

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No.106

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 106

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Tuesday
14 May 2019

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Mardi
14 mai 2019

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 May 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 mai 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 107, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and various other statutes in respect of transportation-related matters, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Tuesday, May 21, 2019, and Wednesday, May 22, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. for public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 107:

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 16, 2019; and

—That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designate following the deadline for requests to appear by 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 16, 2019; and

—That each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk, by 9 a.m. on Friday, May 17, 2019; and

—That each witness will receive up to six minutes for their presentation followed by 14 minutes for questioning, with two minutes allotted to the independent Green member and 12 minutes divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning; and

That the deadline for filing written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, May 23, 2019; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 10 a.m. on Friday, May 24, 2019; and

That the Standing Committee on General Government shall be authorized to meet on Monday, May 27, 2019,

from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 8 p.m., and Tuesday, May 28, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That on Tuesday, May 28, 2019, at 4 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday, May 29, 2019. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on General Government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That notwithstanding standing order 81(c), the bill may be called for third reading more than once in the same sessional day; and

That in the event of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The minister has moved government notice of motion number 61. Does the minister wish to speak to the bill?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): No? Further debate? Over here after over there, because the minister sat down. I am looking over there to see if they want—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you for the guidance. No one is speaking there. Then I shall go to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'm happy to rise today in the Legislature to debate motion 61, the time allocation on Bill 107, but before we do that, I would like to move an amendment to the bill, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the following be inserted after the 10th paragraph: "That when the order for third reading of this bill is called, three hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill with one hour and 15 minutes allotted to the government, one hour and 15 minutes

allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition, 20 minutes to the independent Liberal members, and 10 minutes allotted to the independent Green member."

Mr. Speaker, both the bill in question and the motion on the floor—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. Thank you. We'll get back to you in a moment. I know you're in a hurry this morning. We do have some rules we do have to follow.

The member for Kitchener–Conestoga has moved that the following be inserted after the 10th paragraph: "That when the order for third reading of the bill is called, three hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill with one hour and 15 minutes allotted to the government, one hour and 15 minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition, 20 minutes to the independent Liberal members, and 10 minutes allotted to the independent Green member; and"

Is that it? All right.

I'll recognize the member for Kitchener–Conestoga to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Mike Harris: To the amendment or the motion, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The amendment.

Mr. Mike Harris: No comment on the amendment, sir. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): You're not going to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Mike Harris: Not to the amendment.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today to speak on behalf of the people I represent in London West with regard to the amendment to the time allocation motion to Bill 107, the Getting Ontario Moving Act.

Speaker, this is an important debate that we are having. It is important to get Ontario moving. It is a concern that this government has decided to move time allocation on this act, because the people I represent in London have some real issues with the availability of transit, both transit locally and also the transportation network that London firms need to be competitive and to get products to market in Toronto, and to link the workforce that is available in Toronto, that talent pipeline between Toronto, London, Windsor and the whole 401 corridor.

Unfortunately, although this bill that the government wants to time-allocate is called the Getting Ontario Moving Act, it really only refers to getting Toronto moving. Now, I don't want to deny that there is a concern about getting Toronto moving. Toronto's transit system is critical to the economic health of our province. We need to have economic prosperity in the city of Toronto to keep our entire provincial economy healthy. However, this bill could have done so much more. It could have really addressed some of the pressing transit issues, the transportation issues, that are relevant to so many people in this province, including Londoners.

0910

One of the issues that was a big disappointment to my community was the decision to cancel the planned increase in the gas tax. That decision was made as part of the provincial budget, but of course it is having lasting ripple effects for transit authorities in many communities across this province, including the London Transit Commission. The London Transit Commission was counting on that gas tax increase. They were counting on those funds being available so that they could improve transit networks in our city. The gas tax revenues are critical for transit systems like the LTC not just to run transit operations, but also for capital improvements. The London Transit Commission was counting on being able to access those gas tax revenues to do a detailed assessment on how they could improve transit operations in the city.

London has one of the lowest proportions of workforce participation in the province. Only about three quarters of people of prime working age in my community are actually working. What I hear from many people in my community is that they can't get to where the jobs are. There are new industries that are growing, developing, in some of the areas south of the 401, which you, Speaker, will be well familiar with as you travel past London to Toronto. There are firms that are growing and investing in the London area, but they can't get the workforce out to them because the London Transit Commission isn't able to service those areas.

Transit underpins the ability of cities like London to be able to effectively grow businesses and to ensure that people can get to those jobs that are created, when they're created. But now, without access to those gas tax revenues, the London Transit Commission has had to make some decisions about which planned improvements they're going to have to cancel. They will have to cancel planned improvements because of the loss of these revenues.

The other concern, of course, related to transportation and to getting Ontario moving, giving London's economy the boost that it needs, is related to high-speed rail. Of course, in the communities surrounding London there was a lot of concern about this shiny object that the Liberals held out related to high-speed rail, about the lack of long-term planning that was involved in the Liberal proposal. This government has decided to cancel that project. They have pretty much flat-out said that it's not going ahead. This is a big disappointment to many businesses in London, particularly the tech businesses, because they hear over and over again when they're trying to attract talent—and I have to say, Speaker, that tech jobs are one of the areas in London where we have hundreds more vacancies than we have applicants to fill those vacancies. London tech firms are looking to recruit talent from around not just the province but around the country and even internationally. But people are telling these tech firms that they don't want to move to London because the transit service isn't good enough. That's not just local transit service, but it's also the linked network that would enable people to move quickly and efficiently from London to other communities—like Toronto, of course. So

it's a disappointment to companies in London that this bill doesn't address some of the transportation needs of other communities across the province.

I had the privilege, Speaker, of listening to my colleague the Ontario NDP transportation critic talk about this bill when it was first debated in this Legislature for second reading. One of the points that she really emphasized was about the lack of integrated thinking that is represented in this bill. By hiving off or uploading Toronto's transit system, the government is missing the opportunity to develop a truly integrated transportation network, and that is certainly a concern that we share in London. We believe that integrated transit is what we need. Not only do we need a way to link our community of London to the rest of the province—Toronto in particular—but we also need a way to link people who live in the London area to the city of London.

London is a health care hub for southwestern Ontario. Many people rely on the expertise of our health care facilities in London to get the specialized health care services that they need, but they can't get to London. They can't get to London because, even in areas as close to London as St. Thomas, there is a real lack of transit options. So we need to ensure that transportation planning looks at the big picture, that it looks at not only how we link London to Toronto but how we ensure that we have the ridership who are able to get into London and then access Toronto. So this is one of the big concerns about this bill: that it does not look at how to strengthen that integration. In fact, it undermines that integration. It starts to undo some of the work that has already been under way on building an integrated transit system in Toronto.

We believe that the people of Toronto deserve an integrated transit system, just as the people of London deserve an integrated transit system. So, Speaker, as I said, I think that it would be of value for this government to hear from MPPs across this province, MPPs who don't live in the GTHA, who live in some of the other regions of the province, regions like London that are underserved in terms of transportation options and who would like to have a meaningful discussion with this government about how to get our region moving. We know that the economic success of all regions in Ontario is how we build a successful provincial economy. Certainly we need to keep Toronto's economic growth strong and healthy, but we can't only rely on Toronto for the well-being of our province. People in communities like London, like Windsor, like Kingston and like Ottawa also deserve an economy and a transit system that enable them to grow businesses and to ensure that the talent is there for the workforce that is going to support those businesses.

0920

With that, Speaker, I will once again—

Interjection.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Oh, keep going? Okay—I will once again reiterate the concern that we have with time-allocating this bill: As with any time allocation motion, it's a missed opportunity. It's a missed opportunity for this government to hear from MPPs who represent every

corner of this province, who represent every region of this province, who might have some good ideas—although this government has shown that it's not particularly interested in good ideas. This government believes that it knows best, and that whatever legislation it brings in is the way it's going to be.

Not only are they not interested in hearing from MPPs in this place who bring the concerns and the priorities of the ideas of the people we represent, but they're also not interested in hearing from the people of this province. We've seen over and over, and again with this time allocation motion, that the government wants to limit opportunities for public participation. They want to close their ears to any evidence, for goodness' sake. They're not interested in evidence or research that might be brought to the table if they actually allowed meaningful input in a consultation process, if they actually allowed sufficient time for all the people who would like to weigh in on government legislation that has been brought forward.

But no, this government is not interested in hearing from MPPs. They're not interested in hearing from the citizens of Ontario. They're not interested in hearing from some of the experts and the stakeholder organizations that are going to be directly affected by the decisions that are made. They really have a “my way or the highway” point of view on the legislation that they introduce.

Speaking of highways, isn't it interesting, the investment that this government wants to make on expanding highway infrastructure, instead of looking deep and hard at the public transportation needs of people in this province? Yes, we need to relieve congestion on the 401, but we could do that by investing in public transportation, by investing in an integrated transit network. Instead, there are real concerns that this bill, with the upload of the TTC, will just cause years of more delays. It will delay even further the development of that integrated transportation network that is needed in this province. It will cause yet more frustration as the province has to go back to square one in terms of the planning that is being done.

Speaker, we believe, New Democrats believe, that we should be investing in improving transit now. We shouldn't be putting out bills like this that simply don't move us ahead. They don't advance us collectively on the project that we should be engaged in of getting Ontario moving, of ensuring that all regions in this province are able to benefit from integrated transit systems and a transportation network that actually serves all the citizens in the province. We believe that we should not be delaying projects like the expansion of the TTC by starting over from scratch.

That's why we will be opposing the time allocation motion, regardless of the amendment that is being proposed. We think that there is value in hearing from all members in this place, in hearing from members who represent diverse communities of this province, and there is value in sharing those ideas so that the government can take those things into account and move forward in a way that's going to benefit all Ontarians in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Point of order?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I recognize the member from Whitby on a point of order.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to allow the member for Kitchener–Conestoga to speak a second time to the amendment to government notice of motion 61.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Whitby is seeking unanimous consent to have the member from Kitchener–Conestoga speak a second time to this motion. All those in favour? All those agreed? Then it's agreed. Nobody said no.

I return now to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues, for allowing me to take part in debate today. I'm happy to rise in the Legislature to debate motion 61 on the time allocation of Bill 107, the Getting Ontario Moving Act, introduced by the Minister of Transportation.

Both the bill in question and the motion on the floor are demonstrations of why our government was elected. Bill 107 is what the people of Ontario need right now, and there is no time to waste. The package of reforms that this legislation delivers will complement the rest of the policies that our government has delivered so far in getting Ontario back on track by making our roads, highways and transit run smoothly and efficiently.

It is the broad scope of this bill that makes a real transformational impact. When it comes to safe driving, it doesn't just look at how we can change the rules of the road, but also at how we can improve the processes by which we train our future drivers. We are going to make sure that we hold our instructors to the highest standards possible, so that they may lead in their instruction by example.

One of the ways that our government is doing this is by introducing a new offence for any driving instructor who violates a zero blood alcohol or drug presence requirement. Not only will this reaffirm, to those going through the process, the standards which they are to uphold on the road, but it will also make learning to drive safer.

We are working to make driving safer while not infringing on the ability of our hard-working Ontarians to get where they need to go. I think we've all seen the problems that excessively slow drivers on the highways can pose for traffic and public safety. Traffic on our main arteries and highways at rush hour puts the people of Toronto and the GTA in nothing less than positions of gridlock. It is our responsibility as a government to try to provide practical solutions to mitigate undue congestion. When some drive below the speed limit in the left-hand lane, it makes traffic slower and less safe. That is why, as part of Bill 107, we are introducing tougher penalties for driving slowly in the left-hand lane.

When we talk about improving the flow of traffic, it is important to highlight all the infrastructural and transit investments that our government has committed to.

I must commend the Minister of Transportation for a recent spring announcement that provided \$1.3 billion—

with a B, Mr. Speaker—in investment to boost highway infrastructure across the province.

In my riding, this funding is being used to provide needed upgrades to Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph and the Highway 7/8 interchange around Trussler Road. This is above and beyond the outstanding work with Metrolinx to bring two-way, all-day GO train service closer to reality and reverse 15 years of inaction from the Liberal government.

I must also commend the Minister of Infrastructure, the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, for recently nominating, through the rural and northern stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, the Glasgow Street South rehabilitation project: \$1.2225 million in funding to the township of Woolwich to rebuild this bridge. This will ensure that a vital link between rural and urban Waterloo region is protected for years to come.

Moreover, the ministry has approved a project extension for the Holland Mills Road bridge rehabilitation in the township of Wilmot, which will ensure that this bridge is designed and built to modern standards.

0930

The investment that our government is making will have a massive impact on my riding and the rest of Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

On the transit file, our government's commitments are just as impressive. We are uploading Toronto's subway system and making record investments. Our government announced a \$28.5-billion expansion to Ontario's transit network, the largest investment build in Ontario's history. Much of this will go not only towards the expansion of existing lines but also towards the construction of the new Ontario Line. Whether you are a professional commuting from one end of the city to the other or a constituent in my riding coming into the city on the Kitchener GO line, you will stand to benefit greatly from the action that our government is taking to revitalize Toronto's subway lines. Making real progress on these fronts is one of the most impactful ways that we are going to make Toronto and the GTA, and Ontario in general, a more attractive and feasible destination for business.

The legislation on the floor today is talking about making our roads safer and less congested. It is a win for working families and the businesses they rely on. Bill 107 is not just about keeping our roads safe for our drivers on their way to and from work, but also about keeping our students safe. Our government has not sat still when it comes to keeping our kids safe both in and out of the classroom, and this bill reaffirms that. For starters, our government has proposed new regulations allowing evidence from stop-arm cameras on school buses to stand alone in court. I have to thank the member for Chatham–Kent–Leamington, who has been a huge proponent of this for many, many years now. I'm glad that his work has made it into government policy, because this is a fantastic addition to this bill.

Allow me to provide a little more insight on this provision, Mr. Speaker. Shortly after being elected, I took a couple of meetings with the Student Transportation

Services of Waterloo Region to understand what I could do as a member of the governing party, and a parent of five young children under 13, to promote student safety. Our discussion on school bus safety and the current level of infractions left me absolutely stunned by the extent of the problem and the inaction of the previous government.

They showed me the results of a one-month pilot they completed in 2016, where they placed stop-arm cameras on 350, or 20%, of school buses in Waterloo region. What happened, Mr. Speaker? Shockingly, they recorded 1.5 infractions per bus per week—over 500 infractions, when you totalled them up, per week.

Benoit Bourgault, the general manager of Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region, told me that what was needed to counter this was photo evidence from these cameras being admissible evidence in court without a witness. I think that when we actually look at this footage—I'm sure most of us in the House have had a chance to see a blow-by by a car or other vehicle—it's pretty telling.

Mr. Speaker, we are a government that listens. We are protecting our children by giving municipalities the tools they need to target drivers who blow by school buses and threaten the safety of children crossing roads on their way home from school or getting to school in the mornings. I entered politics to create a better world for my children and our future generations, and we need to punish those who put that future at risk.

All of our roadside workers are vital to the integrity of our transportation system, and we need to make sure we are doing what we need to do in order to keep them safe on the job as well, so they can turn all of their attention towards their work and make sure that they make it home safely at the end of the day. That is why we are strengthening laws that protect front-line roadside workers from careless drivers. It is a two-way street: Those who use our roads must be ever cognizant of those who spend their days making sure that our roads are open for that use.

Our government is firing on all fronts to make our economy function more effectively, and all of the changes that we are making with Bill 107 are bringing us closer to where we need to go with that. One of the important features of this package that our government has brought forward is the broad strokes that it takes. We are not just looking at road construction or transit expansion but also at modernization. In our government's recent news release on Bill 107 reforms, it was also announced that we will be launching a new digital dealer registration pilot program. This will be an expansive pilot that will allow auto dealers to register vehicles sold at their dealerships in-house. Currently, vehicle dealers across the province must register and license newly purchased vehicles off-site, costing businesses and consumers time and money.

Advancing key provisions of my private member's bill, Bill 50, this pilot will save Ontarians and businesses time and money, and will improve the customer experience at dealerships by allowing participating dealerships to apply for permits, plates and validation stickers online.

Mr. Speaker, this program will launch in spring 2020 and will be developed through a six-month, province-wide

consultation in close partnership with the ServiceOntario network providers as well as car dealerships and rental car and fleet organizations. We need to harness the technology of today in a way that benefits all those who use and sustain our transportation infrastructure. That is what this kind of modernization accomplishes. As per its name, the Getting Ontario Moving Act is all about making the common-sense reforms that will allow Ontario's economy to function more effectively for years to come.

Under the positive direction of this government, there is much development on the horizon for this province, provided we continue to make the adjustments that need to be made in order to facilitate this development. We won the last election with a strong majority and entered office with a very clear mandate. The people of Ontario expect us to make this a more affordable and safer place to live and raise a family. They expect us to make Ontario a more attractive place to create, attract and grow business. We know how to get there, and Bill 107 helps us achieve that.

With our mandate and a clear sense of direction, I see no reason to hesitate. The people of this province want better roads, they want better transit and they want better services. So I fully support the time allocation motion that is on the floor this morning. I thank my colleagues for allowing me to speak to this.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's like every single bill that the government has brought into this House that is a government bill—we're not talking private members' motions or private bills on behalf of various corporations that need to have their titles changed etc.—is done by way of time allocation.

It is really a sad, sad day for democracy when we find ourselves, over and over again, in a situation where the government doesn't trust its own members, let alone the members of the opposition, to be able to have a process by which you have reasonable debate in the House. And "reasonable" doesn't mean to say that a bill has to stay here and be spoken to ad infinitum in second reading, but a reasonable amount of time in order to make sure that a bill is referred to committee without condition, to allow the committee to do the work that it has to do, which is, I think, the cornerstone of what our democracy is all about, and that is to consult the people in and across Ontario, depending on the subject.

There are bills where, at times, it's quite in order just to have the committee meetings here in Toronto. If the bill just affects the city of Toronto or the GTA, it probably makes some sense to do that here. But in a lot of cases, bills affect the four corners of this province. The government should trust itself and its legislation enough to be able to put it into committee and to travel it somewhat so that the people of Ontario can have their say.

There is, as we all know, creeping through all of the democratic world, be it Europe or Canada or other parts of this world, a real disdain and a real distrust of the political process and elected officials. That doesn't happen without reason. I think this type of thing leads to that, when

governments say, “We’re just going to rule by fiat”—called time allocation—“and we’re going to do what we want, how we want, when we want, and you can’t say anything about it, Mr. and Mrs. Ontario.” I think that is really a disservice to the people of this province.

The government stands in this House and is proud of the legislation that it has put forward. For example, with this particular bill in regard to transportation, I’ve heard member after member on the government side get up and talk about why they’re proud of this particular legislation and why they think it’s a great idea. Well, they should have the courage of their conviction and they should be willing to take the bill out into committee and let the people of Ontario look at the bill and comment to the government as to what this bill is really about.

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Certainly there are parts of this bill that the people would be supportive of, but there are other parts of the bill, and we’ve heard that in the debates up to now, that people are not happy with and feel not only conflicted but downright upset with the government as to what it’s doing. That was for the debate at second reading; this is the debate on the amendment to the time allocation motion and I’ll confine my comments to that.

When you don’t consult the public, you’re saying they don’t matter. That’s essentially what we’re saying here. We put ourselves in a position where you are building on the stereotypes that have been created as a result of actions like this to where the public disconnects, and we sit here and scratch our heads and ask ourselves why only 49% of the electorate votes in this province.

If you look at other jurisdictions, there is much higher participation when it comes to how many people vote. There is actually an attempt on the part of the legislatures in other parts of the world and on the part of governments to be able to engage with the public in order to encourage people to be involved in the democratic process. But if the only time that you’re prepared as a government to meet the people is an election, and you’re not prepared to do it in between, well, I just think you are adding to the cynicism.

Now, the question is, should every bill that this Legislature introduces travel? Not every bill. There are bills that we probably can agree to. There are times where governments have to introduce bills or decide to introduce bills that are supported by all sides of the House and are not particularly controversial. Those particular bills, at times, probably only need a little bit of time in committee, and doing it here at Queen’s Park probably makes some sense.

But in a lot of cases, and especially with this government, we have bills that have pretty far-reaching consequences for the people of Ontario. We saw the bills on the reforms to health care; we saw the budget bill and others; and the city of Toronto bill where we changed the size of the municipality of Toronto as far as how many people got elected in the last election. Those are pretty fundamental bills. Those change things radically, and if you’re not prepared to go to the public and have people have their say on issues like that, then it means you’re afraid of what

they’re going to say. That’s what it means. And if you are afraid of what they are going to say, well, maybe you got it wrong and maybe you should do things differently.

But this particular government has decided, no, that’s not the way they’re going to do things. I think what this government is about is a very simple thing: They’re right; they are an ideological government as we are an ideological party. The Conservatives see things in a certain way and New Democrats see them in a different way, and that’s healthy. There’s nothing wrong with that. But I believe that what this government really is all about is, they do not believe in trying to find solutions by way of the collective, and I mean that in the sense of societal responses to the issues that face us.

A good example of that is what we’re doing with the autism program. We had a program up until April of this year, and now extended for six months, that was, quite frankly, only meeting about a third of the needs of children who have autism. We agree on both sides of the House that that program, although it was a good program, was not robust enough to deal with the needs of the kids out there who had to access it.

So what this government’s ideological approach is, is that the solution to the problem is to give the individual parent \$5,000 to \$20,000 to fix their problem in order to try to find services for their children. Aside from the fact that \$5,000 or \$20,000 doesn’t cut it—as you know, Mr. Speaker, autism services for full IBI therapy can be about \$70,000 or \$80,000, so let’s not even go into that. Here’s the point I want to make: This government believes it’s up to the individual to find the solution, not we, the people, here in Ontario. As a result of that, the parent will get the money and there will be no coordination of services in the community.

So I’m a parent who has just had a child who has been diagnosed with autism. This is a shock; I have no idea what autism is. I know; we’ve gone through it because our granddaughter Eva was born both physically and developmentally delayed, and it has been a real journey for all of us to learn what that’s all about, how you adapt as a family and how you provide services. As parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles and family, we struggle to figure out how to respond to these children who have special needs. In this case, the government is saying that it’s up to the parents to find a solution. So what this government is all about—and that’s what all of these bills are about—is taking our societal responsibility and putting it on the individual, and the individual then must come up with their own solutions.

If you need daycare—no societal response; not an organized system of daycare that’s regulated, that’s safe, that’s affordable—“Here’s some money. You go and figure it out.” You have a child with autism? “Here’s some money. You go and figure it out.” You have a child with special needs—Passport funding. That was the Liberals who did that, by the way. If the Liberals come into this House and say, “We’re different,” they’re the ones who set up the model by which we’re doing autism changes, because it was the Liberal government who brought in

Passport funding, which is essentially the same thing as what this new autism program is about. So when I hear Liberals feigning disgust and being mad at the government for what they're doing with autism, they should look in the mirror.

But my point is, the Conservatives really do believe—and the Liberals to a certain extent as well, because they're kind of the party of the right as well—that what you need to do is empower parents so that they become the solution. Now, as a parent and as a grandparent, I want to be part of the solution, but I want to know there's something there to help me navigate through the system and find the correct services for the child.

Imagine if we carry this individualistic approach to something like health care. All of a sudden, you become ill, and we no longer have a health care system as we know it today. The government says, "Here's \$100,000 for your lifetime. Go heal yourself." Now you're out there trying to find whatever doctors, specialists, nurse practitioners or whatever to deal with your particular needs. You're really in a spot that—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Please.

Anyway, I was just saying that it would really put us in a position—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm really listening to this conversation now. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Perhaps the conversation at the table is distracting the speaker—the person who has the floor, not this Speaker. We'll return to the member from Timmins, and the conversation at the table will be lowered. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I apologize about that, but sometimes some of the voices carry and you can understand every word being said. And as a House leader, I was interested in that conversation.

I just want to say that this particular government has put itself in a position that it really believes there is no societal response to the issues that face us as citizens. That's where they do not want to go out to the public and face the public when it comes to the initiatives they put through this House. Because although there are some people in our society who believe that—I understand. I have people in my own family, without naming names, one of whom, if he's watching today—we're always on Facebook, having a little bit of fun about his views. I would say that 25% of the public, 24% of the public, believe in that firmly, because they've never had to be in a position to have to navigate things on their own. They've either got enough money, or they've been lucky and have never really been ill and haven't had to face adversity, where the system had to be there in order to help them out. It's not until after that they become, "Oh, well, that's what that was all about."

I always remember my godfather, Uncle Con, who was a devout conservative. He was so far right, he made Attila the Hun look like a communist. He was that far right. A very nice man; I loved him dearly. My Aunt Odette is still alive and lives in British Columbia—a wonderful family. But his views were extremely right-wing.

