities to deal with our health care system, and it is something that we cherish, that we are proud of. If you're going to do the biggest change to it, then it is normal that people want to be consulted.

So 1,594 asked to speak; a lucky 30 got chosen. Of those lucky 30, I took the time with my colleague from the NDP, and we asked each and every one of those 30 lucky ones out of 1,594 if they had been consulted before the bill came out. The first one was the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner: no. The Ontario Health Coalition: no. Home Care Ontario: no. The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario: She said not consulted, but they were briefed once the bill came out. Ontario Community Support Association: not consulted; briefed when the bill came out.

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The chair of the board of Trillium Gift of Life: no. AdvantAge Ontario: some information was brought forward, but not consulted. Regroupement des Entités de planification des services de santé en français de l'Ontario : no consultation. The next one was the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, as well as CUPE: no consultation. The next one was Prince Edward County Community Care for Seniors Association: not consulted. Ontario Nurses' Association: not consulted.

Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada: They said yes. Those are the big pharmacies, the big chains—most of them international—that work in Ontario. They had been consulted. They were my first one, after a full day.

The next one was Michael Rachlis, who is a professor at the University of Toronto: not consulted. The Alzheimer Society was next: not consulted. The Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario division: not consulted.

The next day, we started over. The first one to come was the Ontario Hospital Association. They said that they had had some talk with the government. Children's Mental Health Ontario: no. Then we had two survivors, Patricia Chartier and Kenneth Yurchuk: not consulted.

Cancer Care Ontario: Every single member on the other side praised Cancer Care Ontario: "We have to learn from them. We have to replicate what they're doing." So you would think that they really took the time to talk to Cancer Care Ontario and find out, "What exactly made you so successful? What is it that we can learn from what you do so that we can replicate it someplace else?" Not consulted.

The next one was the Ontario Public Service Employees Union—hundreds of thousands of employees: not consulted. Alliance for Healthier Communities—those are your community health centres, family health teams, Aboriginal health access centres, nurse practitioner-led clinics: not consulted. Save Your Skin Foundation—they are a cancer agency: not consulted.

The Chiefs of Ontario: The chief was there from Serpent River, with a big delegation. Not consulted. The next one was the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, with Ovide Mercredi there: not consulted.

The next one was Addictions and Mental Health Ontario: not consulted. The Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario: not consulted. The Ontario Medical Association was next: not consulted. Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario: They said they were not formally consulted but they had submitted a brief. The Ontario Chiropractic Association: not consulted. And the 30th one, Unifor—hundreds of thousands of workers represented: not consulted.

So when they say that they consulted before this bill was drafted, Speaker, who exactly did they speak to? Because when we asked all of those—and they are on the record, and you can all go read Hansard. We asked the question of each and every one of them. The first question the NDP asked, to all 30 of the 1,594 who wanted to make a deputation, was, "Were you consulted?" Please read the Hansard. None of them were, except big pharma. They had

an opportunity to come in; they were the only one. Everybody else said no. And I should say that the Ontario Hospital Association also said they had submitted briefs. So this is what we had.

I wanted to read into the record some of the people who wanted to be heard. I have Emily Stanton. She is from St. Catharines, and she sent this memo to the Standing Committee on Social Policy: "Less than 24 hours does not fulfill the public notice requirement. I was ill and in the hospital using our health care system and I was unable to meet the noon deadline today, despite a desire to speak to the issue." I don't know Mrs. Stanton, but I know that there are thousands of other Ontarians who felt exactly the same way: They did not have a chance to be heard.

So what happened? The minister in the House, when we brought this forward, said that they can send their comments in writing, and they did, Speaker: 19,413 pages. I have them in my office. I must say that I spent as much time as I could, and my entire team spent as much time as we could, to look at as many as we could.

All of those people who took the time to write got very little in return. I would like to put some of their comments into the record as well.

I have this email that comes from a lady that I don't know; it's just in the pile of 19,413. Her name is Elizabeth Reid. She is from the riding of Eglinton–Lawrence, and she says:

"I am deeply concerned about Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act, currently being considered for amendment by your government. In particular, I am concerned that the bill opens the door to an expansion of private for-profit care in Ontario through a combination of outsourcing, delisting and forced merger of non-profit and public care providers with for-profit conglomerates. I have experienced health care in the US, a largely for-profit system with massive insurance overhead costs paid by patients, and want no part of it in Ontario, and I do not want hard-earned taxpayers' funding to go to shareholders or for-profit companies rather than actual health care services.

"I am writing today to request an amendment to the bill that would prohibit any expansions of private for-profit care in the Ontario health care system, including through transfer or merger of existing non-profit or public care providers to private for-profit conglomerates.