I always remember when he unfortunately contracted—first he had a heart problem, and then, after that, he had cancer, which eventually he died from. I remember, as a kid, growing up when Ontario brought in OHIP. He was arguing with our family about how bad an idea that was, and why should his hard-earned dollars go to pay for some person who doesn't work to get health care? He used to have those arguments in the family, and I remember as a kid—I was 10 or 12 years old, so I remember those conversations well.

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Anyway, the long and the short of the story—I'll always remember: When he was unfortunately in a palliative state—my dad and him were, you know, the best of buddies growing up. They were estranged for a while but they eventually made it up again, as most siblings do. We always have arguments with our siblings and later in life patch things up and recognize that we're family. At least that's what we should be striving for. But my point is, my Uncle Con says to my dad, "Aurel," he says, "I'm a New Democrat now," because he realized, only because of the experience of going through the health care system, that he didn't have to empty his bank account in order to be able to care for health care needs and leave my aunt with nothing when he passed away—and he was well-to-do enough.

That's the point here: Unless you go through that experience, it's a pretty easy thing to say, "Government should get out of my way and I should pay no taxes," and that's what these guys are all about.

Now, do we want to pay more taxes than we should? Absolutely not. Nobody wants to pay more than they should. But the cost of doing nothing and allowing the individual to pay is much more expensive than trying to socialize the cost through taxes or government programs. What these guys are all about is, quite frankly, removing as much government as they can so that the individual will have to find the solution to their problems. For some people, they're going to be happy, but for most people, they won't.

As that relates to the amendment on the time allocation motion, it means that this government, when it comes to not wanting to allow the public to comment on their bills, quite frankly, has a lack of confidence in their own policies and their own thoughts about how all of this could work, because if they really felt strongly about what they are doing, they would not be afraid to go out and bring it to the public.

I served as a government member in the early 1990s, where you had no choice. You had to actually go out and send your bills into the public because we didn't have time allocation at that time, and the rules of the House allowed the opposition to force the government to negotiate things like public hearings. We had to travel all kinds of bills—budget bills, bills of various natures—that were put forward by our government of the day. I found it quite informative and quite instructive, as a government member, to be out in those committees because I believed in most of what we did. Like with every government, there is

something, when you are sitting in government, you may not be happy with, but by and large, 90% of what we did I thought was pretty darn good stuff. I am sure the government members probably feel the same way.

But the thing is, going out as a committee member, as a government member on those bills, was informative, because there were things that you would learn as you would be out there. The public would give you input on what you were doing, and all of a sudden you would come to the conclusion, “We’re trying to do A, but actually what we’re doing is affecting B, and so therefore let’s fix the problem so that we actually fix A.”

Back then, the committee clause-by-clause process was meaningful, because as you went through the hearings process and travelled your bills across Ontario, you came back to the Legislature and you said, “Well, do you remember we were in Kenora and somebody mentioned this, and then we heard it again in Sault Ste. Marie and then we heard it in Cornwall?” Then the government and the opposition members would agree to some type of an amendment and, often, we would support opposition amendments. Sometimes, yes, we’d put it in our own name, but by and large the amendment got done. Governments after that did the same thing until we got rid of the rules and eliminated the ability of the opposition to force bills into committee and to travel.

What it did, it did for legislation that stood the test of time. For example, I’ll just take one that the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka may remember, and that was the snowmobile bill. You were there. You remember the government of the day when we did legislation that put in place the snowmobile trail system that we have today. It is a beacon of North America when it comes to snowmobile trails. But you will remember, because I am pretty sure you were on committee with me. I don’t remember if you were or not, but you are another member who was interested in that, I do know.

There were things that we heard on that committee that we would have never thought of in drafting the bill. There were people that came before us, and the government allowed some of my amendments to go forward as, at that time, a third-party member. We amended the bill and that bill has never been re-amended since. In fact, I was sitting down with the president of the snowmobile club for Timmins the other day; I just happened to run across him having breakfast. He was talking about the good stuff that they were doing and how it was working—the trail system etc.—and how robust the system is and that, without the stuff we had done back then, those snowmobile clubs would not be operating today. So it stood the test of time. Why? Because we allowed the bill to travel.

It was the same thing with the changes to the sustainable forestry development act back in the day when we were government. We travelled that bill for two or three weeks in areas that forestry was active: mostly northern Ontario and central Ontario. The government members and the opposition members—in this case, Chris Hodgson, who was the Conservative member on the committee—brought forward amendments that were reasonable, that

made sense and that were based on what we were hearing out there. We amended the legislation. That bill is still in place. It’s the model by which we manage forests in the province of Ontario, and it actually works.

For example, the other day—I live out at Kamiskotia Lake, and normally the city dump that’s there opens on May 1. So I decided, “I’m not going to leave my garbage inside my grey box, because bears are starting to come out. I’m going to go dump it in the dump so I don’t have any bear problems.” So I drive out and find—my God—the forest company went in and they essentially cut about 200 to 300 yards on both sides of the highway from the old Halfmoon Lake road up to the current Timmins dump. I’m looking at this, and there is all kinds of damage that was done to the walking trails and the bike trails—the bike trails there are not paved; they’re just sand—that have been existing since the time I was a boy, because I grew up at Kamiskotia. We bought that place in 1960. We moved out there when I was a kid.

The point is that I got on the phone and, because of the sustainable forestry development act—I called the MNR on Monday, talked to the forester on Monday afternoon or left a voicemail message and sent a text, and they’re now looking at it in order to clean it up. Why? Because there’s a mechanism to allow that to happen. Clearly, in this case, whoever was the contractor didn’t do what they should have done when it comes to mitigating damages to those trails. So there is a mechanism by which we make sure that that area is not affected in a way that prevents its use by local cottagers.

My point is that those changes came as a result of talking to people. I remember being on that committee and a big concern was—there was real big pushback, then, on clear-cut. We were changing the technology of the day to move from clear-cut to careful logging, where you only take out the mature trees and you leave the smaller ones behind. There was a concern that there would be such an appetite for timber or for wood that there would be an over-cut and that we would move into areas next to cottages, campsites, First Nations and municipalities etc. The real concern of northern Ontario was—we are environmentalists because we live in a forest that’s living and breathing and is still there. We didn’t cut all our trees down like we have here in southern Ontario. I live in a forest. That’s where I live. I live out at Kamiskotia Lake. Timmins is in a forest. If you walk two minutes out of Timmins, you’re in the forest. So nobody wants to see the forest harvested in such a way that harms the environment and prevents our enjoyment and use of that forest.

We have this forest management planning system that is the envy of the world, that works really well, and we’re able to manage, quite frankly, how forestry is done in a way that the forest companies get the fibre they need, we still get the use of the forest and we manage the ecological part of it as far as managing species at risk, managing the fauna, all of those things. It’s a great piece of legislation that has stood the test of time. Why? Because we took the time to send that bill into committee and allow it to travel.

Well, this government has decided it doesn’t want to do that. So every bill that we have now is a bill that goes

through time allocation, and we have short shrift when it comes to public hearings.

Now, in this particular motion, you have to apply by this Thursday to even sit at committee to be able to present. If you want to depute at committee, which means to say appear to have your say on the bill—if you don't do it by this Thursday afternoon, you're going to be done.

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Think about it: Who in the city of Toronto who is interested in the issue of the upload on the subways is going to even know that this bill is in committee? Because even if you wanted to, this particular motion is not going to pass until probably tomorrow, which is Wednesday, and the Clerks are going to have to put a notice out Wednesday afternoon for people to come and give their names by Thursday in order to be able to present. That means to say the only people who will get here are the people who are watching this debate or people who are contacted by the critics of the government. That is hardly a way to be engaged with the public.

It used to be, when we allowed the committee process to work the way that it should, that the subcommittee would meet and say, "Okay, we're going to put in the following papers"—or on the radio, or TV, or parliamentary channel or whatever means possible—"the following advertisement that explains when the committee hearings are going to be." We would give the public a couple of weeks to get a chance to actually read the paper and get it in their weeklies—because, remember, there are a lot of communities out there who rely on weekly papers. It means to say that if the paper weekly came out on Wednesday, you're not going to have a new one until next Wednesday, so you wouldn't even know about that committee hearing until the following week. We used to always allow at least a couple of weeks out there in public in order to allow people to find out that this thing is meeting.

Whenever we travelled, I was always impressed by how, if you went to Kenora or you went to Cornwall—it didn't really matter, Mr. Speaker—people showed up. You often had more people sign up to be able to present to the committee than you had time at the committee. It was always a question—not always, but quite often—of having to pick who was going to present based on first-come, first-served. That's normally what we tried to do.

But it shows that the public does want to be engaged. The public wants to be consulted. People care about their democracy. People care about things like forestry. They care about health care. They care about daycare. They care about transportation issues. They want to be consulted, they want to give you their ideas, and they want to hear what you have to say. So a robust democratic system would allow that to happen in such a way that we're able to, quite frankly, have the committees meet and go to the public so that in the end they can have their say.

We're going to have two days of hearings here in Toronto during the intersession. We're off for constituency week, the week after the Victoria Day long weekend. We're going to be in the situation where we'll have two

days of hearings, and then it comes back, and then we do clause-by-clause. The other problem in what's going on there is that you have two days of hearings of which hardly anybody is going to know about, so the only people who show up are the few who are actually watching. But then when it comes to actual amendments, we're not even going to have time to read what's going on when it comes to the hearings, and take into account what the public had to say, or any written submissions that we have, because there won't be enough time to be able to digest it.

If you remember—I think it was the education bill—there were something like 20,000 people who sent letters to the committee, wanting to have their say around the education bill. By the time we received the letters and the deadline came for the writing of the amendments, the two had overlapped, so we never got it. They didn't leave enough time for people even to write a letter by email and get it to the committee. By the time we printed those emails and made them available to committee members, it was already too late to create any amendments. So a whole group of people—20,000 people—who presented by way of the Internet or letter or fax to the committee Clerk, their thoughts were not taken into consideration, by and large, because the majority of those, by the time they came in, unfortunately—it was so pressed by the way the government wrote the time allocation motion that we couldn't have used what they had to say, even if we wanted to.

So what does that mean, Mr. Speaker? What does it mean when a government says, "We're going to give short shrift to the public when it comes to what we do here in the Legislature and what we do with public bills"? I just have to say, Mr. Speaker, that it's really a sad, sad day when we're in this situation. I just say, again, if the government was so proud about what they were doing, let them take the bill to committee. Let them bring the bill to communities of interest. Let the people have their say. As Brian Mulroney would say, "What are you afraid of?"

I think you guys are afraid of what you might hear, because you're hearing it as we're hearing in our constituencies. Last Friday, I went to the YMCA. This was just people wanting to meet, so I went to the YMCA for meetings. I went to the library for meetings. I went to a health facility for meetings, and—what was the other?—the real estate people for meetings. There was another one; I can't remember which one it was. It will come to me. Oh, yes; I went to another health facility. They all had one thing in common: They were worried and didn't understand what all of these cuts were going to do to their budgets. They were trying to adjust with budgets that they had already struck, because most people have done their budgets by now. They did so either as of January 1 or as of April 1, and they are now being told that they are going to have to revise expenditures because of what this government's budget has done, and nobody really knew what the heck it meant. They started to get an idea, but they certainly didn't know what it meant. Oh, yes; the other meeting I had was with one of the school boards. As they were looking at the estimates that came out on Thursday, they were just starting to grapple with what this was all about.

I think the government understands very well that they are not getting a warm reception at the door when it comes to the changes that they're making. A good case in point is the member from—I can't use the member's name—

Interjection: Brampton?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, Mr. Oosterhoff, his riding.

Interjections: Niagara West.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member from Niagara West had 10 or so elderly women show up in order to do a read-in in his office—70-year-old women. They're not terrorists; they're just people who want to be able to make a point.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, I've had people come into my office and do the same thing. I don't know what the government is so upset about. We all get that. I had them in government and I had them in opposition.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please. Member from Sarnia–Lambton, come to order, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: People have the right to come and express themselves to their local member of Parliament. In this case, these women went in to do a read-in. It's a pretty easy thing to do. I don't know; either they didn't like the books or the idea that they were reading. I don't know why they wouldn't let them in. But right away, the reaction was to call the police—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member from Sarnia–Lambton, come to order, please. The Minister of Education, come to order, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think that's indicative of what the government is feeling out there, in that the public is pushing back. Some of the members are dealing with it in ways that are of their own choice.

I'm not going to say that there has never been a member on both sides of the House who has not called the police. At times, that happens. I understand that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I would ask the member from Timmins to get back to the motion that we're discussing on the floor.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, the motion. It's all about consultation, Mr. Speaker. It's all about the consultation that the government is not doing when it comes to, quite frankly, this bill and other bills that they've put forward by way of time allocation. I'm just saying that the public is pushing back, and they're going to find different ways to do it.

We were here in a debate yesterday on the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition on declaring a climate emergency in Ontario. You saw that there were people here in the galleries who were here to observe, and some of them were here to protest. We see them out on the lawns almost every day now, since this government has come back this spring, protesting about the various initiatives of this government. We're seeing people protest at people's constituency offices.

So I understand why the government doesn't want to go out. They're saying, "If we go out there, it's going to be tough." Well, being government is tough. I understand that. I was in a government for five years. It's not easy. You are having to make decisions that at times the public, quite frankly, may not be in step with, but your responsibility as a government member is to be able to explain to the public why it is that you're taking a particular position.

I went through it. I went through it in spades when I was in government under the social contract. But each and every time I allowed people in my office. When they protested, I supplied the coffee, or bottles of water. At times, they were mad at me. At times, they yelled at me. But I had to, as a local member, hear what they had to say.

This is the point that I'm trying to make: If the government is not prepared to hear what the public has to say by way of travelling committees, then it can't be too supportive—not supportive; maybe they are not, how would you say, as enthusiastic as they need to be about the various government initiatives that they're putting forward.

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I look at members here who served in the federal House. They would understand that as well, because in the federal House, the committee—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, no; the member said I used to do the same thing there.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow, these guys are just something else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): To the member from Markham–Stouffville: Through the Chair, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm trying to give—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I know what's going on. I know that the member for Timmins is trying to get a rise out of you guys, and you guys are falling for it. But the member for Markham–Stouffville will direct his comments through the Speaker, and then we'll hear more from the member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was actually trying to give the member the compliment of having experienced having served in the federal House. I don't understand why he's upset, but anyway, that's a whole other issue. But I just want to say—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Why? Are you jealous?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, I have no interest federally, let me tell you. It's not a place that I would want to serve.

But the point is that the government is, I think, doing a great disservice to the public when it's not—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: If you think you are doing a great job, member from Lambton, take your bill out and travel. It's as simple as that.

To all of the members across the way: What are you afraid of? Brian Mulroney said, "What are you afraid of?" I always remember that motto during that free trade election: "What are you afraid of?" I ask the government across the way: What are you afraid of? Why won't you

travel your bills? You're either not travelling your bills because you're afraid of what the public can say, or you're not travelling your bills because you don't believe in democracy. Both of them are bad.

I'm just saying that you have a responsibility to be held to account by the public. Democracy is not just about elections every four years; democracy is about engaging with the public. That means to say yes at our constituency offices, where people come in and tell us they're upset with things.

As an opposition member, I have people who come in who don't like my particular position on things. That's fair. They have a right to their view. But I also have an obligation to hear what they have to say. When a government is not prepared to hear what the other side has to say in the public—I'm not talking about members, but people who don't agree with them—when they don't want to talk to them, they don't want to hear them, when they want to make sure they don't come into their offices and they don't want to engage by not having a committee travel, then they are essentially saying that the only thing that matters is what they believe. You don't believe in what the public has to say. You at least have to listen, is the point that I'm trying to make here.

The damning thing about this whole thing that really frustrates me as I look at members who were here in the previous Parliament, who served here in opposition—they used to get up and chastise the Liberals for their use of time allocation. They would be up on their feet. I am telling you, there were so many speeches from members that I see in the House this morning who were upset every time the government tried to time-allocate something—because the Liberals were just as bad. They time-allocated absolutely everything. There was nothing that went through the House without time allocation. The Tories would get up and say, “We're different. If you vote for us, we're going to respect the public. If you vote for us, we're going to make sure that committees travel. If you vote for us, we're not going to do time allocation.” And my God, they got elected, and what happened on their way to government? They tripped and forgot everything they thought in opposition. So I say to the government across the way: It really leads to the cynicism that the public has about politics. If you say one thing in the opposition and then do completely the opposite when you get to government, it's galling to the public.

Imagine those parents who heard Mr. Ford say in the last election: “If you vote for me and you're a parent of an autistic child, you won't have to come to the front door at Queen's Park and protest to get what you need for your children.” Then he gets elected and he does completely the opposite. And the government wonders why the public is upset?

I have never seen, in my 29 years here, the anger that exists within those families towards this government. You don't even have to go looking for it; it manifests itself on its own. I'll tell you, for these parents and these children, it is quite a traumatic experience to go through.

I've only got a couple of minutes. But there are constituents I've gotten to know over the years quite well.

There's one in particular who talks about his life of having to quit a full-time job to care for two autistic children, and how he doesn't sleep at night because either one or the other boy won't sleep because the child has autism and is acting out at all hours of the night. This poor child and this poor parent are having to live with that. This government is taking away any hope they had.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The time being what it is, we will now go in recess until question period at 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Miss Monique Taylor: I have two groups that I would like to welcome today. First, I'd like to welcome back our autism advocates: Amy Moledzki, Lisa Kahn, Jeffrey Freeman, Michau van Speyk, Angela Brandt, Faith Munoz, Crystal Burningham and Jaime Santana. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Then I have another group that's visiting us today, Speaker, because today is Children and Youth in Care Day. I have a group from the OACAS. Coming from staff are Christina Campbell and Kayla Scott; and the youth are Dante Williams, Erika Koehn, Stephanie McNab-Scott and Reshma Shiwcharan. Welcome to Queen's Park, and happy Children and Youth in Care Day.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park a special school from Bayfield, Ontario: Lakeview Christian School. I'm very pleased that on a regular basis, the students come and visit Queen's Park, and I welcome them here today.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I would like to introduce a very special guest to the Legislature this morning: Mr. Duff Roman. Mr. Roman was recently inducted by the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences into the honour roll of Walt Grealis award recipients at this year's Juno Awards for his incredible contributions to the Canadian music industry.

For those of my age and above, you may remember Mr. Roman as an incredible on-air personality for a variety of radio stations, most famously associated with CHUM-FM. He's also a member of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame.

Duff, congratulations for all your great work, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to welcome my friend Neethan Shan to Queen's Park this morning. Welcome.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome the members of the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants who are here with us today at Queen's Park. I hope you have an enjoyable and productive day.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to introduce my OLIP intern, Jad El Tal. He is my sixth OLIP intern.

OLIP is an exceptional non-partisan program at Queen's Park, and the interns are hosting their spring

reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230, and they want everyone in this House to attend. It really is the party of the year.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to welcome friends from North Bay, Susan Van Der Rassel and her son, Ishmael Van Der Rassel.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm excited to welcome Niki to Queen's Park, who is here to shadow me today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'd like to welcome to the House Ms. Reshma Shiwcharran, Dante Williams, Erika Koehn, Christina Campbell and Kayla Scott, who are here today to celebrate Children and Youth in Care Day.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'm proud to inform the House that today, page Emily Brown from my riding of Durham is page captain. I'd like to welcome her family to the Legislature. Sitting in the members' gallery are her father, Douglas Brown, her mother, Kristy Brown, and her grandparents Merrill and June Brown, and David and Joan Dalton. A warm welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Tom Rakocovic: I'm proud to welcome my friend and former city of Toronto councillor, Neethan Shan, and my friend Rob Cerjanec.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today Jeremy Rabideau. Jeremy is from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and his daughter, Kate, is page captain today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good morning, Speaker. I am proud to welcome members of the Tamil community here today for the press conference proclaiming Tamil Genocide Education Week in Ontario. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I'd like to introduce the parents of Munisha Basiram, my outstanding and skilled OLIP intern. Munisha's parents, Vidya Basiram and Dan Basiram, have joined us in the Legislature. Welcome to the people's House.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to also welcome Neethan Shan. Neethan was a student when I was a teacher at East York Collegiate, he was a guest speaker in my class at York University and he was a colleague on the Toronto District School Board and on the Toronto Board of Health. Welcome, Neethan, to the Legislature.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Hi, it's great to be back. I'd like to welcome my sister, Thalia, who is here with me today with my baby, Cressida. Thank you for coming.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It appears that concludes the introduction of visitors.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE MULIVAICAL MASSACRE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough Southwest has informed me she has a point of order she'd like to raise.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you, Speaker. This Saturday, on May 18, we mark the 10th anniversary of the Muli-vaikal massacre, one of the darkest periods of the Tamil

genocide. I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence and remember those who lost their lives.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough Southwest is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for a moment of silence to remember those who lost their lives in the Tamil massacre. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. Ontario's regional public health units are only now getting a better look at the chaos in store for them from this government's public health scheme. Yesterday we saw the preliminary geographic boundaries for the Premier's reckless scheme to eliminate 25 public health units. Large cities like Ottawa and Kingston will now share a public health unit, whereas the Renfrew public health unit will be sliced down the middle.

Who did the government consult to draw up these boundaries, Speaker?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the official opposition for the question, but, in fact, the boundaries have not been decided upon yet. There are numerous consultations that have yet to happen.

There were some discussions that happened by phone last week with the medical officers of health upon the suggestion of boundaries, but they are only suggestions; they have not been decided upon. There is a lot of consultation, particularly with municipalities, that has yet to happen.

1040

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, it's clear that the government is proposing that, for example, the Waterloo, Peel, Halton, Wellington and Guelph regional public health units all merge into one.

Chief medical officers in Hamilton and Niagara are still struggling to figure out how the mergers of their regions will even work, much less what the impact will be on the services that they provide to people in those communities.

While the government cooks up these schemes behind closed doors, people who actually work in public health every day are worried for their communities and their jobs.

Why is the government keeping public health units in the dark while they force through these risky changes?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The purpose of this proposal is to make sure that we modernize our public health system to be able to respond to crises in public health that do occur

from time to time. We can probably expect that it's going to occur even more frequently in the future, so we need to be ready for it. That's what we're preparing for.

As for the public health units being left in the dark, that is absolutely not the case. They have been consulted. They have had conversations. There are many more discussions that have yet to be had.

As I indicated in my previous answer, no boundaries have been decided upon yet. That was going to be decided after appropriate consultations with municipalities, with the public health units and with others.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To cut first and plan later is irresponsible; to do that in health could be catastrophic for the people of our province.

The Premier's attack on our regional health care systems will impact every single part of our province. This kind of chaos will only harm the people who depend on their services.

I find it disgraceful that cabinet ministers are laughing at this prospect, because I can tell you that people in public health are certainly not laughing. They are very, very, very concerned.

In response to the news in Waterloo, regional chair Karen Redman said this: "I have grave concerns. The farther you move away from local decision-making, the greater the opportunity there is for less responsive and accountable decisions."

Why is the Premier reducing accountability and imposing a one-size-fits-all scheme on communities across Ontario?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The modernization of our public health system is something that we've been working on for months. The change from the 35 units of public health to 10 is something that we are working on through the consultations that are necessary with the appropriate people involved. This is not something that has just been thought up in the last minute; this is something that's very purposeful and has been thought about in great detail by many people. It's something that is going to be subject to further consultations with the people who are going to be dealing with this on the front lines.

We want to make sure that our local public health units are going to be able to respond to issues that are going to come up from time to time. There are outbreaks of certain diseases; that's going to continue, so we need to be ready. We are ready at the Ministry of Health, and we want to make sure that local health units are going to be ready to deal with this as well.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Yesterday, the Toronto District School Board released their proposed operating budget for this year, which had a \$42-million hole because of the government's cuts to education. In the past this school board has been able to make up shortfalls in their budget without affecting

students in the classroom, but this year the board says it's not possible. They're saying that programs and services for students will need to be scaled back.

Is the Premier ready to admit now that his education cuts are actually hurting students?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Our government is about making sure that students are ready for the new economy and making sure that they're ready to get out in the work world.

The numbers that the TDSB put out were absolutely reckless. They put these numbers out to the public prematurely, before they even know the numbers. They're throwing these numbers out arbitrarily. Our ministry's numbers are totally the opposite.

It's disheartening that they move forward with these figures without first attempting to even verify the accuracy of these numbers. It's the old scare tactics. Political stunts like this only serve to cause anxiety with parents and with students.

Over the past 15 years, there has been zero oversight and accountability when it comes to the education spending at our school boards. The—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I'm going to ask the member for Davenport and the member for Waterloo to come to order.

Start the clock. Supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier only needs to hold up a mirror to see reckless, out-of-control and premature.

One of the programs that the Premier's cuts to education are hitting is the French immersion and extended French program. Students will now have fewer opportunities to participate in French immersion, because the board is forced to reduce the number of pathways into the program, and fewer students are able to be bused into schools to access the program.

Does the Premier believe that forcing schools to cut essential programs like French immersion will actually help students succeed?

Hon. Doug Ford: This year, Mr. Speaker, we're giving the TDSB \$3 billion, and we're asking the TDSB to find three quarters of 1% in efficiencies—three quarters of 1% in efficiencies. But guess what the school board does instead? They go out and waste taxpayers' money. They spend over \$700,000 to replace some locks—locks on schools. These are great ones: To replace one electrical outlet, they spent \$3,000. For a \$2.50 outlet, they spent \$3,000 to install it. This is even better. One of those whiteboards, the whiteboards that cost \$127—the school board went out and spent \$2,500 on a whiteboard. This is reckless spending. Over and over again we see it—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: They went to one school—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think the Premier should check if it was a whiteboard or a smartboard; maybe he doesn't know the difference, Speaker.

French immersion is not the only program that is going to be cut back because of the Premier's education cuts. The international language program, the international baccalaureate program and the outdoor education program are all seeing cuts. There will be fewer psychology staff, fewer supports for teachers to boost their skills in science, math and technology, and fewer opportunities for students to learn music and art. Is this the kind of change the Premier thinks our students deserve?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I think the public needs to know how they waste money at the school board. For seven hours, they hired someone to hang three pictures—seven hours. But it gets even better: They called the same company up that spent seven hours hanging three pictures to come two days later, and they took eight hours to hang three more pictures up. It's outrageous spending we see.

They went out and spent \$143 on a pencil sharpener. That is reckless. They cut one single key, a single key that costs \$5 at Home Depot; they spent \$147 to cut one key. At R.H. McGregor, they needed a little bench moved, Mr. Speaker. The school board hired four guys to come by to move one bench. That's the reckless spending we're going to stop. We're going to make sure there's transparency, there's accountability—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Restart the clock. Next question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I knew the Premier wanted to be the mayor of Toronto; now he wants to be the superintendent of the Toronto District School Board.

My question is to the Attorney General, though, Speaker. Today's Globe and Mail—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Today's Globe and Mail provides more details of a disturbing incident last year in which Dean French, the Premier's chief of staff, ordered senior political aides to direct police to raid cannabis stores the day that marijuana became legal, with the goal of getting people in handcuffs on the noon-hour news. The Globe reports that the Attorney General attended a follow-up meeting in which these same staff were reprimanded by Dean French, the Premier and senior cabinet ministers for not following through on Mr. French's orders.

1050

Can the Attorney General confirm that she attended this meeting, and, if she did, did she actually take the time to explain to the Premier how inappropriate it is for politicians and their staff to attempt to direct police?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, you know, the NDP might not get it but I think the vast majority of Ontario residents

understand that our goal is to ensure that our families and our communities are safe.

The fact that chiefs of staff and ministers, frankly, are asking for updates suggests that we want to make sure that the policies and legislation we are bringing forward are actually making a difference to the front-line officers.

I continue to appreciate and understand—and I wish the NDP would—that these illegal cannabis shops fund opioids, human trafficking and guns and gangs in our community. We must shut them down. And the only way that we can do that is to monitor to make sure that the policies and legislation we have brought forward are actually making a difference to the front-line officers. That's what we're doing. That's what our staff are doing, and we will continue to do that—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the government staff who refused to do Dean French's bidding did so for a very good reason: In a democracy, the government does not dictate who police investigate or how they conduct investigations. It's a concept, sadly, that the Ford government seems to have a problem with.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Attorney General, however, has a unique role at the cabinet table, and this is exactly the sort of moment when she should have spoken up. Why did she not speak up, Speaker?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I'm sorry to interrupt again, but I have to call members to order. The Premier must come to order. The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services must come to order. The Minister for Infrastructure must come to order. The Minister for Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade must come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): While I'm at it, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence will have to come to order. The member for Etobicoke Centre will come to order.

Start the clock. The Solicitor General to reply.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Our government understands and appreciates how important law and order is in the province of Ontario. We will continue to monitor the activities of these illegal cannabis shops because, as I say, Speaker, it is critically important that people understand that this is a source of funding for guns and gangs in the province of Ontario. This is funding human trafficking in the province of Ontario. Illegal cannabis shops are funding the opioid crisis in our communities.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: If the NDP doesn't understand why it's important that we know that these illegal cannabis

shops are shut down, then I can't attempt to explain why they don't understand that chiefs of staff need to have the input and—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Infrastructure is warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The member for Waterloo will come to order—for repeated interjections, if you're wondering why.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga will come to order. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will come to order. The Premier will come to order.

I want to apologize to the Solicitor General for interrupting her response, but I had to call one of her colleagues to order because of repeated interjections.

Start the clock. The next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is to the Premier. The federal government adopted the job-killing carbon tax on April 1. Sadly for the people of Ontario, it was no April Fool's joke. People across the province from all walks of life are feeling the impact of the carbon tax. Hospitals, universities and colleges, businesses and seniors across Ontario are paying the price. No one is exempt. The Prime Minister had better take note, because Canadians are growing angry.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier please update the Legislature on the status of the carbon tax challenge?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank our great MPP from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill. He's a champion, like the rest of these champions.

Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to host Premier Scott Moe from Saskatchewan and talk about the carbon tax and the effects that are taking place right across this province, right across this country. It's not a coincidence that every Premier who ran against the carbon tax has won. From PEI and New Brunswick to Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, the people of Canada do not want a carbon tax. It's a job-killing tax. It puts a burden on the backs of every single family in the entire country. It puts a burden on every single company that exists.

Everything is going up, my friends. Everything the people out there are buying today is going up in price in the stores. Their gas is more expensive. Everything is more expensive—

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank the Premier for his very eloquent answer, as always.

Ontario will be paying \$648 million more a year because of the federal government's costly carbon tax.

Instead of having a federal Liberal government that is looking to make the lives of Ontarians more affordable, we have a government in Ottawa that is doing the complete opposite.

The Prime Minister has an anti-competitive agenda, and the people and the job creators in my riding are feeling it every day. The same motley crew that brought Ontario to this dire state is now playing an encore for all Canadians. Thank goodness that our Premier is working hard every day to make it easier to get ahead in this province once again.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier reassure Ontarians of his commitment to defeating this carbon tax?

Hon. Doug Ford: I'd like to thank the member for the question. I can assure every Ontario resident that we're going to use every tool in our toolbox to fight against the most aggressive, worst tax this province has ever seen.

Again, it makes us uncompetitive. Every company I talked to—it makes us uncompetitive. But our great Minister of the Environment has come up with an incredible plan to make sure we have clean air, clean lakes, clean parks. We're leading the entire country with a 22.5% emissions reduction. As the rest of the country is a positive 5%, we're minus 22.5%.

We're going to hit our 30% target in the next 11 years, and guess what, Mr. Speaker? We did it without a carbon tax, a job-killing carbon tax. We will not stop until we get rid of this carbon tax.

In October, the people in this country will decide if they want a carbon tax or not. I'm betting that they—

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

Interjections.

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

FIRE IN BIG TROUT LAKE

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. *Remarks in Oji-Cree.*

My question this morning is for the Premier. Recently, there was a devastating fire in the community of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, also known as Big Trout Lake. Five community members died in this fire, a mother and four of her children, all under the age of 13. Chief Donny Morris has issued a declaration of emergency because of the fire's impacts on the community.

Using Jordan's Principle, will the government help the community's youth, who are most affected by the fire and need mental health supports? Meegwetch.

Hon. Doug Ford: To the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I share, I know, on behalf of my colleagues, our deepest condolences with the victims' family and, indeed, the community of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug. I had a chance to speak to Chief Donny Morris, a person I've known for a great number of years. We pledged our support not just in the immediacy of the investigation by the coroner and various other urgent supports, but to continue to provide any supports that he requested. He said that he would be in touch with me as those needs arose, and I pledged additional support for

mental health services as they would be required. It was a good conversation under a difficult set of circumstances, and we remain committed to supporting that community during this difficult time.

1100

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Back to the Premier: The fire in Big Trout Lake is the latest to claim lives in a First Nation. Fires in Pikangikum, Mishkeegogamang and Wunnumin Lake also had very tragic outcomes. First Nation residents are 10 times more likely to die in a house fire than the rest of Canada.

It's not good enough just to feel bad. It's not good enough. It's not enough just to have those moments of silence. There are actions that could be taken to make events like this less likely, so it doesn't happen again. Will the government commit to working with First Nations to improve fire safety in our communities?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to recognize my colleague the minister of children and youth services, who spoke about Jordan's Principle at the House of Commons last week. The member opposite is right: It is more than just about moments of silence; it's more about action, Mr. Speaker. That's why we responded to this fire very quickly and reached out to the chief. In fact, resources from the government of Ontario were mobilized immediately—the chief acknowledged that—and we remain committed to supporting the community. We'll take our cue from the leadership of that community in terms of what additional support will be required, and it will be there.

HOUSING

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It is very clear that Ontario has a housing crisis. Homes are too expensive to buy or rent, and supply just hasn't kept up with demand. Last year, three quarters of Ontario households couldn't afford the average price of a resale home. More than half of renters found the average rent for a two-bedroom just too much for their budget—that is, if they could even find a quality rental in the first place.

This is the result of 15 years of neglect by the previous Liberal government. They increased red tape every chance they got, making it even more difficult to build the housing our province so desperately needs.

Can the minister please explain to this House and to the people of Ontario what our government is doing to increase housing supply in Ontario?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the incredible member from Oakville North–Burlington for all the work that she does on behalf of her constituents.

I was honoured to speak this morning at the Toronto Region Board of Trade about More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan. And the member is right: It's clear that after years of mismanagement and inaction on this file by the previous government, there is a shortage of housing in Ontario. There are not enough homes for individuals and families who need it.

Speaker, it takes 10 years to build a low-rise or high-rise housing development in the GTHA. Our plan and legislation aim to speed up the time it takes to build housing across all of Ontario, by cutting red tape and reducing unnecessary delays, duplications and barriers. This is going to make it easier to build more homes and provide more housing choices more quickly, while maintaining protections to people's health and safety and the environment.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. It is clear that more housing of more kinds needs to be built. Unfortunately, there is a major backlog of legacy cases at the Local Planning Appeals Tribunal. It is a two- to three-year appeals process. At a time when Ontario is in a housing crisis, this is unacceptable.

It's estimated there are approximately 100,000 housing units that are caught up in those legacy cases at the tribunal. That's 100,000 desperately needed homes and rentals that can't get built, or three years' worth of construction in Ontario waiting to be approved.

Can the minister tell this House how the tribunal will be able to expedite decisions more quickly in order to get more housing on the market?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, I want to thank the member for that excellent question.

Speaker, thanks to the support of our fantastic Attorney General, we're adding as many as 11 new adjudicators to the tribunal. That's a 45% increase. We're proposing changes that will broaden the tribunal's jurisdiction and, in major land use planning appeals, allow it to make the best planning decision. We're also proposing changes to encourage the use of mediation to simplify the processes and remove potential delays.

We're also giving the tribunal greater discretion regarding its fees, to make sure that barriers are removed for those seeking to launch an appeal. We're moving towards a cost-recovery model so that developers pay more for the system, not the people of Ontario.

These changes are going to eliminate the backlog, reduce delays and ensure the LPAT can unjam that logjam and get units created for the people—

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

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Last week it was released that the Minister of Labour is cutting \$16 million from the office tasked with preventing injuries and deaths in the workplace. The minister is cutting \$16 million from the office, despite the fact that it's not taxpayer-funded and does not impact the government's bottom line.

Speaker, workplace deaths are going up and up, not down.

My question to the Premier is this: How many more workers need to die in workplaces before he stops cutting the services designed to protect them?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I thank the member opposite for the question. We've actually increased our health and safety enforcement budget by over half a million dollars. We take the safety of workers in this province very seriously.

In order to protect what matters most, we asked our partners at the health and safety associations to find \$12 million in savings by exploring opportunities to implement efficiencies, leveraging third-party revenue, and restricting discretionary spending on items such as non-essential hiring, travelling, training and events.

Mr. Speaker, we had important decisions to make, putting people as a priority. We have looked at health and safety programs. We have worked with the partners that deliver these health and safety programs. There are other avenues of revenue for them to provide the programs.

But we have, as I said, increased our enforcement budget by half a million dollars.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Again to the Premier: When asked about the government's \$16-million cut to health and safety, a lawyer with the industrial accident victims' legal clinic said, "It will ultimately lead to more accidents."

Not one person should go to work in the province of Ontario and not know if they're coming home at the end of the day to their families.

Slashing funding designed to protect workers, forcing training sessions online, and creating unaccountable classes will make workers less safe.

The government said they are slashing health and safety in this province because it's cost-efficient.

So my question is this: What exactly is the value of the life of a worker to this government?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, I have to reject the premise of this question. Of course, the health and safety of workers are of utmost importance to this government.

1110

I will repeat again for the member: We actually increased our spending on occupational health and safety enforcement by half a million dollars. Yes, we have the Ontario health and safety associations, and we work with those partners. We told them the reality of the province's financial situation. These are private organizations that receive revenue funding from multiple sources.

Look, Mr. Speaker, we have the priority of the workers in mind in health and safety. We increased the enforcement budget by half a million dollars. There are other revenue sources for health and safety programs to be delivered. We've worked with our partners in these programs. Modernizing health and safety programs—the more people can actually get health and safety programs—is not a bad thing.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday afternoon in the Legislature at the end of

the debate, a young woman stood in the members' gallery to express her dismay that the government members had not supported an opposition day motion put by the NDP to declare a climate change emergency and to develop a real plan to deal with that emergency.

The fact is that Ontario had taken action to reduce pollution. The fact that the Minister of the Environment can stand in his place and claim confidently that Ontario is on track to meet its targets is because another government, our government, did the heavy lifting. Coal plants are shut down, cap-and-trade was in place, there are more electric vehicles on the road, buildings were being retrofitted because of work—

Interjections.

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

I apologize to the member for Don Valley West. Once again, start the clock.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, everything we undertook was based on evidence and science and so, to the Minister of the Environment, I say, "You're welcome." But the young woman yesterday was not challenging—

Interjections.

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

The member for Don Valley West is an elected member of this House and has every right to ask a question just like any other member of this House. I need to be able to hear her. This is twice that the government side, in huge numbers, has shouted her down. It's not acceptable behaviour.

Restart the clock. The member for Don Valley West.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: The young woman yesterday was challenging this government to care for the future. She was asking this government to think about her ability to live safely and securely, to have children of her own, free of the ravages of extreme weather and environmental degradation.

Can the Premier please explain how the cancellation of successful programs that have led to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the deletion of those programs, will safeguard the future for that young woman and her entire generation?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy.

Interjections.

Hon. Doug Ford: Oh. I'm sorry.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Well, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another great opportunity.

It's a little bit rich coming from that member. We saw what those projects cost the people of Ontario—17 to 48 cents a kilowatt—while Liberal insiders got rich and the people of Ontario, families, seniors and small businesses took the hit, especially out in northern Ontario. I can't think of a larger transfer of wealth than what occurred under the previous Liberal government and their irresponsible decisions around, especially, industrial wind turbines. This was a dramatic error. We have introduced legislation, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act. It has just been passed, and we're well on the path to fix what they broke.

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

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, Mr. Speaker, we've actually seen this movie before because, when that member was sitting in the federal Parliament, Stephen Harper stood up and took credit for Canada being a leader in reduction of greenhouse gas emissions because of what was being done here in Ontario by a Liberal government. We were reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Young people are, by nature, optimistic, and they should be. But they are worried about the environment, as they should be. They're also worried about their education. Their parents are worried about their ability to care for their younger siblings, so this whole question is about the future.

They see this government removing the very supports that they rely on: cutting per pupil funding, that will result in larger class sizes; increasing online courses in high school, when we know from the research that fewer students will complete those courses; reducing student assistance grants, which will mean higher debt and less access to post-secondary education; cutting \$1 billion in social services that the—

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

Hon. Greg Rickford: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Rod Phillips: I'm sure it must be frustrating for the member from Don Valley West to see the programs that she put in place, the programs that failed, programs like the cap-and-trade program, a program that the Auditor General explained to the then Premier—but she wouldn't listen—was going to transfer hundreds of millions of dollars to California—why does she like California better than Ontario? Why does she like California taxpayers better than Ontario taxpayers?

It must be upsetting to see a program put in place that is actually going hit targets, not miss targets like the programs that she put in place—a program that isn't based on benefiting Liberal insiders but benefiting the people of Ontario.

Our programs are going to hit the targets that her federal Prime Minister, who she stood beside, agreed to—the 30% targets. Our program is going to do that without a cap-and-trade program, without a carbon tax and without subsidizing and picking winners and building electric truck factories for Warren Buffett, or the other things that she supported.

We have a real plan for Ontarians, and it's—

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Next question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Daryl Kramp: My question today is for another minister who makes things happen: our Minister of Infrastructure. Last Friday, I had the chance to join the minister in the municipality of Tweed in my riding for a very

exciting announcement. We announced funding for 49 road and bridge projects right across this province. These projects are part of our government's commitment to invest in critical infrastructure where it matters most. These 49 projects are the first that our government nominated in the 10-year, \$30-billion infrastructure program known as the Investing in Canada infrastructure program.

Colleagues, this is amazing news for rural and northern municipalities in Ontario. Smart infrastructure investments create jobs, they grow the economy, and they protect what matters most to our families and our communities, our students and our businesses here in Ontario.

To the minister: Tell us more about this program and how it impacts the people of Ontario.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for that excellent question and for being with me on Friday.

Our government ran on a mandate to get Ontario moving. We announced funding for better roads and bridges in 49 different communities across Ontario on Friday, and this is only the beginning. The majority of these projects can get started in this construction season with federal government support.

I was glad to see last week that my honourable friend Minister Champagne declared that Ontario's priorities were his priorities. He said that he would work to speedily approve these projects. Mr. Speaker, that is the right thing for the federal government to do.

These projects are valued at over \$78 million. This commitment is more proof that our government is protecting what matters most to the people. Good roads and bridges get people to work and home safely so they can spend more time with the people they love.

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

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Minister, thank you for that good news—great news, actually—and your continued guidance and support for our rural and northern communities. This announcement demonstrates that our government is absolutely committed to making the right infrastructure announcements.

Friday's announcement, back in my riding, took place outside the boundary bridge on Hawkins Bay in the municipality of Tweed. I know personally, from talking to all of the people there, how it impacts them and how much this investment for its replacement will absolutely positively affect their lives in that community.

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Six of these projects are located in my riding. Municipalities such as Tweed, Stone Mills, Tudor and Cashel, Hastings Highlands, Carlow Mayo and Tyendinaga will benefit from over \$9.4 million in funding for road and bridge projects.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us more about these 49 projects and how they are helping people right across this province of Ontario?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I would be happy to answer that excellent question. Small and medium-sized towns are the fabric of our province. Projects just like the

Boundary Bridge are infrastructure that people need. These investments are essential to the local quality of life and prosperity. They create jobs, grow our economy and shape the future for hard-working families in Ontario. I can only imagine, Mr. Speaker, how much more we could accomplish if the previous Liberal government, supported by the opposition NDP, did not leave us stuck with a \$15-billion deficit.

We're excited about these 49 projects. We are now awaiting approval by the federal government to go ahead. If they can do this, we can get shovels in the ground almost immediately. We're protecting what matters most and getting Ontario moving again. Our government is working harder, smarter and more efficiently to make life better for the people of this province.

POVERTY

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is for the Premier. Last week, we learned that the government is cutting funding for the Poverty Reduction Strategy office in half, defunding the office by \$7.5 million. The Poverty Reduction Strategy office works to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty, identify systemic barriers and eliminate chronic homelessness. Instead of investing in strategies to alleviate poverty, the government has shown its true priorities.

Can the Premier please explain why, once again, his government is making cuts on the backs of our most vulnerable citizens?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: The member opposite and I have had this conversation many times in this assembly. One in seven Ontarians live in poverty. Almost a million people rely on social assistance that costs this province \$10 billion but does nothing to restore dignity.

What does restore dignity is the creation of jobs in the province of Ontario. Since this government has taken office, we've been able to work with industry and business leaders to create an additional 160,000 jobs, in addition to the 200,000 jobs that have remained vacant, which is why we are reforming social assistance so that those people who are employable across this province have the dignity of work, have the compassion of a group society where they're working with individuals.

We know, Speaker, that the best social program is a job. I understand that the members opposite would rather trap people in poverty. Well, this government and this party want to lift them up so that they can succeed, and that's exactly what this government is doing.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary question.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: In its recent Poverty Reduction Strategy report, the government stated, as the minister did just now, that they are committed to supporting those who need it the most. But you cannot support

those who need the help the most when you cut funding for the Poverty Reduction Strategy office in half. You can't reduce poverty in Ontario when you don't understand how poverty works, as the minister just demonstrated. You can't reduce poverty in Ontario when you don't understand what systemic issues perpetuate it, and when you don't have a plan and a commitment to making that change.

Can the Premier explain how the government thinks slashing the Poverty Reduction Strategy funding will actually help those living in poverty, many of whom cannot work, which is why the idea that a job is the solution is absolutely ridiculous?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I come from a small town, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, where there wasn't big government. Neighbours helped neighbours, supported one another, and we made sure that those who could work could find suitable employment. I have no idea why the members opposite are so defeatist, why they are so opposed to a good day's work and a solid day's pay.

I can tell you that this government for the people is committed to ensuring that we provide wraparound supports for those who can work. That is why I'm working with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, so we can best provide the best wraparound supports for those who are employable to get into those 300,000-some jobs that we know exist in this province. That's why we're working with the Minister of Health, so that we can provide the best mental health supports we possibly can. That's why we're working with the Minister of Education, so we can try to get more affordable daycare for single moms out there who might have to stay on social assistance rather than get a job because they don't have affordable child care.

We have a fundamental difference of opinion—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order. The member for Ottawa Centre has to come to order. The member for Windsor–Tecumseh has to come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain has to come to order—for repeated interjections in the last round of questions.

Start the clock.

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. I've worked well with the minister in the past as advocates to end violence against women.

Last week, I met with Erin Lee, executive director of Lanark County Interval House, which provides critical services for victims of domestic violence. Erin is very concerned and troubled that the ministry unilaterally and without notice cancelled \$53,000 in funding. In addition, none of the interval houses and women's shelters have received their 2019 budget package or their contract for services.

Minister, this is not efficient. It certainly lacks accountability to have women's shelters operating without a budget.

Will the minister commit to ending the practice of unilateral and hidden funding decisions that harm those who help victims of domestic violence?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I too met with Erin Lee of the interval house last week. We had all 48 of the coordinating committees for violence against women join us last week to talk about some of the issues that we face on the ground.

But before I go into that, I want to say one thing to the member opposite: The reason we have a \$1.5-million front-line rural strategy is in essence because of three members of this assembly who I served with in opposition. One is the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, another is the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the third is the member from Leeds–Grenville—three strong men who have consistently, time and again, stood in this Legislature.

That's why we are investing an historic \$174 million into violence against women. That's why, above and beyond the previous Liberal administration, we have increased the budget towards violence against women by an additional 2%. I'll get into more specifics in the supplemental, but I do want to congratulate the member for always standing true—

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Minister. Yesterday, during statements, I mentioned that elected representatives ought to practise in government what we preached while in opposition. The MCCSS year-over-year estimates show a reduction of \$17 million for women's shelters and supports for victims of violence, from \$172 to \$155 million. In opposition, we both were very critical of government for leaving agencies and organizations in the dark on their funding, yet we still have today these shelters operating in uncertainty. Without this critical budget information, both the shelters and the women and children they serve are living in the dark.

Minister, will you call Erin Lee and all the shelters this week and reveal what their budgets are for 2019?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, as I mentioned, I met with Erin Lee as well as all 48 community groups last week. We're going to continue to have those conversations. In fact, I've spoken with the Minister of Health about convening a meeting with her with respect to mental health issues.

But let me be perfectly clear where it comes to the numbers the member opposite is stating. These perceived reductions are due to the elimination of unfunded and unallocated resources from the Liberal campaign budget. That was irresponsible. Many of us in the social service types of portfolios have had to contend with a fictitious budget that was written on the back of a napkin. When it became clear, we in this government ensured that we increased the spend by almost 2%, or \$11.5 million, in order to support women's shelters across the province of Ontario.