"On February 26, the health minister told the Globe and Mail that 'There will be no more for-profit care in the system that we are envisioning.' As such, I would like to see this legislation amended to match her commitment and ensure that there will be no additional for-profit care."

I wonder if this good person from Eglinton–Lawrence is going to get an answer from the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I would ask one of my good pages—do I have a good page in there? You look pretty good. Do you want to please bring this to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, please?

I also have a few more. This one was from somebody who lives, actually, in Newmarket–Aurora, in the Minister of Health's riding. They go on to say that they are "con-

cerned that the bill opens the door to an expansion of private for-profit ... through the combination of outsourcing, delisting, and forced merger,” and they’re “writing today to request an amendment to the bill.” I was wondering if the good pages, again, could bring this, from Mr. Gary Roth, to the Minister of Health, just to make sure that she sees it and has an opportunity to respond to those good people.

I wouldn't want to leave the member from Oakville North-Burlington out there by herself. There is a written response that came in from Judith Levasseur—again, people that I don't know, but they're part of the 19,413 who have tried to be heard but never really had an opportunity. I would ask my other good page—they're all good pages, Speaker—to give this to the member from Oakville North-Burlington, please.

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The list goes on. I could send one of those messages to every single one of the 124 MPPs in this House, because when 19,413 messages came in, they came from all over the province. Did they have an opportunity to be listened to? I would say: not very much at all. They did not have a chance to be consulted for the drafting of the bill. The bill went through the House very quickly. It got time-allocated; that's a fancy term to mean that they didn't want to hear from us either. They cut—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Unfortunately, I have to cut you a little bit short, but when this bill is brought back again in the assembly you will have time remaining in your leadoff. So thank you very much.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Ottawa Centre has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Ottawa Centre. You have up to five minutes.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Minister, for being here and being part of this debate. I'm going to attempt what my lawyer friends call an anticipatory breach. That's an attempt to get past a rote debate.

Here's what I think could happen that I hope doesn't happen tonight. What could happen is that I come out charging and say, “This government isn't doing enough and never will,” and rah-rah-rah, and the minister says, “My government understands” something, and we talk

past each other. And honestly—through you, Speaker, to the minister—I don't want that tonight.

I've spent the last six hours hearing directly from people with disabilities and their advocates, and it has been the most rewarding six hours I have spent in this place since I started. I have heard from people who want me—I'm not pointing fingers; I'm pointing thumbs—to do better as the critic for people with disabilities. So here's my thought, Speaker, by way of an anticipatory breach: Let's not get into a debate about our party hating business and that the solution to our lack of momentum around the AODA is convening business leaders because the best social program is a job and every person with a disability simply needs a job, and that will help us meet our AODA obligations. I really, really don't want that to be the debate tonight if we can help it.

The debate I would like to have, though, is about a society, the one in which we live, which continues to wilfully discriminate against people with disabilities. We need look no further than the green-carpeted place in which we're standing right now, where there has been one day since I've been here where there has been ASL interpretation—one day. So for viewers watching at home, good luck tuning into the processes of your government.

For people who need any number of other modifications—we had weeks and weeks of planning, and I just want to say to all of the staff from the NDP caucus who participated in making today a success: It was because of you that people with disabilities had an opportunity to speak their truth today. We organized that, Speaker. We spent \$3,000 of the Ottawa Centre budget to make sure there were CART services, ASL services, attendant care. But we shouldn't have to do that to make Queen's Park accessible for people with disabilities. It should be accessible. Those services should be available for people.

So the debate I want to have tonight is not whether or not a job is the best social program for people with disabilities. The debate I would love to have tonight is: Can we imagine an Ontario six years from now where new apartment buildings are not built wilfully to discriminate against people with disabilities? Can we, as a Legislature, agree that no more public dollars should ever be invested in any built infrastructure which keeps people with disabilities out? Can we agree that any public service offered by this government must be accessible to each and every person who lives here? That's the debate I would love to have, and I would hope the debate to that is a resounding yes.

Back home in Ottawa Centre, I've spoken to many people from the corporate world. Half of my family are in business—developers, in fact, in the province of Quebec. They get this debate, because it's the law. It's the law. Ontario has to scale up its ambitions in meeting our rhetoric on accessibility with reality.

I give the minister credit: When the Onley report was released, the committees tasked with informing our work on momentum towards the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act were unfrozen. That's good. Those are some of the experts I heard from today.

My question to the minister—a very specific question, through you, Speaker—is, when will those committees meet, and on what timeline of urgency will their advice to this government be actioned? That's the question.

If we see examples of public policy in this province continuing that wilfully discriminate against people with disabilities, do they have to wait for their lawyers to resolve the problems? Do they have to be their own private accessibility police? I want to say no. I want to say to every person with a disability in this province, if you see something that is wrong, you photograph it, you name it and you bring it to our attention. I will bring it to the minister's attention, and we will fix it now. We have to have that kind of urgency—

Interjections.