My office continues to work with them, and we will continue to make our commitment to eradicate violence against women as well as sex trafficking in the province of Ontario. There will be no fiercer critic than me on that file.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. Over the weekend, it was great to see so many memories and videos shared on social media celebrating mothers across Ontario. Our mothers are so often the most important women in our lives; I can say that's true in my case.

Unfortunately, women still face barriers right here in Ontario. Too often, women earn less than their male counterparts, and countless women in our communities are confronted by sexual and domestic violence.

Minister, can you please tell us how the government is working to break down these barriers and help keep women safe across the province?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to thank the member from Durham for always standing in this Legislature and being a very strong advocate for women who are fleeing domestic violence, as well as women who have been dealing with sex trafficking.

I've been a strong advocate in this assembly for many years—whether that is making Queen's Park more family-friendly so members like Christina Mitas can bring their daughter onto the floor of this assembly. I have been a strong advocate in making sure that we continue the work of the Saving the Girl Next Door Act by Laurie Scott, making sure that we're actually talking about eradicating sex trafficking in the province of Ontario.

We're working with members of this government to ensure that we continue to protect a woman's right to choose, and we were very clear about that just yesterday.

Last week, I had the 48 community groups that support violence-against-women initiatives—and we're going to continue to work with them. That's why we have a historic investment of \$174.5 million—\$1.5 million, as I mentioned in the previous question, is dedicated to front-line support for those in rural communities. We're going to continue to stand up and we're going to continue to ensure that our voices are heard.

Let me be perfectly clear: It's up to strong women to support vulnerable women, but it's—

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: Violence against women has significant economic costs. I think people sometimes forget that. It's estimated that the economic impact of spousal violence in Canada is \$7.4 billion. That amounts to roughly \$220 per Canadian.

While we've made progress to achieve greater gender equality, we must have women fully engaged in the political discourse.

Can the minister please tell us how she's engaging women in the political discourse in Ontario?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: As I mentioned, I convened Ontario's 48 existing violence-against-women coordinating committees just last week, some tremendous women and men from across the province, making sure that we protect our most vulnerable. We must continue to have this conversation, however, because it is easy, particularly within this ministry, where Ontario's most vulnerable people rely on us to succeed—that we continue to tell the uncomfortable stories and the truths that are out there, which is why we're going to continue to work with those coordinating committees, bring in other ministers so that they understand how we intersect and help the survivors. We also want to make sure that we provide the best possible outcomes. We need to see what those issues are in all of our communities.

I think when we look at building up society and building up women, we must also make sure that men are part of that conversation, which is why, just last Friday, I was pleased to spend some time with grade 7 to 11 male students who were talking about manning up. I think that we all have an opportunity here to talk to the men in our lives to make sure that they're protecting the most vulnerable women in society.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Premier. Since September, I have asked every minister responsible for anti-racism for a briefing. These requests have gone unanswered. In pursuit of answers, I was told to be patient and to wait for the estimates, which I was assured would show the government's plan for anti-racism work.

While the Anti-Racism Directorate was listed in the estimates, I was disturbed to see that there was only \$1,000 dedicated to "anti-racism initiatives."

Can the Premier please explain to the people of Ontario what kind of work \$1,000 can do to combat racism, which is, sadly, on the rise in the province?

Hon. Doug Ford: Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite is using numbers that, frankly, have no basis in fact.

We have relied on the Anti-Racism Directorate to drive our legislative agenda. The OPS employees that work in this directorate do excellent work, and we use that when we are doing things like updating the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act. When we look at policy changes, we make sure that there is their voice, and their impact is very important to us. There is no doubt that racism, in all its forms, is completely unacceptable to our government. We will continue to work with our partners to make sure that we drive decisions based on that input.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Again to the Premier: The story that these estimates tell us is that the Conservatives are just not interested in doing racial justice work. They're unwilling to take concrete steps towards racial equity. There's money allocated to staff and advertising, but no money to do the actual anti-racism work, no money to

invest in the organizations and programs which are making progress on these issues, and no money to resource the Black, Indigenous, Jewish and Muslim anti-racism subcommittees that this government quietly disbanded, despite hate crimes being on the rise.

Does the Premier believe that we can solve racism with \$1,000?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, I will say—I will re-inforce—that there is no room in a Ford government that would in any way allow racism to continue in the province of Ontario. We are actively engaged in working with the directorate. We will continue that work.

But let's be clear: We are asking everyone across Ontario to play a small part in ensuring that we bring Ontario's fiscal health back to order. In a small way, we will ask all organizations and agencies that are transfer partners that are part of our ability to ensure Ontario's fiscal health returns to balance—because, at the end of the day, we have to make sure as a government, as citizens, that we protect what matters most. We will do that. We will do that with the excellent partners that we have, and we will make sure that we are bringing forward policies and ideas that actually—

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

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. David Piccini: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This past June, our government was elected with a mandate to stand up for Ontario's rural, northern and Indigenous communities. These regions had long been neglected by the previous government. In fact, Mr. Speaker, my predecessor famously called northern Ontario "no man's land."

Over those 15 years, Ontarians saw investments grind to a halt. Those looking to grow and expand their business faced roadblock after roadblock after roadblock. Outdated and redundant red tape and lack of infrastructure and resources and meaningful dialogue with our municipalities prevented these regions from reaching their full economic potential.

Can the minister please tell the House about the work our government is doing to ensure that Ontario's rural communities remain sustainable and viable places to live, work and raise a family?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South for that excellent question. Our government is committed to working with our rural communities to ensure they have the resources they need to attract investment, create jobs and boost economic development.

That's why, last week, I was proud to announce that our government has committed to revitalizing the Rural Economic Development, or RED, Program. The Rural Economic Development Program will continue to support projects that diversify and grow local economies. It will now also target more impactful projects and tangible community benefits, such as reducing the burden for applicants and creating efficiencies in program delivery.

This program is just one of the tools that our government is utilizing to ensure that Ontarians' taxpayer dollars are respected, while delivering results for our rural communities.

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

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to the minister for his response and for the work he's doing to promote rural economic development. I know that rural residents in my riding are happy that our government is creating more opportunity for rural Ontario. We're creating an environment where job creators can thrive, especially those in rural Ontario.

In less than a year, Mr. Speaker, we've seen investments open two streams, rural and northern, and public transit that has meant shovels in the ground in my community, and shovels in the ground in my colleagues' communities and across rural Ontario. Because our government knows that when our rural communities thrive, Ontario thrives.

Could the minister please expand upon how our government is supporting job creation and economic growth across rural Ontario?

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Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to refer to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'd like to thank the Minister of Agriculture for sharing this morning, and I'd like to thank my good friend and my neighbour in eastern Ontario, Mr. Piccini, for the question this morning.

Our government came into office with a commitment to create jobs, not just in the big cities like Toronto and Ottawa, but to ensure that we're creating good jobs right across Ontario. That's why we're reducing red tape across Ontario. That's why we're lowering the hydro rates and that's why we're lowering taxes, so that businesses across Ontario can succeed. We're creating an environment where job creators can create more jobs.

Through Bill 66, the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, we removed burdensome red tape affecting our agriculture sector. I'd like to thank again my colleague the Minister of Agriculture for helping out on that file, making it easier for farmers to register online, eliminating costly, outdated standards under the Milk Act and reducing paperwork for meat processors as well—all good things to create jobs in rural Ontario. We're working with our communities to ensure that Ontario is open for business—

Interjections.

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

Next question.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Chris Glover: My question to the Premier. In November, the Premier's Minister of Finance said, "I look at the young people who are here today, and I think about the debt that you are inheriting, and it saddens me."

What saddens me, Mr. Speaker, is that this government is directly downloading \$414 million in student debt onto young people. Is the Premier not saddened by the hundreds of millions of dollars in additional debt that students have to take on because of his callous cuts to OSAP?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Our government is taking action to deliver on its promises to the people of Ontario and restore trust and accountability in Ontario's finances. We promised the people of Ontario to create good jobs, and we want to ensure that Ontarians have the skills they need to fill those jobs. Post-secondary education is critical to the future of Ontario and our next generations. Our government has been clear that we will balance the budget in a responsible manner and deliver on our promise to restore accountability and trust in Ontario's finances.

The previous Liberal government created a \$15-billion deficit, made Ontario the most indebted subnational jurisdiction in all the world and was spending \$40 million a day more than they brought in. If left unchecked, the deficit will put essential services like health care, education—

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

Supplementary question?

Mr. Chris Glover: Again to the Premier: In October, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities said in this House, "Unlike the previous Liberal government, we know that we have a responsibility to our young people to invest in their education and not to leave them with an unsustainable debt load for their children and grandchildren."

There's a contradiction here. There's a contradiction between the minister's words and the actions of this government. What the minister fails to understand is that her actions to cut \$650 million from colleges and universities and over \$400 million from OSAP will leave our children and grandchildren with even more student debt.

Why does the Premier and his ministers want students to start their life under a mountain of debt?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Again, thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Unlike the previous Liberal government, propped up by the NDP, we are balancing Ontario's budget in a responsible manner while protecting what matters most to the people of Ontario. If left unchecked, the deficit threatens essential services that the people of Ontario rely on.

In terms of the figure and the things you mentioned, I can say that the figure represents post-secondary reforms, including our historic 10% reduction in tuition for all Ontario students, which will provide Ontario students \$450 million in tuition relief. By lowering tuition across the entire province, our government is ensuring that all qualified Ontario students will have more access to high-quality skills training and education.

Speaker, we are focused on protecting the services that matter most to the people of Ontario.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kitchener Centre has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Solicitor General concerning resourcing the anti-racism work in Ontario. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has informed me he has a point of order.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks, Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the parliamentary assistants responding to the late shows scheduled for Tuesday May 14, 2019.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to put forward a motion regarding the late shows tonight. Agreed? Agreed.

Once again, the government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 38(b), the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment may respond to the late show scheduled for Tuesday, May 14, by the member for Brampton Centre in place of the parliamentary assistant to the Premier; and

That the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing may respond to the late show scheduled for Tuesday, May 14, by the member for Guelph in place of the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance; and

That the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health may respond to the late show scheduled for Tuesday, May 14, by the member for Essex in place of the parliamentary assistant to the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 38(b), the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment may respond to the late show scheduled for Tuesday, May 14, by the member for Brampton Centre—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

Motion agreed to.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you, Speaker. I'd just like to welcome Parkdale–High Park constituent Krista Slavinski, who is a practising physician assistant at Toronto General Hospital.

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

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask members if they wish to introduce their guests, I have two guests that I would like to introduce in the Speaker's gallery: my sister Debbie Jackson and her friend Edward Ngaira, who is visiting us from Nairobi, Kenya. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature. We're delighted to have you here.

Introduction of visitors?

Mr. Jamie West: I have guests who will be arriving shortly for the OLIP spring reception. I'd like to introduce Barry Guppy, Laurel Hoard and Danika Guppy. They're the family of my OLIP intern, Braelyn Guppy. I want to welcome them to the House for the OLIP spring reception.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I'd like to introduce Rob Meier, a former colleague from the Weather Network. He was my cameraman, and he made me look good even though it was difficult to do that.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: In east-end Toronto, there's a school whose students are mainly refugees and newcomers. Many of them come from conflict and have experienced a great deal of trauma. Their parents are working as hard as they can to learn English, find housing they can afford and do whatever work they can to keep that roof over the family's head. The kids are working as hard as they can to figure out what it means to be Canadian, help their parents out, and do well in school. They are still trying to cope with that trauma.

Up until this year, that school had an extraordinarily talented drama teacher. She had a background in equity studies and was uniquely able to provide a safe space for her students in her classes, help them work through the trauma, be a trusted adult in their lives and help them decide what path is best. That teacher learned this spring that she doesn't have a job at this school anymore. What you need to know is that, whether or not she gets another job in another school, this school and its students have lost their drama teacher. It's a tragic loss for them as students and for all of us who care about how communities are built. On Friday, the TDSB learned that it is facing \$42.1 million in funding cuts. That position isn't coming back.

This story is playing out over and over across Ontario with teachers, librarians and guidance counsellors gone, leaving holes in lives. It doesn't have to be this way, and it's just plain wrong.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Each year during the first week of May, Ontario recognizes the significant contribution of correctional officers, probation and parole officers, nurses, social workers, recreation staff and so many others who help keep our communities safe.

As the member of Parliament representing Carleton and as part of the Solicitor General's caucus advisory team, it was an honour to join the Solicitor General, my colleagues and Ontario's correctional services staff as we paid tribute to those who have fallen in the line of duty at the eighth annual correctional services ceremony of remembrance here at Queen's Park.

I also had the opportunity last week to visit front-line personnel at the St. Lawrence Valley Correctional and Treatment Centre in Brockville to learn first-hand about the challenges they experience in their day-to-day work keeping Ontarians safe, as well as all the positive work they are doing to support rehabilitation and treatment of inmates. Thank you to Superintendent Tracey Gunton, Deputy Guy Boucher, Sergeant Tony Quarterman and all of the correctional staff at the St. Lawrence Valley Correctional and Treatment Centre for a very informative and helpful tour.

Over the past several months, our government has made improvements at adult correctional facilities across the province, including better health-and-wellness supports for correctional officers. On behalf of our government and Premier Ford, I want to thank all corrections staff across Ontario for your continued commitment to service, which protects our communities, stands up for victims and holds criminals accountable. It's clear that you have our back, and you can rest assured that our government has your back.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

Mr. Jeff Burch: I have a pile of letters here from a group of seniors who, last week, held a demonstration at a constituency office in Beamsville. After only eight minutes, they had the police called on them. These constituents were from ridings all across Niagara. They were also referred to as "grannies" later in the news.

Speaker, I want to apologize. The member had a chance to apologize on behalf of his government, but I would like to apologize on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for the way that they were treated. We serve citizens. Our offices belong to the taxpayers. All constituents should feel free to meet and to demonstrate without having the police called on them.

BROOKLIN SPRING FAIR

Mr. Lorne Coe: The Brooklin Spring Fair, a great annual event held each year, starts May 30 and continues to June 2. There are over 200 fairs held in rural Ontario each year, and the 108-year tradition of the Brooklin Spring Fair speaks volumes about how significant the fair continues to be today for residents in Whitby.

The Brooklin Spring Fair is viewed as the gateway to spring, celebrating agriculture with its livestock, local fresh farm products displays, rodeos and so much more. Over 30,000 people annually now pass through the original stone gateway on Winchester Road to attend the fair, reaffirming the importance and value of agriculture in Brooklin.

I wish Kristin Williamson, the president of the Brooklin Agricultural Society, her incredible board of directors and her army of volunteers every success this year and in the years to come. My grandchildren and I look forward to once again attending the fair and seeing how agriculture and agriculture business positively impacts Whitby and all communities in the region of Durham.

ABORTION

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm very proud to rise today, inspired by women in our country who fought for choice and for women's reproductive freedom. Speaker, when I became a community organizer—and I started in this city—I learned from organizers like Carolyn Egan, Michelle Robidoux and Judy Rebick—Judy, who once saved Dr. Henry Morgentaler from an intolerant wielding garden shears who tried to attack Dr. Morgentaler.

Decades of Canadians have struggled to ensure that women have bodily autonomy and access to reproductive freedom. I want to make sure that this government knows that any attempts to roll those freedoms back will be fought vigorously by this opposition caucus.

I know that back home, Speaker, grassroots pro-choice organizations where I live have fought hard to ensure there's a bubble zone around abortion clinics. I want to make sure that people at home know that if you see those bubble zones compromised in any way, if you are taunted or harassed on the way to getting access to your abortion services, call our office at 613-722-6414. We will respond swiftly and promptly.

At the end of the day, Speaker, the women I had the great pleasure to learn from have burned into my mind as a man who allies with them that not the church and not the state but women will decide their fate. If this province believes in human rights, we will never roll those rights back.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Le samedi 12 mai, j'ai eu l'occasion de participer à la cinquième édition de la Soirée Saphir. La Soirée Saphir, c'est une belle tradition, la veille de la fête des Mères, d'inviter les femmes franco-ontariennes à célébrer leurs accomplissements. J'y amène d'ailleurs ma mère de 89 ans depuis les trois dernières années. Elle est toujours heureuse d'y participer.

On rend hommage donc aux femmes et aux contributions qu'elles font à la communauté. Le thème de cette année était « Un regard vers l'avenir », un clin d'oeil vers les innovations et la technologie et la place des femmes dans ce nouveau monde.

J'aimerais prendre cette opportunité pour féliciter les lauréates et les personnes qui ont gagné des prix : Pascale Bazinet, pour l'engagement communautaire; Yasmine Zemni, pour la jeunesse; Linda Savard, pour la vie professionnelle; et la personnalité féminine de l'année, Johanne Lacombe. C'est intéressant de voir—j'ai eu l'occasion de parler beaucoup avec Yasmine Zemni, la

jeune qui a obtenu le prix, qui était d'une éloquence fabuleuse à l'égard de ce que les jeunes peuvent contribuer pour la francophonie ontarienne.

Je veux simplement souligner qu'il est important de continuer de soutenir la francophonie, non seulement en célébrant ses ambitions, ses accomplissements et ses aspirations pour l'avenir, mais aussi en soulignant l'apport de la francophilie—les gens qui ne sont pas natifs de la langue française mais qui la soutiennent. Dans ce contexte-là, je m'inquiète beaucoup des coupures aux programmes d'immersion.

1510

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. Daryl Kramp: It used to be that death and taxes were the only certainties in life. Now it's a trio: death, taxes and debt. And government debt makes the other two even worse.

Here in this chamber, we must talk about debt openly, because it was here in this chamber that we were repeatedly sold decisions that were both wrong and wrong-headed. Those irresponsible decisions turned Ontario into the most indebted sub-national state in the world.

Well, it's time to stop talking. We all have to admit the danger of the situation faced by all of us here, from all parties. The debt hanging over Ontario threatens our very civilization, the Ontario built carefully by industrious generations of natives and immigrants since 1784, the ones who made it a place to stand and a place to grow.

Debt isn't a word; it's a sentence. We must get our debt under control or it will be a life sentence for all the generations that succeed us. And that is not a political statement, Mr. Speaker. It's a fact that we, as parliamentarians, must face that responsibility.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Members of this House have likely ordered food using an app on their phone. One such company that provides this service here in Ontario is the international app giant Foodora.

It has come to light that Foodora has been systematically exploiting its workers and underpaying them. In fact, recent reports show that Foodora owes nearly \$8 million in unpaid wages. That's \$8 million that the company has stolen from its workers. They are part of what is known as the gig economy, where companies like Foodora intentionally misclassify workers as independent contractors instead of as employees so they can get away with not providing the most basic labour protections, such as sick days, vacation pay and employment insurance, and which puts the onus of paying for necessary items, like cellphone data, on workers.

These companies want to keep workers fragmented and make it hard for them to organize and collectively push for basic workers' rights. Why? All so that they can pay less and profit more. They want to keep workers precarious.

Speaker, we know precarious work contributes to poor health outcomes, both physical and mental. Precarious work keeps workers in poverty, living in fear and worry of not being able to make ends meet, or of what should happen should they get sick or injured.

But not any more, Speaker. Foodora couriers are fighting—fighting to unionize and win a \$15 minimum wage and workplace fairness. I am proud to stand in solidarity with Justice for Foodora Couriers to challenge workplace precarity and to demand from Foodora for their workers what every Ontarian deserves: respect, health and safety protections, and fair compensation from a company that's profiting off their hard work.

DOORS OPEN RICHMOND HILL

Mrs. Daisy Wai: This weekend, I was pleased to visit local organizations in my riding who participated in Doors Open Richmond Hill. It is an event that supports cultural sites in the community to open their doors to everyone. This free event is part of Doors Open Ontario, launched in 2002 by the Ontario Heritage Trust. It is amazing to discover the heritage, architecture and culture that Richmond Hill has to offer.

I would like to thank the 15 featured sites that opened their doors to the residents of Richmond Hill. Each site featured a different experience that the whole family could enjoy. There were tours, activities, and demonstrations of weaving, spinning, pottery-making and quilting. We saw very amazing arts and crafts, and also artifacts from previous years. Children's activities included Indigenous games, pottery mending and scavenger hunts—all free.

I would like to thank all the volunteers who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to put this special day together. Your hard work and the countless hours that you spend behind the scenes have made Richmond Hill one of the most vibrant places to live and grow in Ontario.

ANAPHYLAXIS

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: May is national food allergy and anaphylaxis month. I am pleased to rise today to recognize the efforts of the Canadian Anaphylaxis Initiative and to thank Debbie Bruce from my riding of Mississauga Centre for being a passionate advocate for this cause.

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction that can be life-threatening and is most often triggered by food, insects or medication. Certain people are more at risk than others, especially if they have asthma or have experienced a reaction in the past.

Being at risk of severe allergic reactions requires individuals to always be conscious of what is around them, because even the smallest contact with an allergen can cause a life-threatening scenario where every minute counts. That is why it is critical for anaphylactic individuals and those around them to be prepared by having an EpiPen on hand and being trained in its proper administration. That was the intention of Sabrina's Law, introduced by our former Speaker, Dave Levac. Its goal was to save

students' lives by ensuring that all school boards have policies in place that address food allergies in schools.

More than 2.8 million Canadians are affected by some form of anaphylaxis. The month of May reminds us that we have a responsibility to know how to recognize an allergic reaction and how to respond. We must all do our part. That is why I am so pleased to see that the Toronto Blue Jays are providing peanut- and nut-reduced zones during the month of May at their games, including during the weekend of May 24 to 26.

This May, let's all join together in support of our allergic friends, family members, students and colleagues by learning how to recognize the early signs of a reaction and how to administer an EpiPen. It's as simple as this: blue to the sky, orange to the thigh, and call 911.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Mr. Crawford from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption.

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 100, An Act to implement budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 1, 2019, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated May 15, 2019, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POLICE WEEK

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today in recognition of Police Week, taking place this year

from May 12 to 18. Police Week is a national event, organized in Ontario by the province in collaboration with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, that focuses on raising awareness and recognition of the great work that our police services do across the province keeping our communities safe.

This year's theme, "Proudly Supporting Our Police," is an opportunity to shine a light on the diversity of work that exists among our police, including those that the public may not see every day, such as forensics, canine services, search and rescue, marine, aviation, gang intelligence and anti-human trafficking, as well as the work that civilian members of our police services do to support their uniformed colleagues.

I often tell young people, "Regardless of your interests or background, a career in policing is an option if you love working with and helping people."

Public safety is and always will be a priority for our government, and our commitment to provide our front-line police officers with the resources, equipment and supports they need to protect our citizens is unwavering. Our government's record in the last year speaks to this commitment. As soon as we were elected, we took real, immediate action to combat guns and gangs by launching a strategy aimed at fighting gun violence and dismantling gangs throughout the province.

1520

On the infrastructure front, our government also announced last fall a \$182-million investment to replace several aging OPP facilities with new detachments across the province. We've also begun the first modernization of the province's crumbling Public Safety Radio Network, which more than 38,000 provincial front-line and first responders, including OPP officers, rely on to communicate during emergencies.

Providing our police with solid legislative supports is also a key element of our plan to rebuild our province. That is why, this past March, our government passed the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, a full legislative package that will create a foundation for a strengthened relationship between police officers and the communities they serve.

Our government is also helping police officers save lives by enabling them to carry and administer naloxone in response to opioid overdoses, like other first responders, who do not have to worry about routinely being subject to criminal investigations.

We are also investing in the mental health and well-being of our front-line heroes. I was proud to join OPP Association president Rob Jamieson to announce a new mental health program to ensure we look out for and after OPP officers and their families.

Our government also intends to move forward with the proclamation of the Missing Persons Act, which would give police the investigative tools and authority they need to find a missing person, regardless if a crime is suspected.

Every day, our police do incredible work to keep our communities safe. Often this work is silent, preventative and unseen. Sometimes it requires police to put themselves

in harm's way. Occasionally, it requires police to make difficult life-or-death decisions in the blink of an eye.

No matter what, our police can be counted on to protect us. As MPPs, let's use our words and our actions to give police confidence that we will protect them.

CHILD AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It gives me great pleasure to rise today on behalf of Premier Ford and the Ontario government to mark Children and Youth in Care Day.

As members in this House are aware, one in 10 Ontarians rely on the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. They are Ontario's most vulnerable. They are women escaping sex trafficking and domestic violence, immigrants and refugees starting a new life, children and adults with developmental disabilities and autism, and those living in poverty who rely on social assistance. They are also children in custody. Today I want to talk about the most vulnerable, however: children in the care of the province.

Last year, more than 13,000 children and youth were in care in the province of Ontario; among them, an over-representation of Indigenous, Black, and LGBTQ+ children in care. High school completion rates for these children are less than 50%. A recent coroner's report also indicated that among the youth who died by suicide in group homes, many of the young women had been sex-trafficked.

Ontario's children and youth in care deserve better outcomes, and they deserve a government who will push for greater protections and supports. As the minister responsible for the child welfare system, I and our government remain committed and resolute in greater accountability within the child welfare system.

Within the first days of becoming minister, I met with native children and youth in Toronto; and One Vision One Voice, who are committed to changing the child welfare system for African Canadians.

I recall early in my mandate having a rough day. My long-time friend and now my chief of staff, Tim Porter, reminded me that as difficult as the day that I was having was, later that night I would be meeting youth in care who would be smiling but who likely had had a tougher day than me and many reasons not to smile. Sure enough, Tim was right, and his sage advice has helped me get through many difficult days on this file and in this role, particularly when I learn of some of the most difficult files as they pertain to children and youth who are crown wards.

The coroner's report this fall was possibly the toughest document I have read since becoming a minister. To know children and youth in care of the province of Ontario not only died but were subjected to sex trafficking was devastating. That is why one of my first orders of business was to send a message to children's aid societies as well as group homes that I expect greater accountability and responsibility from them. That's why I'm embedding within my office a child advocacy role, and why I have referred all written reports by the previous child and youth advocate to the more rigorous investigative oversight of

Ontario's independent Ombudsman. It's also why I'm creating two tables on child welfare: one for Indigenous youth, respecting the role of customary care, and on general youth in care—each with those with lived experience in the system.

I want to fix problems when they happen, and that's why I want a direct reporting relationship to me and other decision-makers rather than reports that go nowhere and sit on a desk, collecting dust rather than momentum.

That's also why last week I took the opportunity to visit Parliament Hill to speak to the Indigenous affairs standing committee to discuss Indigenous child welfare and Bill C-92. There, I was able to express my cautious optimism for the federal legislation, but also my concern that the standards within the federal legislation may not be as strong and as robust as those within our Child, Youth and Family Services Act here in the province of Ontario, where we actually have 12 Indigenous-led child welfare agencies.

This is just the beginning. I plan on spending the summer listening to how to best improve our child welfare system so we can put children and youth at the heart of all decision-making. The member from Carleton will join me on this listening tour, particularly as it pertains to Indigenous youth. Thank you very much, Goldie. The questions the member from Carleton and I will be asking are: How can we better improve the outcomes of children and youth in care? How can we continue to increase the number of Indigenous children in customary care rather than in group homes? Is there a more effective way to support foster parents? Can we make adoption easier—just like the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who has adopted three children from our child welfare system?

These are the questions that we must ask ourselves, and these are the questions I look forward to consulting on this summer, because we can do better, we must do better, and we will do better. Ontario's most vulnerable children and youth, those in the care of the crown, deserve it, and I and my colleagues in the Ford administration are committed to ensuring that we do better for Ontario's most vulnerable children.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Statements by the ministry?

I understand that the member for Ottawa–Vanier has a point of order.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I would like to seek unanimous consent so that I can share my time with the MPP for Orléans to respond to the ministers' statements.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa–Vanier is seeking unanimous consent of the House to divide her time with the member for Orléans in response to the ministers' statements. Agreed? I heard a no.

Responses?

POLICE WEEK

Mr. Kevin Yarde: It is an absolute pleasure, as the NDP critic on this file, to rise and speak to Police Week in Ontario.

Police have a very important responsibility and play an integral part in our society. They routinely put their lives at risk to protect ours. Their commitment and continued work to keeping our communities safe strengthens our communities and we appreciate them for that. On behalf of our entire caucus, our leader, Andrea Horwath, and myself, I want to thank them all for all that they do in the province.

Policing is a dangerous job, and our police officers often go beyond the call of duty. As first responders, they often deal with some of the most challenging and traumatic situations. They choose a path of challenge and sacrifice so the rest of us can feel safe, and they do so with the understanding that they do the police work while the policies are set in this place. Both of our jobs are to serve and be accountable to the public. So a simple thank you is not enough. We need to do more. We need to support our police officers.

This year's theme for Police Week is "Proudly Supporting Our Police," and it is time that we actually stand behind those words.

1530

This government has made cuts to mental health and is not really interested in addressing the opioid crisis in the province. Unfortunately, our police officers are the ones who face the consequences of the short-sighted decisions made by this government. As front-line officers, our police officers have essentially become our psychologists and often find themselves in tough situations with those suffering from mental health problems. They are not trained to be psychologists but are often put in those tough situations. Police need this government to strengthen existing mental health supports in the community to create effective programs and to support substantial, continuous and appropriate de-escalation and mental health training for officers.

We challenge this government to stand behind our police officers, move past the platitudes and work with the police and community partners to ensure that police can do their invaluable work in a safe, effective, representative and accountable manner.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY

Miss Monique Taylor: Today is Children and Youth in Care Day, a day to raise awareness about the children and youth in the care of the province, a day for all of us here to remember our obligations to them.

There are 12,000 children and youth in care across Ontario. In my capacity as child and youth services critic, I have been fortunate to meet some of these young people. Today, I heard from a group of youth visiting the Legislature with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. These resilient young people told me about the challenges they face as youth leaving care: difficulty accessing OSAP, securing government ID, and using OHIP and their after-care benefits. Overall, these youth want us to remember that when a child is in care, the

government is their parent. So we must make sure that we have everything that they need to thrive.

However, instead of recognizing this important principle, this government is failing these youths. Last fall, the government took away their dedicated independent advocate. The child advocate was a critical watchdog that proactively sought improvements to how we treat children and youth in care. The advocate was also a lifeline—a place that youth could call to get the help they needed when they faced abuse or neglect. When children called the advocate, they had someone who said, "I'm listening. How would you like me to help?" And they would make a plan to make sure that that child was heard.

In pursuit of budget savings, the advocate's office was cruelly cut without consultation or warning. But that's not all. We're now anticipating the children's aid legislation that this government has hinted at that has been coming for months. If recent announcements are any indication, we're expecting consolidation and service reduction.

I just hope this government takes the best interests of the child as their starting point, not what's best for the accountants. The best interests of children and youth should always be the goal when you are designing services that support them. The child should be the centre of every decision. That's Katelynn's Principle.

Children and youth in care deserve our care, and I'm happy to honour them on this day.

POLICE WEEK

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: First, I wanted to say how disappointed I am not to have obtained this UC, because this morning we did agree to the UC that was presented to accommodate some of the changes in PAs.

Let me just say, to start, how important Police Week is for all of us and how, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, I'm happy to bring remarks.

Police Week offers an excellent opportunity to reflect on the work of our provincial and municipal police officers who do help us day in and day out. Many of our police officers are unsung heroes who, without praise and recognition, dedicate their careers to ensuring that our society remains just, remains safe and that our rights and liberties are protected. To our province's police services, I say merci, thank you and meegwetch.

The provincial government has an obligation to both our police officers and to the Ontarians who rely on them to ensure that police have the resources and the support they need to work safely and effectively in partnership with our communities. That's why, like many, I am a bit concerned about the drastic cuts to the budget of the OPP.

It's hard to celebrate the heroism of our police officers and invite more to join the forces while at the same time recognizing that there will be severe cuts. Ontarians deserve to know how these cuts will affect the services that they rely on, and I think we deserve to have good answers today.

I also want to say that we are concerned that civilian work may be cut, as opposed to front-line officers, because that's the promise that the Solicitor General has made. We want to remind her of the importance of pursuing and supporting civilians in the police forces because they do important work that does support front-line work. So I'm calling on the Solicitor General to promise to protect all employees, both front-line and civilian, as she moves in her roles.

I am equally concerned about the \$36 million in cuts to the correctional services program. I think this will perpetuate the mental health crisis that we continue to see. Prolonged segregation makes people worse, and prolonged segregation beyond 15 days is also unconstitutional.

This week, let's reflect on support to all the people who make our justice system work and thank them for what they do, and resolve to continue to support them.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY

JOUR DES ENFANTS

ET DES JEUNES PRIS EN CHARGE

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: It's also a pleasure for me to add my voice on behalf of the Liberal caucus to celebrate May 14 of every year as Children and Youth in Care Day. Today, we recognize the strength and resilience shown by these children. The MPP for Orléans, who was supposed to speak, has worked in the CAS, so I think it was particularly appropriate to ask her to communicate about her experience. I will try to do good justice to what she was going to say and I apologize in advance for not doing the full scope of what she had to say.

Monsieur le Président, en Ontario aujourd'hui, il y a plus de 12 000 jeunes qui sont pris en charge. C'est important aujourd'hui de soulever—to raise awareness about children and youth in Ontario and to reaffirm our commitment to supporting them in reaching their full potential.

I remember that in 2017 there was the introduction of a bill responding to the recommendations of an inquest into the unfortunate death of a youth in care. When we respond to the recommendations from an inquest, it's a moral responsibility of all of us to involve ourselves to make sure that it does not happen again.

Speaker, when we recognize May 14 as Children and Youth in Care Day, it gives us an opportunity to remind ourselves that we all are responsible for providing children and youth with a safe environment where they can thrive and prepare themselves to be successful. Many of the youth in care suffer deeply and want to be reached out to. They also need support as they get out of care, and we know that this is an important issue that we all need to look into.

Aujourd'hui, on doit célébrer les enfants et reconnaître que tous les enfants, peu importe où ils vivent, ont besoin de la société, ont besoin de soins et ont besoin qu'on continue de les soutenir pour qu'ils atteignent leur plein potentiel.

PETITIONS

TRAFFIC CONTROL

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Rita Antler from Wahnapiatae in my riding for this petition, which is very important to the people at the intersection of Highway 17 and Highway 537. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has completed a review of the intersection of Highway 17 and Highway 537 and concluded that improvements such as traffic signals are warranted to improve safety; and

“Whereas there have already been multiple deaths at this intersection and we do not want any further loss of life or injuries;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“That the Ministry of Transportation install traffic signals at the intersection of Highway 17 and Highway 537 to enhance traffic safety as soon as possible and no later than September 2019.”

1540

I support this petition and will ask my good page Caleah to bring it to the Clerk.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm proud to present a petition on behalf of my constituents. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

“The Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) and Ontario Library Service–North (OLS–North) have announced they are facing cuts to their budgets of 50% or more. These cuts represent a clear threat to library service in Ontario—particularly for rural, remote and Indigenous libraries;

“We call on the Honourable Michael Tibollo, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport; Premier Doug Ford; and the Ontario government to reconsider and rescind these cuts. We must ensure all public libraries in Ontario are able to provide the services we need for the people of Ontario, our healthy communities and a functioning democracy.”

I agree with this petition and will sign it and hand it off to page Thomas.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a pleasure to present this petition with a lovely picture of the MPP for Nickel Belt on it. It's called "Time to Care."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard to provide an average of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix."

I affix my signature and hand it to page Kate.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My petition is entitled "Workers' Comp Is a Right."

"Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

"Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

"Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

"Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages, and protection from discrimination;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

"Eliminate the practice of 'deeming' or 'determining,' which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

"Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

"Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on 'pre-existing conditions' that never affected the worker's ability to function prior to the work injury."

I completely agree with this petition, will be affixing my name to it and giving it to page Wolfgang to bring to the Clerk.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Jessica Bell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

"Whereas wait-lists for services have increased in length as a result of the 66% increase in costs to administer direct service compared to direct funding, as reported by the Auditor General in 2013...;

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

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

TUITION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a very important petition. There are hundreds I have received from students all across the province.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario has the highest tuition rates in Canada, the lowest per-student funding from the province and the highest rates of student debt. The Ontario government's recent changes to OSAP funding are a major barrier to college and university students in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to reverse the recently announced OSAP cuts, protect the existing tuition grants and reinstate the six-month interest-free grace period after graduation for Ontario post-secondary students."

I fully support this petition and give it to page Romeo to deliver to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to thank OSSTF District 24 for submitting these names to this petition.

"To the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the Ontario provincial government has announced a significant class size increase for grades 4

through 12, mandatory e-learning and other detrimental changes to our public education;

“Whereas cutting the number of teachers in the classroom and increasing the number of students is not in the best interest of our children’s education and will lead to less one-on-one support for students;

“Whereas mandatory e-learning for students will further reduce one-on-one and face-to-face support while also neglecting different learning styles and underprivileged groups;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose these damaging cuts and implement:

—a fully-funded public education system that includes no increases to class average caps or that otherwise increases the number of students per class;

—excellent needs-support for all students;

—no mandatory e-learning;

—thorough and transparent consultations with board trustees, educators and Ontario families.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Maria.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Christine Noël from Hanmer in my riding for this petition.

“911 Emergency Response....”

“Whereas, when we face an emergency we all know to dial 911 for help; and

“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 affix my name to it and ask Trenyce to bring it to the Clerk.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to read this on behalf of Shelly Newton of London. She is supporting this petition.

“Support Ontario Families with Autism.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the new funding caps are based on age and income, and not the clinical needs of the child;

1550

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

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

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

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Melissa Maurice from Hanmer in my riding for this petition. J’aimerais remercier M^{me} Melissa Maurice d’avoir envoyé cette pétition.

« Respectez la communauté francophone.

« Considérant que l’énoncé économique d’automne du gouvernement a annoncé l’élimination du Commissariat aux services en français et l’annulation des plans pour l’Université de l’Ontario français; et

« Considérant que ces décisions constituent une trahison de la responsabilité de l’Ontario envers notre communauté francophone;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de demander au gouvernement de maintenir le bureau du commissaire aux services en français, ainsi que son financement et ses pouvoirs, et de maintenir l’engagement de l’Ontario de financer l’Université de l’Ontario français. »

J’appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer, et je demande à la page Mary de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

TUITION

Ms. Catherine Fife: A petition in support of “Repeal of Changes Made to OSAP Funding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has repealed the program which granted free tuition to low-income students under the OSAP program in favour of the pre-2016 OSAP system. As well as removing the six-month grace period for loan repayment;

“Whereas the Ontario government has lowered the cost of tuition by 10% regardless of financial situation, which places a financial burden on post-secondary institutions; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has removed many mandatory fees for post-secondary students which go towards quality-of-life boosts for those students;

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

“That the Ontario government repeal the changes to the OSAP program and university tuition and fees made in January 2019, so as to enable low-income students continued access to post-secondary education.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and give it to page Kate.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This petition is entitled “Don’t Increase Class Sizes in Our Public Schools.

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

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

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

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

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

I support the petition. I will be signing it and giving it to page Olivier.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Gisela Nepssy from Hanmer in my riding for this petition.

“Time to Care.

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

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

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

They “petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours of hands-on care per resident adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The time for petitions has expired.

Orders of the day? I recognize the minister for children, youth, social services, women’s issues and a whole bunch of other things.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: The government House leader calls me the “minister of many things”; the finance minister calls me the “minister of everything.” I’m just happy to be called “Mom” when I’m at home.

This is the first time, Speaker, I’ve ever done this since we formed government. I’m calling today government order G108.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MORE HOMES, MORE CHOICE
ACT, 2019LOI DE 2019 POUR PLUS DE LOGEMENTS
ET PLUS DE CHOIX

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 13, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to housing, other development and various other matters / Projet de loi 108, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement, les autres aménagements et d’autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): When last we had this motion in front of us—it was 9:30 last night; I was watching from home—the member for Niagara Centre had the floor.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you, Speaker. It’s an honour to continue my one-hour lead on Bill 108. When we last left off, we were discussing the erosion of the Endangered Species Act.

The minister may temporarily suspend, for up to three years, some or all of the prohibitions that would normally apply once a species is listed for the first time. The minister may also exempt certain persons from certain prohibitions for up to one year if they were authorized to conduct otherwise prohibited activities prior to the listing.

Packaged together with the extension of the prescription process, this results in a massive loophole for developers to take action that would threaten a species.

We're facing a nearly doubled prescription process and, once that species is listed for the first time, the minister can exempt certain people from prohibitions for up to one year. This is a functional removal of the legislation that protects endangered species.

If a species is at high risk within Ontario but at a lower risk elsewhere, then the lower risk applies to the species classification. In addition, instead of submitting a report to the minister when the need arises, COSSARO must wait until January to submit a report unless the species is at imminent risk of extinction or expiration.

Subject to the special requirements in section 567, the minister may limit the application of prohibitions that would normally apply once the species is listed as endangered or threatened. This is a weakening of protections as, currently, the minister now has nine months to publish an action plan in response to a recovery strategy for either an endangered or threatened species.

Speaker, wildlife experts say that the changes included in this bill would gut protections for the province's at-risk animals and plants. It severely weakens the classification criteria, allows the environment minister to delay protections for up to three years—three years, Speaker—and exempts persons—that is, developers, industry and others—whose actions will impact the habitat of endangered species, giving them a full plate of options to continue their activities, including a fee-in-lieu fund.

So if you're a deep-pocketed developer, all you need to do is present your case to the minister, contribute to the fee-in-lieu fund, and you can permanently damage the habitat of an endangered species and further contribute to the process of forever changing the landscape of our province and our planet by driving that species to extinction.

In a recent article in the *Toronto Star*, Kelsey Scarfone, program manager at Environmental Defence Canada, said, "It really is a doomsday scenario for endangered species in this province.... It's basically been whittled down to nothing. They might as well have just cancelled it."

The article goes on to outline how wildlife biologists and conservation policy experts are alarmed over a provision in this bill that requires the committee of scientists that recommends the species-at-risk listings to the ministry to look beyond its classification in our province to how the species is classified elsewhere. For example, if a species has the "special concern" designation rather than an "endangered" designation, the committee must use the lower classification. This will have devastating effects.

Critics are stating that these amendments are scary and irresponsible and could lead to the delisting of many of the endangered species listed in Ontario. It fails to recognize that a species can be endangered in one area but have better terms of survival in others.

As the member from Kingston and the Islands pointed out in question period last week, the United Nations released an 18,000-page report prepared by over 450 scientists, outlining that there are a million species

currently at risk of extinction. The only upside to this report: It's not too late. It will take transformative change in every aspect of how we interact with nature and our environment. Of course, this government takes the situation from bad to worse. Critics say that this government is sprinting the other way by not only upholding the status quo but expanding the ability to damage endangered and at-risk species.

Shane Moffatt of Greenpeace says that this government is "sending in the bulldozers" and goes on to say, "The report really makes it clear if we're going to prevent this crisis of biodiversity, that means an end to business as usual.... We don't see a sign of that in Ontario. In a way, what" the Premier "is doing is worse than business as usual."

1600

Speaker, with respect to the Environmental Assessment Act: This amends the act in line with proposed changes announced in April 2019, with the goal of "focusing on projects that pose actual, real risks to our environment and communities, streamlining approval timelines and eliminating duplication."

A class environmental assessment is a streamlined process intended for routine projects that have predictable and manageable environmental effects. Bill 108 allows class environmental assessments to exempt certain undertakings within the class from the act, and it will specifically exempt low-impact projects within specified schedules of various class environmental assessments.

Section 16 of the current act deals with requests for a bump-up from a class environmental assessment to a full individual environmental assessment under part II of the act. The minister currently has broad authority to order such a bump-up after considering certain matters. Bill 108 will now only allow the minister to order a bump-up if the order may prevent, mitigate or remedy (1) existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, or (2) a prescribed matter of provincial importance. Now only persons resident in Ontario may request a bump-up, instead of any person.

Speaker, Bill 108 weakens the classification process for species at risk. It gives the minister the power to delay protections for endangered species that are typically automatic. It allows him to assess which species are at risk by its biologically relevant geographic range. It indefinitely allows the government to delay their response statements about species at risk, creates an opportunity for developers to pay in lieu instead of undergoing requirements mandated by the existing Endangered Species Act, removes the requirement for the minister to consult with an independent expert and get cabinet approvals and gives developers even more powers than the above by giving landscape agreements for developers who seek to build multiple projects in one area.

Yesterday, we considered a climate emergency bill. We had a lengthy discussion in this chamber, and it's absolutely incredible that not only does this government not have a plan for climate change and does not have a plan for the environment, but they pass bills that will actually endanger species that are not endangered and push to extinction

species that are endangered and give developers the opportunity to pave over wetlands by basically paying a fee. It's absolutely incredible in this day and age that a government would go down that road.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Pay to play.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Pay to play.

Next, Speaker, I'd like to address the OMB and the Ontario Heritage Act. Beyond environmental concerns, this bill restores many of the failures of the OMB. Schedule 9 of Bill 108 amends the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Act to enable changes to how certain Planning Act appeals are handled, reflecting the restoration of appeal rights for developers in schedule 12 of Bill 108. It strengthens the authority of the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal to require participation in alternative dispute resolution. Non-parties to a proceeding may make submissions in writing only. And the minister now has the broad regulatory authority to provide for transition, including the authority to decide whether prescribed classes of appeals shall be heard under the current system or the new system. This authority applies retroactively.

Section 36 of the act—and section 94 of the Ontario Municipal Board Act before it—has long allowed the tribunal, on its own volition or upon application by a party, to make a case and receive an opinion from the Divisional Court on a question of law. In Bill 108, this section is repealed, meaning that if the LPAT or parties have concerns about jurisdiction, procedures or other questions of law, they will no longer be able to ask the LPAT to seek clarity from the court prior to a decision.

The LPAT recently requested an opinion under section 36 with respect to a major ongoing case involving the proposed Rail Deck Park. There are many such cases, Speaker, and this legislation will seriously damage the ability of individuals and community groups to challenge developments.

Sections 32 to 42 govern how specified Planning Act appeals are to be managed or repealed, reflecting the restoration of appeal rights for developers in section 12. These appeals would be managed in the same way as other appeals. However, these Planning Act appeals are still subject to a mandatory case management conference.

This section raises huge concerns with third-party appeal rights. No third-party appeals of non-decisions of official plan amendments or subdivision plans are allowed. Utilities and other specified infrastructure companies may still appeal subdivision plan decisions, but no one else can. It is a huge giveaway to developers and utility companies.

Effectively, this creates a situation where groups that provide valuable insights into the effects of a decision have no opportunity for appeal. Let's say there is a proposal to build a new subdivision over a provincially significant wetland—of which we have many in Niagara, for example—or if a municipality fails to make a decision about a request to amend an official plan to allow a garbage dump next to a drinking water source. In either of these cases, an environmental group would not have the ability to appeal that decision.

In Niagara, development on the Thundering Waters lands has brought huge controversy over the years. A few years ago, Speaker, a China-based investment company bought 196 hectares of land west of Marineland and adjacent to the Thundering Waters Golf Club in Niagara Falls. They proposed a billion-dollar development and a pilot project for biodiversity offsetting. This property includes protected wetlands but also adjacent areas that are necessary in order to protect wetlands from invasive species.

Now, for those who aren't aware of what biodiversity offsetting is, this is the kind of thing we're going to get into as a result of this bill. Biodiversity offsetting is a plan that the development community came up with when they were faced with wanting to build on a wetland, for example. They decide that they will create a wetland of equal size somewhere else. I'm not joking, Speaker. That's actually a development plan that developers have come up with. It has obviously been successfully challenged because any scientist—or anyone with common sense—knows that you can't just create a wetland, which takes thousands of years to become what it is, in another area that the developer doesn't want to build on. Those are the things we're going to be faced with as a result of this bill.

The advocacy for biodiversity offsetting was concerning for a number of reasons. It involves the destruction of one wetland and replacing it with another in a different area. Environmental advocates question what it meant for the species living in the original wetland. The developer had no response.

Many environmentalists raised concerns. It led to a campout in the area of Thundering Waters. Their concern was the habitat of the blue-spotted salamander and black gum trees in the area. There have been delays in this development over the concerns listed above. What will it mean for the 95 hectares of provincially significant wetlands?

This December, crews at the Thundering Waters site damaged protected trees and wetlands while doing soil testing. Plans for the development have been on hold, as they were being appealed before the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. The appeal was launched by a Niagara researcher and environmental consultant, John Bacher, who questioned the way provincial environmental Regulations were interpreted when approvals were granted. After the decision of LPAT it went back to the council, where the public was allowed to comment on the development again. Council ended up accepting the development, but subjected it to 27 conditions and will require the developer to do more studies and implement further measures to prevent adverse environmental effects on the site.

So the concept of biodiversity offsetting was exposed as a scam. At the same time, there was a solution that was found under the former system. With the changes put forward by this government, John Bacher and the environmentalists would have no method whatsoever of recourse. The municipality's decision would be overruled by the decision of the OMB. This takes power away from people,

away from neighbourhoods, and away from environmental groups whose motives are not profit but to protect the environment and to protect neighbourhoods.

1610

To be completely transparent, or, as the government would say, to be perfectly clear, essentially the changes made to the LPAT reinstate many of the problematic rules that made the OMB ineffectual in the first place. It's really OMB 2.0. The OMB is frequently criticized for delayed decisions, sometimes for years, as the appeals process allowed adjudicators to go back to the beginning in order to consider fresh evidence from all sides, ignoring the municipality's decision on the matter.