Mr. Joel Harden: And I don't find it to be a laughing matter; I guess some of my colleagues on the opposite side of the House do. I don't think it's funny when people with disabilities can't get into buildings, can't get services and can't get the support they need. We have to take action, the action has to be now, and I invite the government to approach it with that degree of urgency.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The Minister of Seniors and Accessibility has up to five minutes to respond. Minister?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'm happy to be here this evening to provide more information about the Honourable David Onley's report and our government's path forward to improve accessibility in Ontario. First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Onley for his dedication and hard work over the last year, both reviewing the AODA and preparing this report. He held a public consultation across Ontario and reviewed over 100 submissions to hear people's concerns first-hand.

As part of the ongoing work to ensure that AODA is helping people with disabilities, this review was critical to ensure that Ontario becomes even more accessible. Mr. Onley is a highly committed, respected accessibility leader. I have had the honour of speaking with Mr. Onley on several occasions leading up to the release of this report. We have also spoken since the report has been released, and he has provided me valuable advice and guidance.

Mr. Speaker, this is why we took the step of tabling the report in the Legislature faster than any other AODA review has been released. We also took the steps of sending K-12 education, the post-secondary education, and the health care standards development committees back to work. This was recommendation number 4 in Mr. Onley's report. I'm pleased to report that the chairs of these three committees are currently developing their work plans and are working with ministry staff to re-engage committee members and schedule their first meetings.

I'm also working with my fellow ministers across government, identifying areas where we can work together to remove the barriers faced by Ontario's 1.9 million people with disabilities. I look forward to sharing these plans in the future.

In a discussion I had with Mr. Onley, he told me that the most important thing we can do for people with disabilities is to create economic opportunities so they can find a job. This was also one of his recommendations, and this is a top priority. An accessible workplace means an Ontario that is open for business and open for jobs for everyone.

My ministry's Employers' Partnership Table is currently hard at work developing business plans to show employers the huge benefits of hiring employees with disabilities. Employers are finding that hiring people with disabilities improves the bottom line, because productivity goes up. The table is comprised of 17 members representing a range of small, medium and large businesses from across Ontario.

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And we will be consulting with businesses about how they can better provide economic opportunities to people with disabilities and also gain a competitive advantage by making their businesses more accessible.

Just yesterday, I had a meeting with the great Rick Hansen and Minister Vic Fedeli about this very subject.

We have also recently funded an accessibility guide for businesses, in partnership with the Ontario BIA Association. The guide gives helpful tips for businesses on how to become more inclusive and accessible, especially in relation to removing physical barriers.

Our government is working to make our province a more open place to live, work and do business.

Mr. Speaker, this will not be easy. For 15 years the Liberals were in power, but they didn't make the progress—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you, Minister.

Interjections.

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

CURRICULUM

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from London North Centre has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Education. The rules are, you have up to five minutes, and the Minister of Education has up to five minutes to reply.

I now turn it over to the member from London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question today was about the International Day of Pink, when we should be standing united, celebrating diversity, while also standing against homophobia, transphobia and all forms of intolerance and hate. The answer to my question was the direct opposite of that.

I could tell you my story and what it was like to be a child in a world that hates you, a world that denied you dignity, equity and even basic human rights. But I didn't come to this place to talk about myself. As members of this House, we stand for our constituents, our community, our children and their future. We are responsible to them.

I'd rather talk about the people who came before me, the champions, the individuals who bravely stared down adversity, who dared to stand out, who were themselves, out of the closet, proud, and who risked it all. We all know how many people became alienated from their families or lost their friends, their jobs, their homes, their health and their safety, all simply because they were true to themselves. It's important that we also recognize the allies, the supporters, the people who selflessly stood up for others even though they weren't themselves part of the LGBTQ+ community.

We stand here as parliamentarians tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that no one has to endure that kind of suffering ever again.

Speaker, I'd ask the government and each and every member to look back on their actions.

Today, my question to the minister was a giveaway. I asked her to say the words "homophobia" and "transphobia" because she didn't address them in her first answer. If I recall correctly, I asked twice. This was an opportunity, a giveaway. The minister who is charged with ensuring that classrooms are welcoming, safe and equitable environments refused to use these words. That refusal is neither an omission nor a careless mistake. It was a conscious, deliberate act that ignores and disregards the LGBTQ+ community.

We saw on social media, quickly after that deliberate act, that there was a sloppy tweet with a couch with stuff all over it—an attempt to control the damage that was already done. But the damage was already done.

This is not something in isolation. This is part of a pattern.