Kristyn Wong-Tam, a Toronto city councillor who represents Toronto Centre, stated that the move would effectively hand control back to developers. Councillor Josh Matlow stated that residents will be subsidizing growth to pay for community recreation, local schools and basic infrastructure. "Today's announcement by the Ford government is a giveaway of the development and planning process to the development industry. They've gone back to a free-for-all for developers."

Who is it that this government wants to make the decisions? Appeals processes are back which were criticized for being too timely, but can only be used by developers. Municipalities lose their say because their decisions, even if they fulfill all of the regulations, are overturned. In the case where an environmental group may want a say, they don't have the formal option of appeal.

The member from Guelph outlined how the OMB hearing cost taxpayers more than \$1 million in three years in his riding alone. LPAT was created to rectify the problems that plagued the OMB. It was not without its issues, but it respected the decisions of municipal councils by only compelling adjudicators to test if a municipal council's decision conformed to local and provincial planning policies. We've gone back to the system where appeals can be made as if there were no decision from councils at all. There was a case in Ottawa where, after a council decision, the adjudicator said a developer could have a taller building if it had a "wow" factor.

The minister has been stating that this move "takes the best parts of the OMB and LPAT," but it really combines them to ensure the opposite. The issues of very expensive, lengthy decisions are still prevalent. The cost burden on municipalities is still there. The exception is that now developers hold the power and the people have less of a say.

Municipalities also now face restrictions on the designation of heritage properties. Speaker, once our heritage buildings are gone, they're gone forever. This bill basically allows developers to plow heritage buildings into the ground with almost no warning. Under this legislation, municipal councils are now required to consider prescribed principles when identifying heritage properties or establishing a heritage conservation district. In addition to creating new rules for listing non-designated heritage properties, this bill also creates new rules that make it harder for municipalities to designate heritage properties.

This bill also makes LPAT, not the municipality, the final decider with respect to municipally designated heritage properties and requests to alter heritage property.

Currently, there is no appeal of a heritage designation bylaw. Bill 108 will allow anyone within 30 days of the published notice to appeal the bylaw to the LPAT, which may dismiss the appeal or repeal or amend the bylaw as it sees fit. Cities are currently required to keep a list of properties that are considered to be of cultural heritage value. They do not have the full benefits of heritage protection, but it is required that owners of those properties have to provide 60 days' notice before demolishing the building. This protects heritage buildings in heritage neighbourhoods and gives the heritage committees in municipalities a second chance to review. This will be gone, Speaker, and I fear that heritage properties across the province will once again be bulldozed over for the sake of cheap development.

Ms. Catherine Fife: And gone forever.

Mr. Jeff Burch: And once they're gone, they're gone forever.

Speaker, I'll talk now about affordable housing, which this bill is supposed to be about, but it really is about giving away housing and, really, the farm to developers. I have deep concerns over what this bill will mean for affordable housing in this province. This bill has no vision for affordable housing. We all seem to agree that we're in a housing crisis in Ontario. Where I'm from, in Thorold, a community in my riding, whether you're a senior, single or a household with dependents, you'll wait anywhere from six to 10 years for an affordable housing unit; in St. Catharines, three to 13 years; in Welland, two to 15 years, depending on your situation; and in Port Colborne, three to 13 years.

Across Niagara, there are 6,118 people on the wait-list for affordable housing. In London, there are 4,770 families, couples and singles on the social housing wait-list. That's a 34% increase from the previous year. In Waterloo, 4,000 people are on the wait-list. In 2018 in Toronto, there were 100,515 total active applications for subsidized housing. This is a housing crisis, and we have a bill that does absolutely nothing whatsoever to increase our stock of affordable housing. The numbers are high across the province. There's no doubt it's a crisis. We're in an era of stagnant wages, increasing job precarity and an overwhelming amount of need.

We've spent over half an hour now discussing this bill, yet for a bill about affordable housing, it fails to address what it claims to. Because it's not an affordable housing bill; it's a give-everything-to-developers bill.

Schedule 12 is functionally the only portion of this bill that addresses affordable housing in any way. It tweaks some provisions in the existing section 16(3) of the Planning Act, which has required municipal official plans to include second-unit policies to govern the creation of basement apartments, granny flats, coach houses etc. Now these plans will not be able to arbitrarily limit homeowners to either one additional unit within the main home or an ancillary structure but not both. It's a good step, but this is

not a revolutionary approach to affordable housing, and it certainly does not do the massive amount of work that is needed to address the housing crisis in this province.

Inclusionary zoning is an incredible land use planning tool that allows a municipality to require a certain amount of affordable housing units to be included in residential developments of 10 units or more. Municipalities can tailor inclusionary zoning to fit their local needs. It is the main tool to promote affordable housing units being built in municipalities, yet Bill 108 has nearly completely clawed back the ability for municipalities to pass inclusionary zoning policies. Now inclusionary zoning can only apply to a protected major transit station area or to an area where a development permit system has been required by the minister.

This bill seeks to just build more homes. There's no indication that these homes will be affordable. It is running on the premise that simply having new housing will mean that housing will somehow be affordable. The key is in the language. The government, in their plan, states, "An increase in supply should help bring rents down." No, it won't. What about the people who are waiting in this province to make things more affordable? This bill will do nothing to make homes more affordable or to increase the number of affordable units available. It becomes increasingly clear that this bill is not about housing when you consider the patchwork of policies this government has passed that affect people who are looking for housing that is affordable.

This November, this government announced that rent control rules no longer will protect tenants who will move into new residential units coming onto the market. If you move into an apartment, a condo or a basement unit that was first occupied as a unit after November 15, 2018, there will be no legal limit set on how much your landlord will be able to raise your rent—no limit whatsoever. This government has created a series of ways to speed up development—"More Homes, More Choice," they call it—while simultaneously gutting the protections that would make those units affordable once they're built.

1620

What's worse is that there is ample evidence that this policy change will be a historic failure.

We all know the tale of Mike Harris: He downloaded the responsibility of affordable housing, a textbook soft service, while simultaneously cutting municipal transfer payments. It was not a very brave move to off-load an expensive responsibility in order to make it appear that his government was making financially responsible choices. Mike Harris downloaded \$905 million in social housing costs to municipalities and gutted tenant and rental housing protection laws, including rent controls. We are still paying for those decisions today. His actions were done as an experiment to stimulate the private rental market by deregulating private housing and throttling Ontario's, at the time, vibrant social housing sector.

After six years of the Mike Harris housing plan, the average rent for a typical apartment jumped 5.6%. It resulted in an affordable-housing deficit of 74,000 units.

In 2001, the province's rental vacancy rate dropped to its lowest level in a decade.

Why didn't this market solution, deregulating the market, improve affordable housing? It was supposed to lead to a big increase in new rental construction by developers. The minister at the time, Al Leach, predicted that the removal of rent control would generate 10,000 new rental units. From 1995 to 2001, developers got nearly everything they asked for: less regulation, lower municipal taxes, direct grants and subsidies and the option to raise rent. Yet this private sector still did not build.

The answer is clear why they did not: There is no profit to be made from building housing for low- and moderate-income tenant households. If we're looking at a market solution, which it's clear this government is attempting to do, it doesn't make financial sense for a developer to invest when they can get bigger returns on other types of development investment. It's economics—something this government says they understand, but they clearly don't.

This bill helps developers while using careful messaging to pretend this is somehow going to create affordable housing units, despite gutting rent control and gutting inclusionary zoning regulations. There are no clear targets or timelines for addressing housing supply or housing affordability, no details about provincial contributions to cost-shared programs under the federal housing strategy, and no new money for social housing or capital repairs.

The Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario released a statement regarding Bill 108: "Ontarians are struggling to find and keep their affordable rental homes," they write, "especially renters living on low to moderate incomes. Here's what the plan means for tenants across the province:

"1. The government hopes"—and this is the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario—"that developers will choose to build rental housing and that by 'creating more rental units, tenants will have more choice.' But with no plans for expansion of social housing or incentives to develop new affordable rental units for low- to moderate-income tenants, only those tenants who can afford to pay at the high end of the market will have any more choices....

"3. Once again, small landlords are being encouraged to create new, legal secondary rental units like basement apartments....

"4. Inclusionary zoning would allow municipalities to leverage private development to require a certain percentage of affordable units. The government appears to intend to limit inclusionary zoning to areas 'that are generally high-growth and are near higher order transit,' reducing the power of municipalities to develop their own inclusionary zoning plan that takes into account local context and needs....

"6. The Housing Supply Action Plan includes making it easier for developers to build by making development approvals easier through changes to the Planning Act. This includes going back to the old way of dealing with developer appeals of local decisions and making it more difficult for local governments to control development.

The proposed measures do not address the need for increasing the supply of affordable rental housing, a critical concern for low- and moderate-income households in the province.”

Speaker, the problems don't end there. When we talk about development charges, we're back again to the days of Mike Harris. When he downloaded the responsibility of affordable housing onto municipalities, he knew they couldn't afford it. It's clear by needs seen today that municipalities still cannot afford the cost of affordable housing. Their only real revenue tool is property tax, which is what makes inclusionary zoning such an attractive option for municipalities who are feeling the squeeze.

Development charges are frequently collected by municipal government to help pay for the municipal costs associated with urban growth. The Development Charges Act currently distinguishes between two classes of services to which development charges apply, sometimes referred to as hard and soft services. Hard services include water, sewer, storm water and drainage, roads, electricity service, police, fire, transit and some other services. Everything else is a soft service, including libraries, community centres and daycare facilities.

Development charges for hard services are levied at 100% of the capital costs, while soft services are subject to a 10% discount, on the grounds that existing residents would benefit from the new facilities soft services would provide: libraries and daycares. Schedule 3 of Bill 108 now only allows development charges for these listed hard services, and they've added an additional service: waste diversion.

In a submission to the minister on the increasing housing supply in Ontario consultations, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario outlined the importance of development charges for the health of municipal government finances:

“Development charges are a major source of revenue for cost recovery that funds the infrastructure needed for Ontario's growing communities. In 2017, 197 municipal governments collected about \$2.3 billion in development charge revenue.

“At present, development charges only cover about 80% of the costs of growth-related capital. They are used throughout Ontario and especially in high-growth areas. That means property taxes are currently subsidizing the cost of growth and municipalities are currently falling short of achieving the principle, ‘growth should pay for growth’—a principle that has been respected by municipalities and by the provincial government for many years. “As a recent paper from the Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance at the University of Toronto noted, ‘[the] burden on existing ratepayers is not only inequitable, but also leads to inefficiently low municipal service levels and other related problems for municipalities and the development industry.’

“Inadequate DC revenue will have negative consequences for the province, not just municipalities. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario urges the government to consider these three key points:

“1. Development charges are not a root cause of the affordable housing and supply challenge in Ontario.” Let me say that again: Development charges are not a root cause, as this government claims, of the affordable housing and supply challenge in Ontario. “Even further to the point, DCs only apply to a small part of the housing market—new homes. DCs represent between 5% to 7% of the cost of a new home.

“2. A reduction in development charge collections will increase the cost of public services for all residents. This will increase pressure from taxpayers to constrain growth and to constrain demands on the already stretched property tax dollar.” It will result in property tax increases, and this government will be the cause.

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“3. Municipal governments and current property taxpayers do not have the means to subsidize developers in building new homes. Changes that reduce development charges have never resulted in reduced housing prices.”

Charges for soft services evidently will now be determined as part of the new community benefits charges process, which is combined with the former section 37 of the Planning Act. Currently, section 37 of the Planning Act allows local municipal councils to authorize increases in the height and density of development beyond the limits set out in their zoning bylaw, provided they have enabling official plan policies in exchange for providing specified facilities, services or matters such as the provision of public art or affordable housing.

Under Bill 108, Speaker, section 37 is repealed. Instead, the municipality may now pass a bylaw to levy community benefit charges to pay the capital costs of facilities, services and other matters that are required because of a development to which development charges apply. It is not clear what “required” means and whether this can include things like daycares and social services.

Section 37 has provided municipalities with a tool not only to develop more densely, which is what smart growth plans ask for, but to help reduce urban sprawl. It has also provided many benefits to communities. In Toronto, the city planning staff analysis has identified that in the calendar years of 2013 and 2014, the city secured over \$112 million in future cash contributions for approximately 204 community benefit capital facilities. In addition, the city secured 181 in-kind community benefit capital facilities that the owner-developer had agreed to construct. These in-kind or non-monetary obligations are generally secured through a letter of credit and are contractually enforceable per the provisions of a site-specific zoning bylaw and either sections 37 or 45 agreements registered on title.

Under the current changes, the municipality must first prepare a community benefits charge strategy that identifies how the money will be used. The community benefits charges are capped at a percentage of the appraised value of the land. The percentages are prescribed by the minister and can vary for different municipalities and classes of municipalities. The community benefits money

must be kept in a special account, and each year the municipality must spend or allocate at least 60% of the money in the account at the beginning of the year.

If the percentage prescribed by the minister is too low, then the principle of “growth pays for growth” will be undermined. The money will be lost. Municipalities will have an incentive to enable more sprawling developments in order to maximize the amount of community benefits and parkland that can be funded under the cap.

Urban areas like Toronto or Hamilton will suffer the most, Speaker, as their funding will be capped due to the size of sprawling developments that will be—there will be an incentive for sprawling developments because the money will be based on the value of the land rather than the density of the development. Even in Toronto, where we all know land value is very high, the amount of actual land under development may be very low in comparison to the number of new residents who will live on the redeveloped land.

These changes open up the opportunity for a myriad of problems for municipalities. Again, it threatens the “growth pays for growth” principle and takes away a municipality’s ability to add in inclusionary zoning except in a very strict set of circumstances.

The massive downloading of soft policies onto municipalities under the Harris government in the 1990s has resulted in an unmanageable amount of burden on Ontario municipalities, exacerbated by the limited ability of municipalities to raise revenue and decreases in transfers from above. This government is replicating the exact same situation. This government continues to blame municipalities for their financial problems, and we heard more of that this week, Speaker.

In the pre-budget report, the government blamed transfer payments. Municipalities are in this financial situation because the former Conservative government downloaded expensive services onto municipalities, knowing that they didn’t have the money or the revenue tools to adapt to demand. That is how we got into this situation in the first place.

I’ll pause for a moment and just say that I’ve been a two-term city councillor and had two years as a budget chair of a large urban municipality. A lot of this presentation sounds like developer-bashing, and I can understand why the opposition may think that. But the fact is, over my two terms as a city councillor I had an area of the city of St. Catharines called Merritton, which was actually a former industrial area with lots of brownfields and lots of development that needed to happen.

I worked very closely with developers for eight years as a city councillor and as a budget chair. It’s like anything else. It’s like union leaders or business leaders: There are good developers and there are bad developers. We need developers; there’s no question about it, and I’ve known some very good ones I’ve worked with. But there are also a lot of very bad ones out there who are only in it for a buck. Those are the ones that these laws and acts are there to protect us from and to protect the environment from. This is a bill that drastically, drastically slants the laws in

favour of developers and basically gives them carte blanche to do whatever they want.

My concerns, Speaker:

—\$2.3 billion in development charges are at risk, or at the very least in question;

—a \$366-million cut to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing budget we’re dealing with. No details explaining the 25% cut, or what programs are expected;

—cuts to public health, libraries, paramedic services and school boards—cuts received piecemeal after budgets have already been passed. We’ve said before: What kind of partner, who would tell municipalities that they want them to be partners, treats their partner like that—actually cutting retroactively so that the government has to go back and not only raise taxes this year, as the mayor of Toronto is saying, but raise taxes retroactively because they’ve been treated so badly and so unlike an actual partner by a government that’s supposed to be working with them?;

—gas tax funding for municipalities remains at two cents a litre. The planned increase did not go forward. Instead, the program is now under review. The city of Toronto says that the cancellation of the scheduled increase represents a \$1.1-billion cut to transit funding over 10 years for Toronto alone;

—the budget for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs was cut by \$321 million, with no details about what’s being cut; and

—the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund, cut from \$510 million to \$505 million.

Where are municipalities supposed to get the money for the services that this government’s Conservative predecessor—who it appears they’re emulating—downloaded onto them?

Mayors have told this government what this means. It means property tax increases. If you truly believe that there is only one taxpayer, why make that taxpayer suffer?

This government gets to offset the political blame for what will inevitably be service reductions or property tax increases. They get to appease their developer friends—and we know their friends, based on conversations we’ve all heard; we know who they are—while alienating populations that are already disenfranchised.

I think the driving principles of this bill are fundamentally clear: This is a pro-development bill. When you combine all these provisions, all it is a patchwork of policies that make life easier for developers and harder for municipalities and families. They also degrade our environment.

Time and time again, this government disrespects the relationship with our municipal partners. Harris downloaded the responsibility of affordable housing onto municipalities, setting up municipalities for failure in being able to adequately meet the need. This government is doing the same, but using piecemeal announcements to degrade the financial sustainability of our local partners.

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Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I’m actually being heckled by the progeny of the culprit.

They continue to take away the powers of local decision-making, whether that be with the overriding of their decisions on planning, downloading cuts to public health and paramedic services, or changing their elections in the middle of the game.

Bill 108 touts this vision of choice, stating that they'll make housing more affordable by increasing the supply. This is simply deregulation. There are no clear targets or timelines for addressing housing supply or housing affordability. There's not a single affordable housing unit being built in this bill.

Bill 108 weakens the classification process for species at risk and gives the minister the power to delay protections for endangered species that are typically automatic. It allows them to assess which species are at risk by its biologically relevant geographic range. It indefinitely allows the government to relay their response statements about species at risk. It creates an opportunity for developers to pay in lieu instead of undergoing requirements mandated by the existing Endangered Species Act. It removes the requirement for the minister to consult with an independent expert and get cabinet approvals and gives developers even more powers than the above by giving landscape agreements for developers who seek to build municipal projects in one area. This bill only helps sprawl developers degrade our environment, our endangered species. It takes power away from democratically elected local officials and restores the deeply troubled OMB rules.

As Gregg Lintern, the chief city planner for the city of Toronto said, building more housing can't be to the detriment of everything else.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I listened to my honourable colleague and made a few notes. I'd like to share that with you.

First, I'm glad that he brought up the economics and understanding economics, because I think it's important for us to talk about that. Understanding economics will involve us understanding the basics of economics, which talk about supply and demand. That's very important to note, because when you have a lack of inventory, you're going to face issues such as higher costs, higher prices and, as a result, less inventory for the people.

Housing prices: The younger generation in my family, for example—I can tell you, because of the lack of inventory, there are people who are working in areas such as Toronto or in the GTA and have to live an hour and a half away from home simply because they can't afford it. That's the problem. For 15 years, the previous government allowed this to happen. It's like they went out of their way to make sure that this became the most challenging—the most onerous for housing to be built. As a result, who ended up paying the price? It was the people. That was the problem with the last government. In 2018, a report came out that showed that 75% of your household income would have to go towards you having a chance of owning a house in Ontario. That's outrageous. Can you imagine 75% of

your household income having to go towards purchasing your house? That's unacceptable.

The last thing that my honourable colleague touched on was the environment. I'm glad that he brought that up because I really do think that we should—and I ask my honourable colleague to look at the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan that the minister put forward because it's one that is well thought out. It's good for the—

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Niagara Centre for your lengthy and thoughtful explanation about this bill.

I represent the riding of University–Rosedale. It's an area in Toronto that has a huge number of projects that are in development or where there are applications that have already been submitted under the OMB or the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal.

I've spoken to many of the residents' associations in University–Rosedale. Many of them are very concerned about this government's decision to roll back the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal and move back to the OMB process. It is reasonable to expect the city of Toronto and residents to have a say over the kind of development that happens in our neighbourhoods. It is also reasonable to expect developers to pay their fair share to go towards the kind of hard and soft services that are needed to cater to the people who already live in the area, as well as the residents who are moving in. That is a reasonable thing to do.

What really concerns me is that the evidence suggests, and reality suggests, that we cannot build our way out of the housing crisis alone. It is not inventory alone, because if it were, the city of Toronto would have a very affordable housing situation. We have more cranes operating right now in the city of Toronto than anywhere in North America, including Mexico and New York City. We are building already in the city of Toronto but, unfortunately, the cost of renting and the cost of buying in the city of Toronto is astronomical because there is a whole lot more going on than just supply. We need to tackle the affordability piece of this issue, and that means looking at inclusionary zoning. It means properly regulating Airbnb. It means getting into the business of building affordable housing. These amendments need to be introduced into this bill.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to stand and rise and comment on the member from Niagara Centre's comments and a few things in Bill 108. We updated the outdated and inefficient legislation rules and regulations to enable us to cut the red tape, and that would make it easier to build homes and also create jobs. In everything we've done, every program, policy or decision, we've tried to put the people first.

Our government has exempted new rental units from rent control to encourage new construction, and this should help bring rents down and, in turn, make finding a

new home more affordable. Rent control also discouraged landlords and home builders from creating more apartments.

We've also worked on surplus property—the ministry that I am the parliamentary assistant to, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. Ontario has spent millions of dollars every year to maintain unused government properties across the province. That's why we're doing our part there by freeing up that land to build new housing in communities across Ontario. We will sell hundreds of unused properties to build more homes, long-term-care facilities and affordable housing.

Buying a home is one of the biggest investments that most of us will make in our lifetime. That's why this government is putting people first and looking at all stages of new home building and the buying process to protect consumers. We've announced major measures to transform Tarion and the broken system that exists there. By the end of summer, key measures will be implemented to include public disclosure of executive and board compensation and updates the Ontario Builder Directory to include information about new home builders and those with a history of condominium and project cancellations.

Many people want to live close to transit or close to work, and we're working on investing in that infrastructure, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member from Niagara Centre for his excellent presentation.

When I think of downtown Toronto, and when I think of other cities I've visited, one of the things that I see lacking is an old city. Imagine if governments of the past worked with developers and not necessarily for developers. I think this legislation, and a lot of the legislation that's coming before us, is really, really contrary to even the base of this government.

I've heard members on the other side, on the government side, get up and read petitions about puppy mills. I know I've spoken to some members off-line and they've expressed interest in protecting the rights of species and animals, but legislation like this does exactly the opposite, and I'm telling the government members that you will wear this. Each and every time, moving forward, when a new development is being established or built in your constituency, and it's not going to fulfill the needs of the community—because what this legislation does, I don't think, will increase the housing supply; it will just reduce the quality of it—because protections exist—exactly what they're named for—as protections. And so you are putting yourself in the crosshairs of the municipalities, of mayors, of councillors. You are just allowing developers to go against the will of their own communities by returning to the OMB.

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I can tell you, fighting developers was one of the reasons I was interested in politics, and it's one of the issues that gets my community the most frustrated: when a developer comes along, ignores the needs and wishes of

a community and just builds whatever it wants, just to make more and more money on the backs of the communities that now are forced to live in that new development.

Please rethink this. You will disappoint your own communities with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll now return to the member from Niagara Centre for his two-minute summation.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for his comments. I think there are a couple things we're going to have to just agree to disagree on, and one of them is that creating more inventory in the housing sector is not going to create more affordable housing. It may create more housing, but not more affordable housing. To do that, you need inclusionary zoning policies. And I disagree on that as fundamentally as I think that to address the environment you need carbon pricing. If you don't have carbon pricing, it's never going to happen. So those two things, we're just never going to agree on, but thank you for your comments.

The member from University–Rosedale: Thank you very much. I think it's a great take-away that residents have to have a say. This legislation, obviously, gives all of the control to developers and just takes away any kind of appeal process for residents, community groups and environmental groups who—I can give you examples—have saved very valuable areas, just in my own municipality. That's going to hurt communities.

The member from Sarnia–Lambton: Sorry, but rent controls do not help people who live in poverty—I mean, getting rid of rent controls doesn't. Rent controls are what helps, and more affordable housing. Increasing the stock of housing without increasing affordable housing and then taking away rent controls is just going to be decimating to people who are living in poverty. To say that it's going to help them is just not true.

Thank you to the member from Humber River–Black Creek for his focus on Toronto. Large urban municipalities are really going to suffer under this legislation, because they're going to lose a lot of the development charges that went into making sure that they had daycares and community amenities.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I can't read your mind. You're rising on a point of order?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, Speaker, I'm rising on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from London–Fanshawe on a point of order.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the late show in the name of the member for Essex.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for London–Fanshawe is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the late

show in the name of the member for Essex. Do we agree? Agreed.

Back to the member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I move that the late show in the name of the member for Essex be rescheduled to Wednesday, May 15, 2019.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Are we here on Wednesday, May 15? We are.