During the throne speech, when mentioning differing aspects of diversity such as race, ethnicity, gender, the term "lifestyle" was used. To anyone from the LGBTQ+ community, we know exactly what this means. Mentioned here, it insinuates that being gay is a choice—a bad choice—something shameful.

I recall asking the Premier if he would attend the Trans Day of Remembrance flag-raising here at Queen's Park. One would imagine that walking 20 steps outside the door wasn't too much to ask—again, another giveaway. It was a chance for the Premier to show he stands with Ontario's trans community. If I recall correctly, he passed that question off to the Minister of Education.

Notice a pattern here, Speaker?

The curriculum is an expression of the values of the government. It is well within the government's purview to redefine and refine the curriculum, but the government backpedalled on human rights and reverted to an anachronistic government. Through you, Speaker, for the minister's vocabulary, "anachronistic" means it doesn't belong to this time.

Critics quite rightly have decried that this curriculum was the deliberate erasure of LGBTQ+ voices, realities and identities. The government spouted over and over again that they were listening to families, but when their online consultation showed that families supported an inclusive, modern curriculum, the Premier blamed "certain groups."

Let us also not forget that educators were threatened with a snitch line if they were found teaching or talking about 2015 health and physical education curricular topics. It really sent a chill down one's spine. Lawyers from the government's side during the court case claimed that teachers were free to discuss topics from the 2015 curriculum as though they were wilfully ignoring the Premier's words, but the threat had been made.

In addition, when new curricular documents are produced, older ones are still always available online. Not so with the 2015 curriculum: It was erased from the Ministry of Education website—erased, much like LGBTQ+ voices, identities and realities.

You know, through you, Speaker, to the minister: Children are watching. Children are smart. And words matter. On this side of the House, as Ontario's loyal opposition, we're proud to show young members of the LGBTQ+ community that they're loved and they're accepted, even though their government hasn't.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now, the Minister of Education, you have up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: On the International Day of Pink, a day where I sincerely hope we could all come together in an effort to stop all forms of bullying—all forms—and combative discrimination against the LGBTQ community, as well as anybody else who stands up for them in their own way—we'd come together and stand united, because people have a right to stand up and unite in their own way for something that matters a lot.

That's why I'm so pleased to stand in this House and clarify some comments that people have enjoyed misconstruing, that the opposition, in particular, may have taken out of context. Our government, to be perfectly clear, Speaker, has zero tolerance when it comes to bullying of any form, be it in person or online via social media. Let me be perfectly clear, Speaker—and as I shared with the media after question period this morning—there is absolutely zero room—zero room—for any kind of homophobia and transphobia in our education system. Anybody who plays games to try to make it so is—actually, I question their integrity.

Since day one, we have been taking steps to ensure safe and supportive learning environments for every student in this province. Nobody should play games with that. We're listening. We're consulting. Regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender, age, disability or any other factor, we are committed to ensuring that all schools are accepting for all students.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand here today to further outline what the Ministry of Education is doing specifically to combat any discrimination against our LGBTQ students all across Ontario, and that starts with putting a stop to bullying in any form—in any form that is unacceptable, because it can happen anywhere and so easily, whether it's physical, verbal, social, written or cyberbullying, especially in our schools. We have to stand tall and united and say, "No more."

Today and every day, our government, along with students, educators, allies and parents, must work together to combat bullying instead of perpetuating it. We have to stand tall against discrimination in all of its forms, because as I've said before, a safe and supportive school environment is essential for students to succeed in the classroom and in life.

Last month, we released our bold, groundbreaking vision for education, Education that Works for You. This plan will modernize our education system, empower our educators and better prepare our students for our modern world. For example, we've released a revised health and physical education curriculum. This curriculum was based on 72,000 points of engagement from parents, students, educators, employers, grandparents and concerned citizens. This curriculum will help prepare our children for the realities of the world today, outside of the classroom.

Part of this new curriculum includes a brand-new focus on mental health. For the first time in this province's history, all students from kindergarten to grade 12 will be required to learn about mental health. There will also be a renewed focus on issues such as body-shaming and body image.

Interjections.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you for that.

Part of the updating of the curriculum means reflecting the practices commonly used by our students, and I'm talking about the use of technology in this particular case. That's why we're focusing on teaching things like online safety and putting a stop to cyberbullying. We have to increase awareness of how it's not acceptable in this day and age and why it needs to stop.

This is about making sure that Ontario schools are adopting equitable and inclusive practices. The Education Act requires all school boards to provide safe, inclusive and accepting learning environments for all students—and I repeat, all students—and we've been taking steps since we formed government to continue to enforce just that. We've been working with schools and school boards on how to best address homophobia and any other form of discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, we stand for safe and supportive classrooms for every student, no matter what race, what—

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

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1823.

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