The member from London–Fanshawe has moved that the late show in the name of the member for Essex be rescheduled to Wednesday, May 15, 2019. Agreed? Agreed. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

MORE HOMES, MORE CHOICE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 POUR PLUS DE LOGEMENTS ET PLUS DE CHOIX

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm pleased to rise to comment on Bill 108. But before I do so, I just want to send out a big congratulations to the city of Guelph and the county of Wellington, who just won the Smart Cities Challenge from the federal government to build a circular food economy. We just heard the news. Congratulations.

The government says that Bill 108 will create more affordable homes, but as I read through the bill, it focuses more on removing environmental protections that prevent flooding and support endangered species habitat than it does providing comprehensive solutions to fixing the housing crisis. Bill 108, much like the quickly retracted schedule 10 from Bill 66, is a gift to a small number of developers who don't understand how important it is to protect green space to prevent flooding and build livable communities. Gutting the Endangered Species Act, bringing back the old OMB rules and reducing development charges will hit municipal taxpayers directly in their pocketbook.

I know first-hand that we face a housing crisis in Ontario. My riding of Guelph has one of the lowest vacancy rates in the province. We need to find creative, innovative and affordable ways to create housing options that work for all people while at the same time protecting endangered species, prime farmland and local democracy.

In my limited time today, I'm going to focus on three schedules.

The first, schedule 5, guts the Endangered Species Act at a time when we're losing more species than at any time in history since the dinosaurs were around. If passed, Bill 108 will allow a stunning amount of political interference into the scientific process for determining habitat protection, allowing the minister to delay recovery plans and suspend habitat protection at his discretion while diluting the scientific representation on the decision-making body making those determinations. This bill goes so far as to allow industry to pay to slay species at risk.

It is clear that protecting endangered species is not a priority for this government. It's too bad species don't vote

or contribute to political parties. But I want to be clear: Protecting endangered species and their habitat has direct benefits to people. Bulldozing habitat hinders the earth's ability to provide millions of dollars' worth of benefits such as flood control and erosion control, and nature does it for free. Southern Ontario has already lost 72% of our wetlands. Some areas in this province, particularly in the south, only have 10% forest tree cover; a healthy ecosystem requires 40%. Paving over even more green space will only escalate the financial cost of flooding and soil erosion.

Speaker, we don't have to make this choice. According to the Neptis Foundation, only 20% of the land that's been set aside in the whitebelt has been developed and there's enough land there to build housing in the GTHA for the next two decades.

Next, I want to focus in on bringing back the OMB rules. Municipalities and citizens' groups worked so hard to convince the previous government to get rid of the OMB, yet schedule 9 brings the rules back. Reviving the old OMB rules is a huge transfer of wealth and power from the people to a small number of developers. It disrespects taxpayers who have had to spend millions of dollars on OMB hearings. In my riding alone, in Guelph, in just three years we had to spend over a million dollars in OMB hearings. So I don't understand why this government wants to bring it back, overturning local decision-making and hitting taxpayers and municipalities directly in the pocketbook. That's why Aurora mayor Tom Mrakas tweeted out, "Once again, an unelected, unaccountable body will get to decide what's best for our community when it comes to growth and development. This is not a decision 'for the people.' The ability to manage growth in our communities has just taken a huge step backwards and it is unacceptable."

I'd also like to point the government to schedule 3. I'm a strong believer that growth should pay for growth. In fact, I believe the Development Charges Act should be amended so that all growth is paid for through the act, thus taking the burden of growth off existing municipal property taxpayers. Doing otherwise, in my opinion, disrespects those taxpayers.

We need innovative solutions. And do you know what? There are some in this bill that I've actually been calling for. Making it easier to build secondary suites and laneway housing or supporting co-housing are good things. I wish the government would focus on that instead of removing environmental protections that are so critically important to building livable communities. Let's talk about ways that we can bring in inclusionary zoning, brownfield redevelopment, putting a speculation tax out there, because homes should be for people, not speculators. Let's focus on innovative solutions and not removing protections that are so important to creating the places we love in this province.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments? The member for Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: It's a pleasure to rise in the House when you're Speaker in the afternoon.

I want to just address some of the comments from the member from Guelph and speak to, really, what is a housing crisis in Ontario. I'm so proud, actually, to stand to speak in support of Bill 108, our More Homes, More Choice Act.

Mr. Speaker, prior to becoming a member of the provincial Legislature, I worked as a city councillor in the city of Hamilton. It was clear that one of the biggest challenges facing municipalities across Ontario was building an environment where the private sector could actually take the lead, take the initiative to build affordable homes, to build affordable homes in a variety of ways, and to build homes that would address a variety of needs.

I really do believe that Bill 108 and our government, in many measures that we've taken since we were elected last June, addresses that and helps the private sector move forward and create these homes, build these homes to provide affordable housing options for young people. I'm the mother of two young men and they are working hard to save to buy a home. But what they have to save to purchase a home today versus what I had to do when I purchased my first home is very, very different.

What we need to do is to allow those who do it best—the developers, the building community, the construction community—to take away all of the obstacles and barriers that are in place that you see in municipalities across Ontario. Our efforts to decrease red tape in municipalities and municipal government, and certainly in the building offices of municipalities, is one very expensive obstacle that this bill addresses.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are doing this so that generations to come and generations today can meet their dream of affordable housing.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to rise today to discuss this. If we take a look at the situation we have on our hands here in Ontario, we have a homelessness crisis. That's very much the creation of the government. Between 1980 and 2005, governments stopped creating social housing and affordable housing. They blamed it on the recession. Really, we had governments who talked about austerity budgets, and we see how those austerity budgets have played out. Governments have created the homeless population that we have here today. Currently, within social housing and affordable housing, many people aren't able to move because we have different situations, such as the cancellation of an increased minimum wage.

We need to take a look at the creation of social housing and affordable housing as a tremendous economic benefit. If we are able to house people and house them properly, in an appropriate way, then we will have fewer problems with our health system; we'll take care of hallway medicine. We will have fewer incidents with our criminal justice system. Further, we'll be giving people the opportunity to be employable. If someone doesn't have an address, then they simply can't apply for a job.

With Bill 108, all we see is that this is “creating the conditions.” It's not taking any concrete steps to adequately measure or create social or affordable housing. It's crossing our fingers, leaving it up to chance, and hoping the private sector will look after it. I think that we should be taking a look at this legislation and ensuring that it has subsidies and incentives for private developers to create these sorts of residences.

I think a more appropriate title for this bill would be, “More Homes You Can't Afford and More Choices For Developers.”

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's a real privilege to be able to stand in the Legislature today and speak on behalf of the constituents of Niagara West. I think there are a lot of different things that I would agree with the member opposite on in many regards, but unfortunately, I would have to say that I disagree with his characterization of this legislation. This is legislation that addresses a significant challenge in the province of Ontario.

Speaking as an individual who is a first-time home-buyer myself, it's becoming increasingly difficult for young families to make ends meet but also to be able to actually put that money down for a down payment. I look at a lot of my friends who are working in trades, a lot of my friends who are making \$40,000 or \$50,000 a year, and for them it's becoming increasingly difficult to see whether or not they can buy a home in the Niagara region, which is traditionally a very affordable area. But these steps that we're taking to ensure there is going to be a faster approval process and making sure that we're getting these new projects built—it's going to really help in Niagara West and it's going to help many young families, and not just young families, but those who are potentially looking to downsize or those who are looking to get into the housing market for the first time.

Speaker, I do want to spend a little bit more time on this when I have a chance to bring my remarks on this legislation and speak about some of the specific reasons that it's such a good piece of legislation, but I also want to say that the federal government has not addressed this. The federal government claims to be trying to help “the middle class and those working hard to join it,” as I think is their slogan federally.

One of the best ways you can do that is to make sure that we're able to access mortgages, and the federal government has made that extremely difficult with the stress test. They've created a lot of difficulties in the market, and I think as a House we should also express that to the federal government, that some of the actions they have taken have not actually created any solutions but have actually exacerbated the problem with having homes that are affordable.

I look forward to hearing more from members on this, but I did want to add that as well to the member's debate.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: One of the biggest concerns I have with respect to this bill is actually its impact on

endangered species. There has been a report that has recently been published that demonstrates how at risk endangered species are across this world right now and that roughly one million species of animals and plants are on the verge of extinction.

This is a very comprehensive report that is compiled: over 18,000 pages. It was compiled with the help of 450 scientists who came together to demonstrate that human activity, our unchecked growth, is having a devastating impact on the environment. This is the reality. This is what science tells us, on one hand. On the other hand, we have the Conservative government putting forth a piece of legislation that is going to put endangered species and species in general—the Conservative government is putting forth a piece of legislation that is going to put our environment at risk. They're going to make it effectively a pay-to-pave situation where developers can then just pay if they want to develop an area that is otherwise a prohibited area to develop. It's a piece of legislation that weakens protections for species that are at risk.

This is not how we build a sustainable future. This is not how we protect our today. This issue of the environment is not something for our next generations; this is happening now. The impact that it will have on the world is going to affect us today, and we need to make drastic decisions, we need to take a drastic approach to preserving our environment, protecting these million species of animals and plants that are at risk.

That is the direction the government should be taking, not the position the Conservative government has been taking, further putting animals and plants at risk throughout the world. That is a huge concern I have with respect to this piece of legislation and something that should be totally put in mind and thought.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member from Guelph will have an opportunity to have the final word in this portion of the debate.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank all the members participating in the debate.

I want to start with the member from Niagara West, because I absolutely agree with you that the federal government's stress test is making it more difficult for young families to buy housing. I've communicated that with my MP in Guelph, and I'd encourage all members in this House to share that with their federal MPs, because it absolutely needs to change.

When it comes to affordability, the member opposite talked about affordability. I want to say that, as somebody who pays municipal property taxes, it's one of the biggest things that hits affordability for renters and homeowners and small businesses. My fear is that not only the actions in Bill 108 but some of the other actions that the government is taking are downloading more costs onto municipalities and onto municipal taxpayers, which is going to make it more difficult for people to afford a home and a place to live. I would love to work with the members opposite to talk about how we can avoid downloading these costs onto municipal taxpayers.

1710

The member from Flamborough–Glanbrook talked about, “How do we get the private sector involved?” I'll give you some ideas on how we can get the private sector involved in affordable housing. One is, inclusionary zoning. You can require minimum affordability in inclusionary zoning, give the private sector a density bonus or expedited approvals, and encourage them to build housing that includes affordable housing.

The member from London North Centre talked about, “How do we incentivize it?” Well, so many developers have told me, “Let's bring back the program where the province helped with brownfield remediation, which helped the private sector be able to afford to build on brownfields.”

The member from Brant was talking about the Endangered Species Act. I don't see any reason that is included in—

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise on this bill, on Bill 108. It's obviously a very important piece of legislation. It is something that many of us have been seized with for a very, very long time.

I want to just single out the minister and his parliamentary assistants for bringing together the consultations across the province. I know that many of us, at least on this side of the House—the Conservatives on this side of the House and the Conservatives on the opposite side of the House—participated in many of these consultations, and we spoke with both the minister and the two parliamentary secretaries with respect to how we can improve and make housing more affordable to Ontarians.

It's unfortunate that what we've heard a lot in this debate today, and what I suspect we're going to continue to hear going forward in this debate, is a theme that we have continuously heard from the members opposite, and that is to single out and bash those people who work hard every day. We heard it with the budget. We heard the members opposite talking about our craft brewers and how some of the budget was focusing on measures that would improve our craft brewing industry and the people who work in that industry. We heard them talk down that industry. They talked down the service industry when we talked about some of the improvements that we were making in the service industry to improve tourism in the province of Ontario. And now we are hearing a full assault on our home builders. That's what we're hearing from the members opposite, and it is a shame. I want to spend a moment or two talking about that before I get into some of the other parts of this bill.

We have heard member after member talk about our home builders in a negative light. Who are our home builders? Who are the people who build homes across the province of Ontario, who build single-family, who build multi-, detached homes, who build our apartments, the condos, the places that we live? Who are the people who build the roads and the schools that our kids attend and that we use to get to work? It is our neighbours. It's the people

who live next door to us. It's our friends. It's our relatives. When we single out our home builders and somehow make them the enemy, it certainly doesn't help in the debate.

Thankfully, this government is making some serious progress towards empowering those people and our home builders. When you look at where this province has come over the last 15 years, through the previous Liberal government, often supported by the NDP—house pricing, and the reason why we were forced to bring forward a bill of this significance, which touches on so many different aspects that are involved in the home-building industry, is because of the policies of the Liberal-NDP coalition of the last 15 years, which has impacted affordability more than at any other time in our history.

I can think of one other time when—I think the member for Niagara West talked about affordability and the federal government. People often ask me, “What was the reason why you initially got involved in politics?” Colleagues, I remember specifically why I got involved in politics. I was 10 years old. It was 1980, and interest rates skyrocketed to 18%, 19%, 20%. Why? Because of policies of government. For the first time in my family—as I've said, colleagues, we weren't a rich family, but my parents always made sure that we didn't feel like a poor family. We were a good middle-class family. My parents worked very hard, but this was the first time when we had to worry, and I could see my parents were worried. Could they afford to pay the mortgage on their home? Could they afford their bills? How much more did my father have to work to pay those bills? Did my mom need to get another job? Why? Because of policies of government.

What we've seen over the last 15 years across the province of Ontario is another time when affordability has become a major, major issue. What was the solution? What was the solution that they came up with when prices started to skyrocket? A tax. That was supposed to solve everything: a foreign buyers tax. That would solve everything. Obviously, that hasn't.

The minister has broadly consulted with individuals, and we've talked about what we can do to make homes more affordable, what we can do to bring more homes onto the market and what we can do to increase the stock, the types of housing. We've come forward with an action plan that covers a lot of what we have heard.

Some of the members opposite have also talked about social housing in the context of this. It is true that what we have brought forward in here will actually increase the supply of affordable housing. Obviously, the government is taking the lead. We're taking the lead. The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has looked at surplus properties across the province. Just recently, in the city of Toronto, we announced the sale of a property that had cost the government millions of dollars over the years—by and large, it was sitting empty—which will be turned into over 200 units of affordable housing. That's good news. We're doing that province-wide. We're turning surplus properties that the government doesn't need, that cost us money, over to affordable housing. I think that's what Ontarians would expect us to do. They don't expect us to sit on vacant properties.

But we did another step, when the minister announced earlier that we were going to be making a massive investment in improving social housing. For far too long, those investments had not been made. I don't often like to talk about money. Sometimes I think we get too carried away on talking about money. But it is a significant investment that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing made: over \$1 billion to improve, to repair and to modernize our social housing stock. What does that do? That respects the individuals who are there. For far too long, we couldn't do that in the province of Ontario. This Premier and this government have made that a priority, and we're getting the job done. That's good news for people who live in social housing.

Is it not in this bill? Of course it's not in this bill, because we've already done it, colleagues. To hear the members opposite talk about the absence of policies on social housing, you would think that they had not been in this House, that they had not had the opportunity to discuss the over \$1 billion in funding that we made to social housing.

What is most grating, colleagues, is to hear members opposite who, as municipal politicians, came to this House either in the last election, or in elections before, as municipal politicians and had no problem taxing multi-residential dwellings at four times the rate of single-family dwellings. Think about that for a second: four times the rate. If you lived in an apartment in Toronto, your landlord paid four times the property tax. Guess who paid that? The tenant paid that. And for years, municipalities across this province said nothing about it. The very same individuals who talk about affordability across the aisle sat there and did absolutely nothing about it. That's not how you build affordable housing. This bill will help build affordable housing.

I talked a little bit about trades and I wanted to circle back, because everything we have been doing since we've come into government—and I've talked about this often—is about a whole-of-government approach. We're improving health care and we're improving transit and transportation, which I will get back to in a second. But also, early on in the mandate, we decided to get rid of the College of Trades. Why did we do that, colleagues? Because, obviously, limiting the amount of people who can get into the trades is going to increase the cost of housing. That was a policy that the parties opposite placed on the people of Ontario. And what has happened? Housing has skyrocketed, and they are fighting tooth and nail to stop that.

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But we've gone forward and said that we are going to continue to invest in making sure that we have increased trades. These are the very same people they are attacking, of course, when they talk about home builders and they insinuate that this bill is solely about advantaging home builders at the expense of everybody else. That obviously is not true. What this bill does is it cuts red tape. It looks at the entire development industry. It looks at the entire home-building industry. It looks at our municipal partners

and says, "What can we do to bring supply on faster?" And we look at red tape.

They've talked about development charges. I know the leader of the Green Party gave a quote from the mayor of Aurora. I want him to think about this: In York region, if you want to build a 700-square-foot home or apartment, you pay over \$25,000—not even for the permit—as a development charge. If you want to build a single-family home or a duplex, fork out \$52,000 before you even put a shovel in the ground. That doesn't include your permit or anything else.

You cannot begin to tell the hard-working people of this province, who are going to pay those bills and who have been paying those charges, that they don't deserve some type of certainty in what it is that they are paying. What is it that they are paying for? This bill does that. It gives them certainty so that they know what they're paying \$52,000 for or what they're paying \$25,000 for, but it goes a step further: It actually eliminates and helps to eliminate development charges on some of these smaller homes. That is actually very good news.

We look at the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. We've heard a lot of the members opposite complain and talk about that, but what has the bill done? It recognizes the fact that there is a huge backlog that was created by the policies, again, of the Liberal-NDP coalition. Do you know what happens when you have a backlog at the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal? You actually don't get a home built. You don't get a duplex built. You don't get an apartment built.

We had Habitat for Humanity in my riding—a wonderful organization that does great work. Three years on, they couldn't build in the community; couldn't get it through the town council. They wanted to build six townhomes. The town council couldn't hear them. There were discrepancies. They couldn't get it done, so they just decided to fold their arms and say, "Forget it. We'll build one, and we'll get out of here." When we've talked to them, they said, "You've got to do something about this. We can't have this happen because we can't afford to build in jurisdictions that don't want us." That's what has happened. The minister saw that, and through this legislation, we are going to put more people on adjudication so that we can clear the backlog. That's good news, colleagues. It's actually good news for those people who are waiting to buy a home.

But it's more: I talk about the whole-of-government approach. The Minister of Transportation also announced the fact that a new GO train station—I believe it was in Etobicoke that a private business was going to build the GO train station, and do you know what was going to happen above the GO train station? Homes. Homes were going to be built on top of it. That's the approach that this government is taking. We're looking at all avenues where we can increase the supply of housing so that we can bring prices down.

But it's not just, as the members opposite have said, about creating more space. It's about getting more people from the trades to build the homes. We got it done. It's

about giving transit and transportation opportunities. There's no point in building homes in areas that aren't serviced by transit and transportation. The Minister of Transportation has done that with an incredible investment in transit and transportation across the GTHA in terms of subways, but also in building new roads, better roads. We're getting that done.

The Development Charges Act has changed. As I said, we're making changes for certainty. But there's no point in building new homes if you don't have schools, so we're addressing that also in this.

The members opposite talked about species at risk. We will still have one of the most, if not the most, stringent species-at-risk acts across this country. We are the only jurisdiction that will have a science-based approach to species at risk, but guess what? We'll work quicker. We won't have the species-at-risk act become a club by which we hold back development. It should be something that encourages proper development, something that focuses on making sure that the species we want to protect are protected.

We've heard mayors across the area talk about the conservation act. They've talked about the conservation act. I know the mayor of Burlington spoke about this. Well, what does this bill do? We're talking about actually doing what the conservation authorities were meant to do: flood mitigation. Why do we need the conservation authority duplicating what the town already does or what the city already does, and then what the region does? Why do we need three levels of government bureaucracy doing the exact same thing? We want our conservation authorities to be focused on flood mitigation. That's what they'll do. That's what this bill does, because that's what our home builders expect.

If you're going to make a significant investment, whether it's me building a single-family home for my family—when I go to my town or when I go to my community and I drop that \$52,000 just to have a plan looked at, I want to know what I'm getting for it. I want to know that within a year or two years I'm going to be able to have my home built. I don't think that's asking too much of our communities. I think our municipal partners want this type of certainty, and that's what this bill allows them to do.

We also talk a little bit about—and I know we've heard this. There are amendments in the bill to the Tarion home warranty. I know there's been a lot of frustration with that. I hear it constantly. My community is one that had explosive growth, and a lot of individuals—even on my street, people were frustrated that the windows, after five or six years, started to fail and they were fogging up and, "We have to replace all of our windows." The minister is addressing that. We're making improvements to the Tarion home warranty because, again, you can't just build homes; you have to protect the people who are buying the homes.

If people can't afford to buy the home, there's no point in building the home, so we're making changes so that people can afford to buy a home. We're making changes

to give certainty. We're making changes so people understand what the investment is all about. I would have hoped that the members opposite would have actually supported that, as opposed to doing what they always seem to do: bash the people who they don't like. In this instance, it's home builders.

What is even more galling—with due respect for the leader of the Green Party, when you talk about not bringing farmland, let's go back to my riding if we can, colleagues. The creation of the Rouge park—one of the most significant protections of farmland in the history of this country, the Rouge National Urban Park—took thousands of acres out of a potential airport and preserved it. Do you know who voted against it? The Green Party in Ottawa voted against it. They voted against it. It was a Conservative government that brought forward the Rouge National Urban Park.

It was a Progressive Conservative government that protected the Oak Ridges moraine. We've heard it constantly. It was Mike Harris who protected the Oak Ridges moraine. It wasn't the NDP. It wasn't the Liberals.

In fact, the Liberals, when they talk about the greenbelt, supported by their friends in the NDP—19 times they attacked the greenbelt. Where were the voices of the NDP, where were the voices of the Green Party, when that attack was happening? They were standing in this place supporting them and keeping them in power. That's what they were doing.

So when we bring forward a bill that will make new housing more affordable, when we have already taken actions to better respect those people who live in social housing across this province by investing over \$1 billion to renovate, to upgrade—long overdue investments—how do they vote? They vote against. As I said yesterday, it's not about getting things done; it's about the thrill of the protest. That's what they are about. That's why Ontarians and Canadians have never given them the opportunity to sit here, in the case of Ontario, but one time.

As a government, we don't have time to waste. The damage that was done by the Liberal-NDP coalition is one that we have to address. I said it earlier in the budget debate. Look, I would have liked to have seen this move to a balanced budget quicker. I said that and I'm on record as saying that, but I understand why we've had to do it in the fashion that we have done it in. I get it.

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But I can't help but think this, colleagues, in my closing minute that I have: Imagine if, in 2011, the NDP would have done the right thing. Imagine if they would have voted to end the Liberal government when it was a minority. How much money would the people of Ontario have saved had they, in 2011, stood in their places and voted them out of office? We spend \$13 billion a year on interest. You talk about species at risk. You talk about conservation authorities. You talk about affordability. You talk about new homes. You talk about schools. You talk about health care. Think of what we could have afforded, had you done the right thing in 2011 and ended that government.

We are going to continue on, doing the right thing, building a bigger, better, stronger Ontario, and I guess we'll do it without you.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Markham–Stouffville for his little speech there.

I'd like to just make sure that we read into the record that on this side of the House we do love home builders, but we also love what's known as a responsible government. We agree in principle with what they claim the intention of this bill is, but this is not a housing bill. This is a deregulation bill. This does hand over so many privileges to developers. It allows them to build where they want and when they want, and it's weakening protections for wetlands, farmlands, heritage properties and endangered species. Those are things we cannot discount.

But I would like to target, or consider, some of the comments from the member from Markham–Stouffville, such as his comments on the greenbelt. It's important, when we think about how the greenbelt has come up in Ontario politics so often—it seems as though we see yet again an example of the Conservative-Liberal consortium. We heard the would-be Premier himself talking about developing the greenbelt when he was caught on video; he recanted. We saw the greenbelt come up in schedule 10 of Bill 66, and when there was a public outcry, that got pulled back. But here it is again. Wow, would you look at that? It's like Groundhog Day all over again. The government seems quite intent on developing the greenbelt.

Also, Bill 108 lacks so many things that it should have. It should strengthen protections for tenants, providing stable rent. When we take a look at what is known as the median price for a one-bedroom, in London, for instance, the metric or the number that is used is \$1,080, but that is not an accurate portrayal. That is a portrayal of people who are in a unit. If you're looking for one, it's frequently quite a bit more.

Bill 108 does not do enough.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'm going to focus on a very important part of this legislation here, Bill 108. I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for including this in the legislation, because this is something that I've heard in Carleton for such a long time. Even back when I was first seeking the nomination in 2016, it was an issue that came up over and over again. That has to do with the Conservation Authorities Act and the fact that conservation authorities, for so many years, have been unaccountable and their authority has just expanded to the point where they have lost focus of their mandate. So, I'm really thankful that Minister Clark has brought forth these amendments which will allow or mandate conservation authorities not only to act honestly and in good faith, but also with a view to furthering the objects of the authority.

What this means is that after 15 years of having people in Carleton, landowners and farmers alike, people like Tom and Marlene Black, people like Dwight Foster,

people like the Schoutens and many others who have had to deal with this unaccountable expansion of authority by conservation authorities—what this means for them is that they can finally have some relief, and they can finally have some sort of mechanism to deal with conservation authorities when they are acting *ultra vires* and out of their jurisdiction. I want to thank the minister for including schedule 2, the amendment to the Conservation Authorities Act, which, for the first time, actually adds a section where the ministry says they can now hire an investigator to investigate actions of conservation authorities. That means for the first time in Ontario's history, conservation authorities are finally going to be held accountable for the work that they do.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Markham–Stouffville for your comments.

Last week, I hosted a community meeting in Kensington. Kensington is one of the lowest-income—probably the lowest-income—areas in my riding of University–Rosedale. We have some of the richest areas in Canada as well as some of the poorest. We held a community meeting; 80 people came. The purpose of it was to talk about housing affordability.

A lot of the issues that came up included people who were illegally evicted from their home. They'd called the police on the landlord. The police would charge the landlord, they'd take it to the Landlord and Tenant Board, but the Landlord and Tenant Board wouldn't be able to get them back into their apartment. This person ended up in a homeless shelter.

Or the mass eviction that's happening at 54-56 Kensington, where a new owner has come in and is using intimidation techniques and tactics to persuade, in a very aggressive way, the people who currently live at 54-56 Kensington, people who are not going to be able to buy a one- or two-bedroom condo in Yorkville—these are not those kind of people.

What I find so distressing is that those are the kinds of stories I hear when I canvas my riding twice a week and when I go to many events. For renters, for the nearly 50% of people in Toronto who rent, many of them earning \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year or less, they are not going to see any tangible benefit from this bill in the near term. They're just not.

I urge this government look at renters and to tackle the issue of affordability in this bill.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to thank the member from Markham–Stouffville for his passionate speech. I enjoy his energy and the opportunity to debate. He talked about development charges and the cost of development charges as new developments take place. Well, Mr. Speaker, somebody has to pay for the roads and the sewers and the schools and the parks and all the things it takes to build a great community. So the question is, is growth going to pay for growth, or are you going to transfer those costs

onto existing municipal taxpayers? The Conservatives say all the time, and they're right, that there is only one taxpayer. That's the citizen of this province. So we're either going to pay for it through our property taxes or we're going to pay for it through development charges. It's not one or the other.

The member also talks about the importance of conservation authorities. I can tell you that the province of Ontario, on a per capita basis, pays less money in flood damage than any other province in Canada. Part of the reason that we have such low costs associated with flooding, even though those costs are escalating across the country, is because conservation authorities have done their job and that has saved us huge amounts of money in paying for the clean-up cost of flooding.

And I finally want to just talk about the OMB. There is a backlog at LPAT, and the reason there's a backlog is because we don't have enough adjudicators. Why doesn't the government solve the problem by hiring more adjudicators without having to bring back the old OMB rules, which is going to cost municipalities and citizens' groups millions of dollars again? To me, that would be the fiscally responsible approach and I hope we can work together on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you, and now, should the member from Markham–Stouffville want the opportunity, he can sum up this portion of the debate.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the colleagues who responded.

Look, colleagues, to suggest, as one of the members opposite did, that this bill does nothing for people looking for affordable housing would be to suggest that investing over a billion and a half dollars to finally provide respect for those people who are living in social housing by maintaining and upgrading I think does a disservice to those people who are in those homes. That's what government's responsibility is. One of our responsibilities is, of course, to protect our people, to keep them healthy, to keep them safe, but it's also to give them the opportunity to succeed. For far too long, we haven't done that in the province of Ontario. The reason why we're making these investments is because we want all Ontarians to succeed.

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The member opposite from the Green Party is quite correct: We're investing to make sure that we can end the backlog at the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. But what the member opposite doesn't understand is that developers and people like myself who might be building a home for their family don't mind paying development charges. We would rather not, but we understand what the purpose of a development charge is; we get that. But what we don't want is uncertainty. We don't want the rules of the game to change while we're doing it. You know what? Some of us need to take out a mortgage. Some of us need to get financing. When the rules of the game change, it's easier just to step back and not build than it is to just build.

I look at my parents; they're small-time landlords. The only people who made out when they sold their properties

was the government of Canada, when they took capital gains tax from there.

There are other options. There are ways that we can improve the social housing stock. There are ways that we can bring affordable housing to the people of Ontario. This bill starts that process.

As opposed to attacking the people who build the homes, and the tradespeople who make our roads and our apartments and bring electricity and plumbing, let's work together. Let's make sure that we give them the tools they need. Let's give all Ontarians the opportunity, not to dream about housing but to actually buy a house.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It is an enormous honour to stand to participate in the debate on this really, really important topic.

We desperately need more affordable housing in Ontario, absolutely desperately. It seems to me that a bill that actually addresses affordable housing is one of the most vital things that a government can do. Unfortunately, this is not that bill, as you've been hearing this afternoon from my colleagues, notably the really thoughtful, detailed explanation of the bill by the member for Niagara Centre.

I want to talk a little bit about three specific parts of the bill. I want to start talking about the reason that we're in such a housing crisis in Ontario and all across the province—most notably, perhaps, in Toronto, but all across the province.

Historically, we've done really well as a province when governments have invested in affordable housing and the private sector has taken care of market-rate housing. That is when we did well, when for decades governments put public money into not-for-profit housing, into social housing, and into funding co-ops. That is when we were able to keep track of the rising demand for affordable housing.

What the government doesn't seem to understand is that simply increasing the supply of housing doesn't mean that we're going to meet affordable housing demands. It's not simply the first day of Economics 101, where you learn about supply-and-demand curves and you figure that if you increase the supply, yay, the demand is going to go down. That's not how this works, and that's partly because if you stay a little bit longer in the economics class, they actually explain to you how context matters. There have been a whole bunch of things that have happened in the housing market that demonstrate why that alone is not enough.

We have a housing crisis of catastrophic proportions. There have been a number of things that have been happening to cause that. Among them is the fact that although the private sector has been building and building, to make up the shortfall when the public dollars stopped going into those areas, none of it, or not enough of it, went into affordable housing. Inclusionary zoning was one of the last tools that the government had to incent developers to build more affordable housing units, but it hasn't been enough. We have condos that have been built by the

bazillions, and many of these units we know sit empty while speculators wait to simply flip them. We also know, because we've been hearing about the money-laundering—that has caused an inability of the system that should flow smoothly and means that we actually end up with a 5% higher cost of housing in Ontario.

But on top of that, as you've also been hearing, we have enormous rental issues. It doesn't help that this bill closes the door on rent control for new units. But if any of the government members actually sat down with renters in cities like Toronto, they would hear the things that I've been hearing in Beaches–East York, which is that renters are terrified. Renters are really afraid. They are afraid that rent increases, renovations and above-guideline increases will actually put them out of the homes that they have been able to afford, and that once they're out of those homes, they won't find anywhere else to live.

I had a really interesting conversation a few weeks ago with folks like Cathy Crowe from the Shelter and Housing Justice Network, and they were explaining the ways in which renters are terrified that they are really one renovation away from homelessness. They are starting to see people coming into the homeless system, the shelter system, who were housed and who couldn't fight the renovation that's been occurring.

It's worth noting here that a lot of the systems that the government has been affecting will come to bear on these people. For instance, a lot of folks who relied on legal aid in order to be able to keep their homes are simply not going to be able to. You're going to find increased numbers of people being pushed into the homeless system.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about homelessness because I think if you don't understand homelessness, it's very difficult to build adequate, affordable housing. The folks from the Shelter and Housing Justice Network were explaining—and I think that it would be a consultation that the government should invite and might want to really invite before it pushes forward with this bill—that the number of folks in the shelter system has doubled between 2013 and today. You need to really hear this. It doubled from roughly 4,000 people on an average night to close to 9,000. That, if nothing else, should be an indication to you that we are in a crisis and that the pace at which we have been building affordable housing is simply not enough.

Here are some statistics for Canada. There are roughly 35,000 Canadians homeless on any given night, and at least 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness in a year. Ontario has the highest number of usual residents in homeless shelters: close to 9,000. On the day that the census was done, it was 8,780. It is also the province with the largest percentage of no-fixed-address shelter residents, at 41.8%. So we in Ontario have the lion's share of people using shelter systems.

In addition to visibly homeless, there is an enormous number of what is called hidden homeless. In Canada, that number is somewhere between 450,000 and 900,000 Canadians. It's important to understand what hidden homelessness is. It is defined as people who live temporarily with others but without the guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent

housing. A lot of those hidden homeless people are precariously housed. That's what that means; they're precariously housed. A lot of those people could easily become homeless because the whole affordable housing system is a delicately structured house of cards that is on the verge of toppling.

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It's also really important to understand that most of the people who are experiencing homelessness are people who experience systemic barriers that make it very difficult for them to get out of poverty. They have faced these kinds of systemic barriers before they entered homelessness and were experiencing homelessness. For instance, in Toronto, the Indigenous population—so this is people who are First Nations, Inuit, Métis or who identify as having Indigenous ancestry—is overrepresented in Toronto's homeless population. Although they make up between 1% and 2.5% of the population, they make up 16% of the overall homeless population in Toronto. They are vastly overrepresented, and that has everything to do with these systems of barriers that I keep talking about and that it's important to think about when you're thinking about tackling poverty.

On that note, it is really important and relevant here to note that it is tragic that the government has seen fit to halve the Poverty Reduction Strategy Office's budget, by \$7.5 million, because it is that office's job to think about where these systemic barriers lie and why they affect certain populations so much more than others.

It's also important to note here that the reason it doesn't make sense for the Minister of Community and Social Services to keep saying that the best social program is a job is because there are many people who cannot work, who are mired in poverty. There are other people who are newcomers to Canada, for instance, who are racialized Canadians and who often work many jobs that are very poorly paid. Their racialization itself sometimes becomes the reason for their inability to break out of these multiple jobs that are precarious work, that forces them to work multiple jobs that don't give them the ability or the income or the stability to get out of poverty. So it really seems to me that the government needs to take a completely new tack.

When you understand the way that rental issues work—people who work within the shelter system know that the shelter system is already full, that people are about to be kicked out of their homes in greater numbers because there simply is nowhere else for them to go. They speak as well about people being—a really interesting term they used—trapped, but really trapped, in the shelter system with no way out of it, because there simply is no affordable housing to transition into. So you start to understand how deep this crisis goes and how simply building more housing isn't going to cut it or solve it.

The other point that I found really interesting from my conversations with the folks at the Shelter and Housing Justice Network were the ways in which the housing crisis is extending into rural areas. They were speaking specifically about Napanee, but knowing that it's happening in other places, where you have people sleeping in fields.

This is happening across Ontario. This bill isn't going to help.

I want to spend a couple of minutes on the Endangered Species Act. It is absolutely unforgivable, when we are sitting at a time when a million species are on the verge of extinction, to see the government putting in place a pay-to-pave legislation that allows developers, however lovely they are as human beings and however lovely they are as home builders, to simply pay if they want to pave over a wetland or a forest, regardless of the status of the endangered species that may live there. There are so many clauses in this bill that weaken the protections of the Endangered Species Act, as my colleague was outlining earlier.

I want to just say again that when you weaken these protections that are there for a very good reason—they are there to keep these species alive—it doesn't help us to know that a given species is doing fine in another province when it is going to be brought close to the edge of or into extinction in Ontario. That is how we've arrived at the place where a million species on the planet are on the verge of extinction. We need to curate and conserve, and to be aware of the way that climate change is affecting all of these aspects of our lives in every policy area, and that includes this one. It's something that I find really deeply, deeply disturbing.

I want, finally, to talk about the cannabis provision. This is really an interesting bill, which covers, by the way, everything from housing to cannabis to endangered species and more, and that is part of the problem with the omnibus nature of this, as with other bills. It really does cause one to wonder how thoughtfully, how carefully the bill was crafted. But this particular clause is one that should give every member of this House enormous pause. This is the clause that allows for people who have been selling cannabis out of their homes—and we have to bear in mind here that cannabis is a legal product, but if you are selling it out of your home, you can actually be kicked out of that home. That is true if you are a renter, and it is true if you own the home. The property can be seized by the government.

This is something that is so odious and so deeply problematic on multiple levels. In the first place, housing is a human right. It isn't a privilege. It doesn't matter what you have done or why you have done it; you do not deserve to lose your housing. You do not deserve to be kicked out onto the street and into homelessness. It is immoral and it is unthinkable that the government would be putting this forward.

Secondly, in a moment where the government has also gutted the Anti-Racism Directorate so that there is almost no money for any anti-racism work—in fact, I think that the figure is 1,000 for all the programs, for all the anti-racism work; 1,000—how is it that this government justifies a change in a law like this, when we know that the people who are going to be most impacted by it are Black, Indigenous and other racialized people? It is, on top of that, just purely abominable.

1800

On top of that, I want to make the point that it is way more expensive for society to have to deal with the

downstream issues that happen when you push people into homelessness, when you push people out of their homes, when they become sick, when they end up in jail. These things become way more costly for society than keeping them out of that in the first place.

I just want to say, in closing, that I think this entire bill needs to be rethought. I didn't even get to the development charges. There were so many delicious things I didn't get to. But I wanted to go into some depth and to talk about the systemic aspects of the three pieces that I did touch on. I think that what it all says is that the government once again needs desperately to go back to the drawing board. It needs to sit down with the people who actually understand how poverty works, it needs to sit down with people who understand how homelessness works, if it is going to keep people housed so that our homelessness problem doesn't balloon in the years to come.

I really do hope that you will listen to the things that we've had to say, that you'll sit down with the folks who know what they're talking about when it comes to housing people, and that you'll reconsider and that we will actually end up with a bill that creates more affordable housing.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We won't have time for questions and comments this evening. However, we do have two late shows, so pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Brampton Centre, Ms. Singh, has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question that was addressed to the Premier. The question is on climate change. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, Ms. Khanjin from Barrie-Innisfil, will respond.

But first, we'll turn to the member from Brampton Centre. You'll have up to five minutes to give your side in this debate.

Interjections.

Ms. Sara Singh: I know I heard some disappointment from the government benches, but had I gotten an answer, we wouldn't have to be here tonight. Unfortunately, the Premier chose not to answer the question on climate change, and it was a pretty simple one, to be honest with you. My question was just about whether he would support our motion or not. Had he just said, "Do you know what? No, I'm not going to support your motion," we wouldn't be here, you all wouldn't be here. Unfortunately, I didn't get an answer, and so hopefully I'll get something today. But it's pretty apparent that we got our answer yesterday with our opposition day motion, when, unanimously, members of the government actually voted down our

opposition motion to declare a climate emergency. How unfortunate.

Our planet is in crisis and we cannot pretend that this is not the reality that we face. Our clean drinking water supply is being threatened. Our air is filled with toxic pollutants. Farmlands across this province are drying up and dying, frankly. Water is overflowing—

Interjection.

Ms. Sara Singh: It is actually happening. You're a rural member, and you know that. I sit next to a rural member here, and he has told me that the droughts are having impacts on farmlands in northern communities. So we can continue to pretend that it's not a problem and that that's not the reality that people in this province face, but it is a reality that people in this province face.

In addition to our farmlands drying up, our rivers and lakes are causing unthinkable damage. Our forests are on fire. And as we speak, species across this planet are actually going extinct.

Let us not forget that climate change is also having drastic and real impacts on often the most vulnerable in this world. In the global context, it's actually poor and underdeveloped nations that are currently paying the price for our hyperdevelopment.

With tsunamis and fires ripping through much of this planet, we cannot pretend that these issues are not real. We cannot ignore the real and rising costs of climate change to our health, to our communities. And let us not forget the financial and economic impact to infrastructure that this real, real problem is having in our world.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, this government chooses not to act. When we have an opportunity to be leaders in the world, with the first-ever Legislature declaring a climate emergency, this government chooses not to act. Instead, they choose to point us to an empty plan that they say they have, yet we haven't really seen how this is going to deal with the climate problem.

In fact, what we've seen this government do is cut, cut and cut more from this budget and in actually dealing with the emergency that we're facing. We saw this government eliminate the 50 Million Tree Program, a tree-planting program that is actually critical to ensuring forest sustainability and flood protection. As I shared the other day, in my community of Brampton our downtown core is on a flood plain. So every summer and spring, we get increasing water levels right through our downtown core. Actually, in 1948 we had a historic flood that left most of our downtown core damaged and under water for weeks.

These are real problems that communities are facing, not just in the rural sector but also in the urban sector. Yet this government chooses to take away money and programs that would help us mitigate these real impacts of climate change: cancelling the cap-and-trade system; collapsing the Office of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. This, to us and to many people here in Ontario, does not signal a government that has a real, clear commitment to tackling the issue of climate change. Instead, what it signals to people is that this

government is out of touch with reality, and is not willing to accept the fact that this planet is in crisis and that we need to act.

We had an opportunity here as a Legislature to, again, be leaders on the world stage. And rather than taking that opportunity and running with it—it was something that they could have taken as a win for themselves—they chose not to support that motion.

It's the most important moral and social problem, I would argue, that we are currently facing. There is a real threat to our humanity should we not declare a climate emergency. And rather than addressing the problem, it is shameful—it is shameful—to sit here and watch the government pillage our planet and promote the interests of business and profit over the interests of our communities, our health and our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I urge this government to think critically about how we are tackling climate change in this province.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Niagara West will come to order, please.

We turn now to the parliamentary assistant, the member from Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I want to say that during the last election, Ontarians spoke loud and clear: They wanted affordability—Ontario is becoming less and less affordable—but they also wanted a government that was going to take action on several things and protect what matters most. So we are taking action when it comes to climate change. We're taking action when it comes to affordability.

While some advocate for higher costs and making life more unaffordable and expensive—in fact, the NDP advocated for the largest carbon tax in history, which would increase the costs of both agriculture and forestry, and the cost of gas at the pumps and everywhere—we've brought forward a plan that would actually ensure our emissions are down by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030, and we take our plan pretty seriously. I would really hope that the opposition would support our plan that not only takes climate change seriously, but also ensures Ontarians aren't paying the price.

I would ask the member opposite from Brampton what she would say to her local hospital, which is paying over \$775,000 on the carbon tax alone, as well as what she would say to her own leader of the New Democratic Party, when they had the words “climate change” and “global warming” and “adaptation” mentioned zero times in their platform.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we're making life more affordable for Ontarians and fighting the carbon tax, we're making life more affordable and taking climate change seriously.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Brampton Centre and the member for Carleton will come to order, please.

LAND USE PLANNING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Guelph has given notice of dissatisfaction with a question that was put to the Minister of Finance. However, that question was about the old OMB rules, and so the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, will respond.

First, we turn to the member from Guelph, who will have up to five minutes to state his case on this matter.

1810

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the colleagues opposite for staying late tonight to give the parliamentary assistant the opportunity to answer my question.

On Thursday, Mr. Speaker, I asked the Premier why he had decided to revive the old municipal board rules that had burdened municipalities so heavily in the past, dragging them into costly quasi-judicial disputes to defend their local planning decisions. In my home riding of Guelph, the city had to pay over a million dollars in three years alone to adjudicate OMB hearings. That is why I also asked the government if they had done any analysis of the anticipated legal costs for municipalities, given that these costs will ultimately be borne by taxpayers.

Speaker, the answer I was given by the Minister of Finance never mentioned the OMB; it didn't even mention housing. So I figured I'd give the government an opportunity to answer this important question, because this is a huge issue for municipalities and for local citizens groups especially. AMO has worked on this issue for years, and they all deserve a clear answer. Any government that claims to respect taxpayers should show them some respect by answering the questions I asked about bringing back the old OMB rules which cost municipalities and citizens so much money.

For years, the OMB allowed local planning decisions to be overturned, undermining the decisions made by democratically elected councillors. It allowed a few deep-pocketed developers to run roughshod over local interests. Cities and towns across Ontario were forced to empty their pockets just to protect their local planning decisions. The old system did not work for the people of Ontario, and it was a good day for democracy when the OMB was dismantled.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, when they were in opposition, felt exactly the same way. In December 2017, when this was brought before the Legislature, all parties unanimously voted to dismantle the OMB. Now that the members opposite are in government, I guess they've changed their mind and they want to bring back the old OMB rules. It's no wonder that councillors and mayors across the province have been vocal in their opposition to this regressive move.

Just a few minutes ago when we were debating Bill 108, I quoted the mayor of Aurora, Tom Mrakas, who was the chair of the OMB working group and planning committee—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: He's a Liberal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Carleton, your fourth come-to-order-please. The next one will be a warning.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: He said, and I quote because this quote is worth being quoted again: "Once again, an unelected, unaccountable body will get to decide what's best for our community when it comes to growth and development. This is not a decision 'for the people.' The ability to manage growth in our communities has just taken a huge step backwards and it is unacceptable."

The people who live in communities should have the final say about how their community grows. There are many good developers in this province, and I believe government should work with those developers, not hand the keys to the province over to a few of them.

This government talks a lot about the fact that they respect taxpayers. I'm here to say that this move does not respect taxpayers. It won't solve the housing crisis, but it will likely lead to more expensive subdivisions being built on prime farmland. It will likely lead to more sprawl that will eat up endangered species' habitats.

Mr. Speaker, I'm worried—I'm a little nervous—that I'm not going to get a straight answer on my question. But I believe the people of Ontario deserve a straight answer. And so I'll ask at least one more time: Can the members opposite at least tell us if they've done any analysis on how much municipalities can expect to pay in legal fees as a result of reviving the old OMB rules?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mr. McDonnell, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, will have up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by stating that our government, first and foremost, believes everyone deserves a place to call home. We want to put affordable home ownership in reach of more Ontario families and provide more people with the opportunity to live closer to where they work. We want to make sure that each person in Ontario can find a home, no matter what their income or what stage of life they're in. The fact remains that an inadequate supply has led to high housing costs, and has made housing unattainable for far too many people in Ontario.

We are committed to increasing housing supply in this province. That's why, on May 2, our government was proud to introduce the More Homes, More Choice, Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan. We plan to address Ontario's housing crisis and help to build more homes that are affordable.

The existing process to get new housing approved across Ontario is not working for the people of Ontario,

and we've heard the members talk about that. The process for hearing land use planning appeals at the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, in its present form, has slowed the planning process and the decision-making process to a halt. Right now, there's a backlog of legacy cases from the former Ontario Municipal Board before the tribunal. Approximately 100,000 residential units in Toronto alone are affected by appeals and are still awaiting a decision. This backlog is preventing housing from being built and preventing Ontario from growing. The fact is that a prolonged appeals process, while Ontario is in the middle of a housing crisis, is unacceptable.

In our extensive consultations which led to the development of our Housing Supply Action Plan, we heard that getting housing built across Ontario is just too difficult. I want to be clear on this point: We heard this not only from home builders but also from more important stakeholders: the people.

Through Bill 108, the More Homes, More Choice Act, and the investment in the new tribunal adjudicators, we are proposing changes that will make sure that the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal has all the information and resources that it needs to make fair, just and timely decisions.

Our proposed changes at the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal take the best from both the OMB and the tribunal to create a system that can make the final decisions in a timely manner, and that would produce housing where and when it's needed.

We're proposing to give the tribunal greater adjudicative and case management powers. We propose amendments to encourage the use of mediation to simplify processes and remove potential delays.

Our government also wants to ensure that barriers are removed for those seeking to launch an appeal at the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal.

Critics of our proposed changes clearly have not done their homework. I'm not saying that of you. But if they had, they would have seen that we are proposing to give the tribunal the discretion to charge different fee levels, which would help maintain affordability in the appeals process.

In addition, we are adding up to 11 new adjudicators, which is a 45% increase, to help clear the backlog over the next year and a half. Eliminating the backlog will reduce delays and ensure that the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal can deliver fair and timely decisions in the interests of the people and communities across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): 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 1819.

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Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stephen Crawford
Doug Downey, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Kaleed Rasheed
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Dave Smith
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Chris Glover
Christine Hogarth, Logan Kanapathi
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Dave Smith, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Parm Gill
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Jane McKenna
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Lorne Coe, Michael Coteau
Mike Harris, Faisal Hassan
Jane McKenna, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Toby Barrett, Catherine Fife
Goldie Ghamari, Michael Gravelle
Jim McDonell, Norman Miller
Christina Maria Mitas, Suze Morrison
Michael Parsa, Peggy Sattler
Kinga Surma
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Will Bouma, Paul Calandra
Lorne Coe, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
John Fraser, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie