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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 30 April 2019

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 30 avril 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

ATTRIBUTION DE TEMPS

Hon. Laurie Scott: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 100, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes, 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 Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Tuesday, May 7, 2019, and Wednesday, May 8, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 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 100:

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 4 p.m. on Thursday, May 2, 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 p.m. on Thursday, May 2, 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 3, 2019; and

—That each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by 10 minutes divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning; and

That the deadline for filing written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, May 9, 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 10, 2019; and

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs shall be authorized to meet on Monday, May 13, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. and

Tuesday, May 14, 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 14, 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 15, 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 Finance and Economic Affairs, 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): Ms. Scott has moved government notice of motion 36. We'll return now to the government side to kick off the debate. I recognize the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was kind of anxious to get up because I don't know how many times I've prepared remarks in the past and I've always spoken at the end and ran out of time, so I was pretty near going to get up ahead of the minister there, but now I'm up.

Mr. Paul Calandra: You're not going to run out of time today, Bob.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes.

It's an honour to rise today and add my comments on Bill 100, Protecting What Matters Most Act, 2019. I will be splitting my time with the member from Kitchener–Conestoga this morning.

Like I said, it's an honour to stand here in the House today and speak in favour of Bill 100. This is the first time in 12 years, as the member of provincial Parliament for Sarnia–Lambton, that I will be supporting a provincial budget, as, in the past, I've always been in opposition, so

it's kind of nice to be able to vote yes for a budget. I really like this budget, and I know my constituents in Sarnia–Lambton have been waiting a long time for me to do this.

They've been waiting for a government like this Ontario PC government that would take a responsible approach to balancing the budget and restoring confidence in Ontario's finances. Whereas the previous government refused to do what was necessary to protect Ontario's most valued public programs like health care and education, we will restore trust and sustainability in our province's finances for generations to come, and we'll do it while providing real relief for families and businesses in this province.

I would like to commend the Minister of Finance, the member from Nipissing, and all my colleagues in the government caucus who participated in the budget process, and there were many. Together, our caucus has delivered a document that makes smart, long-term decisions, reinventing the way the Ontario government delivers its services. We're focusing provincial resources on the individuals and families in the greatest need. We're restoring trust, transparency and accountability, and balancing the budget in a reasonable manner. It's a new day in Ontario.

I've said for many years, and I've said it repeatedly during every campaign I ran for election, that the biggest threat to Ontario's public services that people of Ontario and Sarnia–Lambton have come to expect and depend upon is the suffocating debt that our province is and was accumulating. Those spending habits of the previous government, supported by the opposition NDP caucus many times, were completely unsustainable, leaving behind a \$15-billion deficit, while still somehow managing to starve programs and services across the province. It is the epitome of mismanagement by the former government. I'm proud to be a member of this side of the House, that is now going to fix this mess that was been left behind for us and our children.

Our plan will balance the budget in five years while protecting what matters most: health care, education and our core public services. Despite the fearmongering from the opposition and the press, we're investing in the programs and services that matter most. I probably shouldn't have said that about the press, but what the heck.

The health care budget increases by \$1.3 billion a year this year with \$384 million more for hospitals and \$267 million added to home care. Hallway health care is the most serious challenge facing our hospitals and our constituents today. We also know that the wait-list for a bed in a long-term-care home is too long, and this creates added pressure to the system. These historic investments make crystal clear our government's commitment to protect what matters most to Ontarians, including our public health care system.

In addition, we are investing \$90 million in a new low-income seniors dental plan, something I heard a lot about over the years and in my office. This is something I've heard a lot about, and I'm incredibly proud to say that our government is moving forward and providing low-income seniors access to quality dental care through a new publicly funded dental care program that will begin later this

summer. Together, we are creating a connected system of care where every Ontarian is truly supported throughout their entire health care journey.

I want to once again commend the Minister of Health, Christine Elliott, for the work she has done on the health care file. I can't imagine a person more perfectly suited to handle the transformation of health care in Ontario than the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

As a government, we are also making historic investments in education in our first budget. The education budget increases by some \$700 million this year alone. And we are investing \$13 billion over 10 years in capital improvements, \$1.4 billion this year alone. As well, we are investing \$1 billion to build 30,000 child care spaces in our schools.

0910

We have taken great care to build a sustainable education plan, despite what our opponents often claim. The Minister of Education continues to get an A+ on her file for the work she is doing. I am particularly interested in the updated curriculum that will see the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities working together to introduce more young learners and students to careers in the skilled trades.

Mr. Speaker, for those who don't know, in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton there is a large presence of skilled trades workers, some 5,500 plus, because of the petrochemical and biorefining sector. We're right now making a major investment in Nova Chemicals of over \$2 billion, which is going to employ a massive amount of men and women for the next three years, until about 2021–22. I really applaud the work on the skilled trades.

I continue to hear from skilled trades employers who say they regularly have to turn away work because they can't find the people they need to put on job sites. These are high-paying, highly skilled jobs. In fact, I met with one of the big sectors in Sarnia just a week ago—it's just come back to me now. I was with the Ministry of Infrastructure. One gentleman said he has 85 employees right now in the construction sector, and he said, "I could use another 20 tomorrow." He says, "I have to turn work away because I don't have enough employees to be able to do the work."

The sooner we can show young people that, as a master electrician, a labourer, a pipefitter, a carpenter or a crane operator, they can build a great career, the better off we are going to be as a province. How many kids are defaulting to attend university because that's what their parents did, or that's where they think they have to go in order to find a job after graduation? I'm excited that the Minister of Education has included this emphasis on the skilled trades in her plan, and through this budget we are going to make that happen. This is certainly something I hope the members of the opposition will support.

I think that if the members of the opposition took the time to really look through the budget documents with their constituents, they would find that a lot of folks agree with many of the ideas and the reasonable approach that we have taken as a government. There are so many important pieces of Bill 100 where, as a government, we

show how we are going to lead this great province back to its traditional spot as the leader of economic growth and opportunity in our country. We are putting the people of Ontario, and the people of Sarnia–Lambton, back at the centre of every decision that we make. We are creating the environment to create jobs. We're providing relief to families, individuals and businesses, and we're looking out for seniors and students alike. And we're building a sustainable future, with a reasonable approach to the province's finances that protects the jobs of front-line staff delivering those critical services. This budget will benefit people in every corner of this province, not just those in urban centres.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Bill 100, the Protecting What Matters Most Act, shows exactly how this government is restoring trust, accountability and transparency to our provincial government. I, for one, am excited at this time to be able to cast a vote in support of this budget bill, the first in 12 years that I'm voting for.

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and to the members of the House, for the opportunity to add my comments. I look forward to hearing further debate on Bill 100.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to say, I am not happy to yet again be debating another time allocation motion. I remember, as you do, Mr. Speaker, and others who were here in the previous Parliaments, that the Conservatives were consistent in their opposition to time allocation. When you listened to the Conservatives when they were the official opposition here, they would get up and, rightfully so, chastise the Liberal government for an overuse of time allocation. If it happens every now and then on a bill that is seized by the House that just can't be let go, maybe you could make an argument. But that you're going to time-allocate each and every bill that comes through the House, and pretend that you're a government of the people and it's all about making sure you do things for people back home is a little bit rich.

Time allocation is a very blunt tool. It's a tool, at the end, that is a disservice to the people of Ontario and a disservice to democracy. Our parliamentary system, as imperfect as it is, has a really great part to it, and that is the committee process; so that a bill, once it's out of the second reading portion of the House, which is normally after seven to 10 hours, let's say, on average, ends up going into committee, and we have an opportunity there to travel the bill so that people get to hear what the government is trying to do. We listen to what the public has to say, and then we amend the bill based on that comment, so that we can actually have a bill that is strengthened and that works for the people of Ontario.

That's not what is going to happen here, Mr. Speaker. The time allocation motion is essentially the same as every one this government has done. The anti-democratic Ford government is coming forward with yet another time allocation motion that is going to give us two days of public hearings here in Toronto. Now, I have nothing against the city of Toronto—I think this is the best city in

the world—but, you know, there are other municipalities in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if the government has woken up to that fact, but there are communities like Windsor, like Cornwall, like Ottawa, like Thunder Bay and a whole bunch of other communities that are out there that would like to be part of a process by which you deal with the budget, because the budget will affect everybody.

If you're a municipal "partner," as the government likes to make them out to be, you may want to say something about this bill. I was at an event on the weekend with one of our local elected officials, who, I've got to say, is a very identified Conservative, not somebody that is known to be a New Democrat—known to be a Conservative—and who is mad as heck at this government for the way they're handling things through this budget. Imagine the municipality: They've made their budget. They drafted their budget; they decided what they are going to do when it comes to expense and revenue for the entire year. And then the government, through this budget process, announces that they're going to download a bunch of services onto the municipality as a result of decisions they made in this budget.

The big one is obviously public health. As we know, a large part of public health is 100% paid by the province, which is going to be downloaded to municipalities like mine in Timmins to 70%. Those programs that were 75% are going to be lowered to 70%. Well, that means to say the municipality has got to pick up the bill, and that means ratepayers are going to have to pay more on their house taxes as a result of this download. Well, I've got to tell you, if there's one tax that people are really upset about in the city of Timmins—and I would think it's the same in a bunch of other communities—it's about how much we pay on property tax. This government, which purports itself to be the government of the people, is downloading costs onto a municipality, which is going to lead to increased property taxes or a reduction of service at the public health unit, such as water testing, or maybe a combination of both. Those are the decisions the public health unit board is going to have to make, and those are the decisions that municipalities are going to have to make. Essentially, the Ford government is not only downloading the financial cost to the municipalities; they're going to be downloading, quite frankly, the blame for the cuts that are going to happen as a result of what's done around public health. That is not right.

So that's one of the reasons that you have to be able to travel. You've got to be able to take your budget bill and travel it around Ontario so that municipal partners, in this case, can have their say.

What about the famous gas tax? You'll remember how my good friend the Minister of Natural Resources would stand in the House time and time and time again and talk about how we had to properly deal with the gas tax so that municipalities other than the large municipalities are able to get their fair share. Well, we've gone in completely the wrong direction. The government has not only not done what the current Minister of Natural Resources has advocated for for years—and with how many bills that he's

introduced in the House?—but they're actually reducing the gas tax that municipalities get, which means to say they're going to have less money for transit and other things. So they've gone in the opposite direction to what they had indicated they would do prior to the election, when they were in opposition.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Twist, twist, twist.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, you reduced it. It's a wonderful thing about this Liberal government—same thing. Tory government, Liberal government: no difference. It's really interesting. Do you know the story, Mr. Speaker? The mother walks into the bathroom and she sees the little boy who plugged up the toilet with a roll of toilet paper. The water is bubbling out of it, and the little boy stands by the bathroom and he says, "It wasn't me, Mom. It wasn't me." Well, that's what these guys are like. Every time they make a decision around cuts to education or cuts to municipalities, they stand there and say, "It wasn't me. It wasn't me."

Well, it is you. You're the majority government. You have put forward a budget. You have made decisions. And now people are having to feel the full impact of those decisions. At least own it up. Try not to deflect by denying what you have actually done. It's in black and white. It's in the budget bill. It's in black and white; it's in press releases that the government has put forward.

0920

The government can try to deny its actions all it wants, and I think that speaks to why they're not travelling their budget bill. They're not travelling their budget bill because they know there are people in this province, in their own constituencies and within their own party base, who are upset and are going to say, "Listen, we don't disagree with some of the direction the government is going." We'll say it's some Conservatives, because I hear that from my Conservative friends in the city of Timmins, because we have Tories in Timmins, like there are anywhere else, and New Democrats and Liberals. But they're going to say that what you guys are doing, quite frankly—you're doing it very ineptly, and you're doing it in a way that it's actually going to be worse, not better, for the people of Ontario.

What about all of those parents with children with autism? You think that the people across Ontario wouldn't like to have a say about this provincial budget that radically transforms how we deliver autism services in this province? People would like to be able to come to committee in communities across this province. In fact, people came to Toronto yesterday from across Ontario at their own expense to just try to change the government's mind, because they're looking at what this means to their kids.

I was talking to Theresa Beasley yesterday—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, come to order, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Here is a really interesting comment by the Minister of Community and Social Services. She used to stand on this side of the House—I think she sat around here, if I remember correctly—and she used to

ridicule the government for creating websites as a way of being able to consult the people of Ontario. She used to stand up and rail at them, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services has raised a point of order.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'm going to inquire and look into Hansard for the past 13 years where I've actually ridiculed the government for consulting people. I think it was the lack of consultation. Maybe, perhaps, he'd like to correct his record or provide me with the information.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I return to the member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We're back to the analogy of the little kid and the toilet again: "Not me. I didn't do it." Listen, you stood in this House as the opposition critic, and every time the government created a website that said, "Oh, we're going to consult you; come to our website," you got up and you railed and laughed at them, and rightfully so.

We have a legislative committee process that allows people to come before the committee, which we can travel across this province, who are going to have their comments said in front of elected MPPs, registered in Hansard and have to be taken into account. Why is it that the government is not doing that? I think because they understand full well that this is not a very popular budget. There are going to be people across Ontario who are going to have some pretty big problems with this budget who want to speak to it. Chief medical officers of health across this province, I think, are going to want to say something about this budget. Parents with children with autism are going to want to say something about this budget. Mayors and municipalities are going to want to say something about this budget.

Even the chamber of commerce, which is normally pretty friendly with the Conservatives, is criticizing this government for some of the initiatives they have in the budget. I saw last week, Speaker, as we all did—or maybe two weeks ago—the Ontario Chamber of Commerce put out a press release and said they've got to stop doing this sticker campaign that they're planning to do at gas stations, because it's a waste of money, and their membership, who has to put these stickers on, aren't happy, because they see this as the government trying to play politics rather than the government trying to govern.

There's a real problem with the price of gas, I think we'll agree on both sides of the House. Hey, Mr. Speaker, in Timmins, less than a month and a half ago, the price of gas was around 95 cents a litre, when the price of a barrel is essentially what it is today. Today the price of gas is \$1.45. All right, you can argue, "Well, that's because of Mr. Trudeau's carbon tax that was forced on us because the Ford government cancelled cap-and-trade." So let's be clear: We're paying the carbon tax because Ford cancelled cap-and-trade—fair enough. That's 4.4 cents. You can criticize Ford and Trudeau for the 4.4 cents. Fair enough; I don't have a problem with that. But the price of gas went

up about 50 cents. What happened to the rest? The price of oil is the same.

The government's response is not to try to rein in the gas companies and the refiners in order to get their prices under control. Their response is, "Let us help Mr. Scheer, at the federal level, get elected by waging a campaign against the federal government and wasting all of our time by putting stickers on gas pumps instead of dealing with the real problem," and the real problem is gas companies are gouging you at the pump. It's as simple as that. If you don't like it, do something about it. At least call the guys in and say, "Listen, either you stop doing this or else we will call the NDP gas regulation bill," or draft your own and actually put these people under some sort of regulation so that we are not constantly being gouged at the pumps.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, if this bill were to travel, you would have people from across Ontario coming out just to speak on that. We're all seeing it on our social media feeds. We're all seeing it in media interviews that we hear on the radio. I just got a call this morning from another radio station, I think, in Kitchener that was talking about it. Even the right-wing talk radio shows are understanding that there's something wrong. This is not merely just the carbon tax. The carbon tax is 4.4 cents. Fair enough; that's pushing the price of gas up—that's a whole other debate—but the price went up 50 cents. How do you explain the rest of it? There's another 46 cents there that's unaccounted for.

So people need to be heard, and this government has a time allocation motion that says, "We are going to have two days of hearings in the centre here in Toronto." If you live in Elliot Lake, if you live in Niagara, if you live in Ottawa, if you live in Timmins or Moosonee or wherever it might be, either you've got to fly down here or drive down here on your own, because you can't take a train from northern Ontario; that was cancelled under the Liberals. But, yet again, you have to come to Toronto to be heard. Well, this Parliament is the Parliament of Ontario, and you would think that the people of Ontario would have fair access to their government. But this government has decided yet again not to travel the bill and give it the amount of time that it needs.

Now, they're not heckling this, but I was expecting this heckle: "Oh, you guys are not any different." Yes, we are. I was part of a government in 1990 who had a budget bill that was controversial, our very first budget in 1991. As a matter of fact, the former member and later Premier, Mike Harris, read names of lakes into the record and did different dilatorious things, as was his right—and I'm not arguing that he didn't have a right to do this—as a means of putting pressure on the government to travel the budget bill.

We were going to travel the budget bill anyway, but we decided to extend the number of days for that bill to travel. We travelled that bill across Ontario. I think there were about two weeks of hearings here in Toronto, and there were three weeks of hearings on the road. We went to Ottawa, we went to Sudbury, we went to London and we went to Windsor. We went to different places around Ontario to hear what the people had to say, listen to what they

had to say, amend the bill as per what we thought needed to be amended based on those comments—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Government members in the northeast corner, come to order, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Finally, the bill was passed at third reading.

Well, what is the government afraid of? Are they afraid that (a) they don't want the people to be able to get access—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry, member, I have to interrupt and ask the government members who are occupying the seats in the northeast corner this morning to come to order so I can hear the member from Timmins. Thank you.

Member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The northeast corner of Ontario is where I come from, so I don't know what that was all about. I know what you're talking about. Just teasing, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

My point is, it's either (a) this government doesn't want to travel the bill because they know, politically, they're going to get a bit of a rough ride from a number of different organizations, groups and individuals out there about the bill. There are going to be some people who are going to come and say nice things about it, I don't doubt, but I think the vast majority are going to be opposed and say things the government doesn't want to hear.

So it's either (a) they don't want to go through the exercise because they don't want to listen to what people have to say, because they're fearful that it might hurt them politically, right? That could be one of the reasons that they're not doing it. It could be (b) they really don't believe in democracy. I think you can decide that one for yourself, right?

So I say to them: What do you have to lose? You're a government with a majority. You have three and a half years—or a little bit less than that now; three and a quarter years left—to govern in your mandate, and you have an opportunity to do what's right and make sure that people are heard. That's what this place is all about.

Now, we wonder why people in Ontario—and across Canada, I would argue, as well—have a low regard for politics, government and politicians. This is one of the reasons why. You have to be in touch and in contact with the public. We know that on a local level.

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There's not a member in this assembly who doesn't understand that if you don't go home and you don't talk to your constituents and you don't interact with them, you're not going to get re-elected. There's not a member in this House that doesn't understand that. Members on both sides of the House try to do the best job they can with that, because we understand we're here to serve and we have to answer to those people who elected us. This is not me saying the Tories don't do it. They do it; I do it; the independent members do it—because we understand that's what our job is.

The job goes beyond just us as individual MPPs going out there and talking to our constituents. The job is also for this Legislature and the government to do the same, and not for the government to say, “Oh, we’ve got yet another consultation process, the www.ImNotGoingToReadYourEmail.ca kind of a process.” Right? Because that’s essentially what it’s at—or it’s www.IveAlreadyMadeUpMyMindButImGoingThroughTheExercise.ca. Right?

Put the committee out so that the committee can actually do what it’s meant to do. If we, as individual members, understand in our constituencies that we have to get out and talk to our electors, we, as government and as members, should understand that we have that obligation as well. That’s what committees are all about. This government is very reluctant to do that because they’ve made a number of decisions around this budget that, quite frankly, are not very popular.

I listened to the previous member from Sarnia get up and talk about what he liked in the budget. One of the things that he said through his comments was, “We have this big deficit because the NDP supported the Liberal government.” Did anybody notice last time that there was a majority government? Did I walk through the last four-year term? Was there a minority Parliament then, or was that a majority?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: It was a majority.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was a majority. And a majority government—I just want to understand. I’m not really good with the rules, guys; I don’t understand the rules of this place at all. But when there’s a majority government, they kind of get to do what they want to do. Is that how it works?

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, that’s what a majority is.

The idea is, if all of a sudden the NDP—which was not even the official opposition; we were the third party—somehow or other were supporting a majority government in enabling them to pass legislation, either the government did not account for its own majority and didn’t show up for the votes or these guys, again, are just making it up. That’s the reality.

If you go back and look at the voting record—here’s the part that they don’t like—every party in opposition at times does vote for a government. In fact, in the last Parliament, 53% of the time the Conservatives supported the government.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I got that wrong. Excuse me.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Excuse me. No, no. I got it wrong. Let me correct—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They’re having fun over there.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: In the last Parliament—I just had the number backwards—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Whitby, come to order please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson:—the Conservatives supported the government 49% of the time, and we supported the government 53% of the time, so virtually—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I’m trying to listen, and I’m trying not to laugh. The member from Timmins is doing a good job at aggravating the government members, but the government members aren’t doing such a good job of listening so they can reply.

I know the member from Kitchener–Conestoga is anxiously waiting to get his 10 minutes in, but if he keeps up the agitation, he won’t be here to do his 10 minutes.

I’m just letting you know that we’re getting to the point where we’re back in kindergarten, and that’s not where we should be. I’m asking all members from both sides to come to order. Let the member from Timmins conclude and then we’ll get back into a fulsome debate, as we’re hearing now. Thank you.

I return to the member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So in the last Parliament, because there was a majority, the government virtually got to do what it wanted. This is exactly what’s happening now. The Conservatives got a majority; they get to do what they want. There are going to be times—and we have voted with the Conservative government on certain bills because sometimes you get things right. When you get things right, it’s the job of the opposition to say, “Okay, fine enough. We’ll support it.” We’ve supported the government on a couple of bills.

I will argue the percentage is pretty off from the last time. It’s maybe 5% of the time we’ve voted with the government, because most of what they’ve done, we don’t agree with. But my point is, even the Conservatives, in opposition, under three different leaders—Patrick Brown—no, more than that; it was under Patrick Brown, under Mr. Fedeli, and under Hudak, just before that—voted half of the time, essentially, to support the Liberal government, because there were times that the Liberals did something that the government agreed with, and there were times they didn’t. That’s what an opposition party does. Sometimes they vote with the government; sometimes they don’t.

The government’s job, by rule of this House, is to propose, and our job, as they say, is to oppose but to offer criticism, and that comes by way of amendment in committee. So, when a government says, “We’re going to chop off the part of the political process or the parliamentary process which is committee,” which allows not only the public to come forward but the opposition parties and the government members to put forward amendments on the legislation, the system breaks down.

And you wonder why the public is, quite frankly, disconnected from politics? I think that’s what the right wing wants. The more that people hate government, the better it is for them, because they don’t believe in government. It’s pretty clear. Conservatives, if there was no

government, would be happy. If we could go back to the Dark Ages, if we went back to that time, I think these guys would be pretty happy, because they're always talking about going back to the good old days. What people should realize is, they're talking about the Dark Ages. They're not talking about a few years ago.

The thing is, the government, I think, is very happy not having the public to present before committee, for a whole bunch of reasons. They know that there are people upset with the budget. Quite frankly, they don't want to listen. They're just going to do what they want to do. That's pretty clear; that's why they're time-allocating. In the end, they don't care if people don't have confidence in the political process, because that serves their aim. The more that people are mad at government and tune out and don't pay attention, the more they can get away with what they're doing.

Well, I tend to disagree. I believe that government can be a solution to many of the problems that our society is faced with.

For example, I started telling this story earlier. Theresa Beasley was here yesterday with her daughter, Julie, out on the front lawn. Her son is now 21 or 22 years old. He had autism from the time he was born, but he never got in the system, and he was on the severe side of the spectrum. He now has to live in a group home. He cannot function on his own. He cannot be left alone, and he can't stay at home because of the severity of his autism.

We're now spending far more money to maintain this young man—and rightfully; we need to. We can't put this young man out on the street. We're paying far more money to deal with the outcome of not dealing with his autism issues when he was younger. Unfortunately, he was born at a time when we didn't know as much about autism as now. IBI therapy was just starting, and the system never really got put into place until he was—you know, he was probably in his very early teens when everything started to get going, so he kind of missed the window.

But saying today that we're going to essentially privatize autism services as a way to solve the problem—you may save yourselves some money up front; there's no question. The government says, "Oh, but we're spending more." No, it's the way you play with the numbers. You say, "We're going to spend more," but what you're going to do is give less to every individual parent, so they'll never be able to get the service they want. Because it's a privatized system where you get the \$20,000 or the \$5,000 to bring your child to an IBI therapist, or whatever it might be, you will not be able to find them, because there will no longer be an organized system by which we do the proper assessments and we match the child with the service they need. That's a big problem.

I met with an organization last week in my riding about this particular issue. What's clear—and I knew this going in, but they confirmed it—is that part of what's going to happen as of April 1 and then six months from now, when this temporary hold has been put in place, is that we're going to lose the coordination part of what they do. That means that parents are on their own. They're having to go

out and figure out, with their \$5,000 or \$20,000 or somewhere in between, what it is they can purchase for their child.

Is the parent in a position to make that decision? Because it's a very complex issue. I have a granddaughter, Eva, who is four years old now, who is both developmentally and physically delayed. Her mom's a psychologist, her father's a mental health worker, and they're pretty qualified to be dealing with issues around taking care of children with special needs. Even they find it hard to make some of the decisions they have to make with the Passport funding because, as you know, the Liberals did to adult services and children's services exactly what you're doing with autism. You essentially took the Liberal plan and made it yours, because it was the Liberal government who created the Passport Program. What's the Passport Program? It's essentially your autism program. The parent gets an allocation, the parent sends the bill to the DSO and the DSO pays for the private service that you went out and purchased. It's kind of the same thing that's going to happen with autism.

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But here's the problem: First of all, a lot of parents are ill-prepared to understand what it is they need to provide to their child. All they know is their child needs help. Number two, because you can't get the IBI therapy—if, let's say, that's what you need—which will cost you \$60,000, then maybe all you're going to get is a little bit of service around respite care and a few other things in order to give you a break. But you're not going to deal with the issue, and you're going to end up with a child who's not going to get the needed attention that they have to get at an early age to deal with their autism.

We had a meeting on autism with parents in Timmins about three or four weeks ago, with Monique Taylor, our critic, who just happened to be there, because we were doing different things. One of the things that happened there was a story we've seen in all of our ridings: A mother shows up with two young boys, about nine or 10 years old, perfectly coping with what was going on. You know, they were engaged, they were quiet, they were doing what every little boy at nine and 10 years old does. These children were at the extreme of the autism spectrum about five years ago. But because they got IBI therapy and eventually ABA, they are now functioning in the community and in the household like every other nine- and 10-year-old child.

That saved us money. Yes, it cost \$60,000 per child for a couple of years—and in this case, probably a quarter of a million dollars—but imagine how much money we're saving in the end when these children are able to function on their own and become meaningful contributors to our society and to the economy. But even more important, imagine what this means in human price.

All the government is doing—that's why I always like saying this old saying: "Liberal, Tory, same old story." Unfortunately for me, as a New Democrat, what we end up doing—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: That's original.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, you guys are anything but original.

But anyway, the point I would make is that unfortunately, as New Democrats, what we see happen in this province is that people get mad at the Liberals, so they vote Tory. Then they get mad at the Tories and they vote Liberal, and they do that back and forth, and we end up with the same result, and we wonder why.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Because you guys follow the same policies. You took the Liberal Passport solution—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. I'm sorry to interrupt the member from Timmins again.

The member from Markham–Stouffville would perhaps like to choose a seat and sit down instead of standing at the back and making his voice heard over the person who has the floor. Thank you very much.

If the government members could limit their conversations—if they feel they need to carry on conversation, there's always a lobby. You could go out and raise your voice as loud as you want.

We'll return to the member from Timmins, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying, all the Conservatives have done in this case is they've taken the Liberal solution to child and adult services, applied the Passport model, which is private funding to private deliverers, and did it to autism. That's what they've done. Even more so, if you look at the Liberal government's response to autism in British Columbia when they were in office, it's essentially the same thing, and the same amount of money, even. All we're doing is that we're using the same policy and we're exchanging the title: Liberal, Tory, Liberal, Tory—the same thing all the time. We need to do something different. That's why we, as New Democrats, work hard in order to try to get people to understand that there is another option out there.

I guess where I part company with the government, along with my colleagues—and of course, the government and the Liberals are kind of in the same pot—is that I do believe that you can use government for good. Should government be doing everything? Absolutely not. Government shouldn't be running private businesses. They have no business doing that. But we do have the right to make sure that when they run those businesses, they take due regard to the environment, and they take due regard to workers and the communities they operate in. We don't have to be heavy-handed about it, but there are some basic rules, and good businesses understand that. If you talk to people in the mining industry—as my good friends from northern Ontario would know, the mining industry is actually somewhat fearful of this government, as to what they're going to do around the environment and a couple of other items.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Oh.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You guys have no idea.

They're sitting there going, "Oh. They're business, so they automatically like us." No. They understand they live

in an international world, and they have to be able to sell their products and sell their companies by way of investments in a way that looks and shows them to be a responsible corporation to the jurisdiction they're operating in.

I'll tell you what could happen. If you follow the logic of the government where they say, "Get government off my back," you'll have happen what happened in South America, where the tailings dam—was it in Brazil?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yup.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The tailings dam ruptured in Brazil because of poor regulation on how you handle effluent from the mill, and it killed how many people? Like, people died. The environment is like—it's just one big environmental and human tragedy.

That doesn't happen in Ontario because we have rules which companies follow so that they're able to operate safely. When you talk to the Lake Shores of this world, when you talk to the Vales of this world, and others, Glencore and Placer Dome—well, not Placer Dome anymore, but Goldcorp—they understand that they have a responsibility to the community they operate in.

In the city of Timmins, Goldcorp built an open pit in the middle of the city, all right? Nobody has really heard about this. Why? Because it's not perfect, but the company went through an entire process, because of the laws of Ontario and our municipal laws, where they had to consult with residents about how they were going to approach the development of this pit. What we had in Timmins was the old Hollinger mine that was opened up in the 1910s. It had shafts, it had open pits, little ones here and there, and the whole thing was fenced off. It was ground that can't be used, it was dangerous and it looked not very good—right in the middle of our city, because the city built around the mine. Back then, when the mine started, they would build the houses close by, because you didn't have cars and buses in the same way we do today.

So the mine proposed, because there's lots of gold there at the surface levels, to mine it, and, once they finish mining it, they're going to turn it into a lake, so you'll end up with a lake in the middle of the city of Timmins.

I've got to say, there were residents in Schumacher who were very unhappy, and are still unhappy, about what happened and how that is going, because of dust and noise and other things; and the company, as much as they can, are trying to mitigate that. Are they mitigating to the degree that every citizen wants? No; I will agree. But at least there's a process in place by which the majority of the complaints that have been brought forward have been able to be dealt with in a pretty positive way. Is it perfect? No. But it's a lot better than what we would have had otherwise.

So what this government doesn't understand is that what they're doing is actually putting at risk some of the investment opportunities in Ontario as a result of some of the decisions they're making. You can't go and pass legislation, as you are in this bill, where you're saying you will make it illegal for a corporation who is done wrong by, as a result of a government policy, to sue the government for that decision.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, if you ran a business and you said, "I'm going to make a decision and I'm going to make a royal decree onto myself that you can't sue me." No business in Ontario has the ability to do that, but the government of Ontario is doing that and they're creating a very unstable climate for businesses to invest in. Are you going to invest a billion-dollar investment in something that you think the government may be putting its paws on, in this particular environment of the government taking away the right of a corporation to sue? That's a good question. Maybe or maybe not. So I just say the government would be well served to travel this bill and send the bill to committee so that the people of Ontario get a chance to have a say.

Again, I just want to say there is precedent where governments in the past, dating back to the time that I first got here in 1990 up until even the Conservative governments of Mr. Harris, actually travelled their budget committees. They actually travelled their budgets in committee around Ontario. That was the right thing to do. Did Bob Rae like travelling a bill? Probably not. Did Mike Harris like travelling his bill—

Mr. Mike Harris: Of course he did.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No. Probably not. I was there. I was there; I remember.

The point is that there's an obligation for us, in the Legislature, to say to the people of Ontario, "We are here to consult; we want to listen to you," and then make a decision. And if you make a decision that the public doesn't like, they're going to accept the decision for the time being, and how you act for the rest of your mandate will determine if you get re-elected as a government. But doing this, I think, is very short-sighted and quite frankly is going to harm the democratic process here in Ontario.

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With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to let you know—no surprise—New Democrats will be voting against this time allocation motion, just in case you had any doubt through this whole presentation. I know that there are other government members who want to speak, as well as members on the opposition side.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: You know what? You're right. I am very eager to participate in debate today because I am passionate about what this budget stands for. It reflects the philosophy that lies at the core of our government's mandate, that the decisions we make today are the decisions that will protect and serve the interests of future generations, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure you're wondering when I'm going to bring up the fact that I'm a father of five; here it comes. As a father of five, this is, after all, why I am here. I ran in the last election because I was fed up with the previous government, that had no qualms about mortgaging the future of our children, Mr. Speaker, and I couldn't be happier with the direction that this government is heading.

I am happy to play my part in bringing about the necessary changes that need to be made in relation to the way that government services are managed here in this

province. Passing Bill 100 is an essential step in bringing about this change. Not only does it reflect a commitment to make our government more efficient, but also one to protect the longevity of our most essential services, such as health care, education and transit. It does this through proposing strategic investments and common-sense reforms.

Our government is taking great leaps forward on the health care file. Ontario's families and seniors will not be forgotten by this government. Rather, with our budget, their health care services will not only be protected but significantly improved.

Let me start off by noting the financial commitments that our government has made towards boosting health care in this province. The budget includes several health care funding increases:

—hospitals will receive an additional \$384 million in funding;

—home and community care spending will increase by \$267 million; and

—long-term-care funding will increase by \$1.75 billion over the next five years.

Our government is making sure that Ontarians get the health care services they need and deserve while making the changes that need to be made to make our system more efficient. We are modernizing the organization and funding of public health care units, enabling greater flexibility in the delivery of services based on community priorities, and the provision of higher-quality health care.

Quality, Mr. Speaker, starts with delivery. We need a system that is patient-centred, and that is exactly what we are working towards. That is why our government is exploring options for redesigning the Ontario Drug Benefit Program. We are looking to provide more timely access to clinically proven medicines.

We are working to modernize oversight of payments to pharmacies. As is the case across the board for all government programs, we are finding ways to make more serious reductions in red tape for clinicians and industry wherever possible.

Now, Mr. Speaker, since day one, we have made it clear that we are a government that is prepared, amidst all the tough decisions that have to be made, to do what is right for the everyday Ontarian. We work for all Ontarians.

That is why, in addition to all of the positive health care reforms and funding increases that our government announced as part of the budget, we also included the expansion of dental care for low-income seniors. Not only is there a public health argument to be made in defence of this provision, but there is also a moral argument to be made. After investing their professional lives in their careers, paying their taxes and putting their time in to make this province a better place, seniors deserve better, Mr. Speaker. Single seniors with incomes of \$19,300 or less—or couples with a combined average of \$32,000, barring existing coverage—will be eligible for dental services in public health units, community health centres and Aboriginal Health Access Centres throughout the province.

We need this province to work for and reward hard-working Ontarians at all phases of their life, Mr. Speaker. We are protecting what matters most for working professionals and seniors. We aim to build this province up through smart policy.

When we talk about building this province up, we must remember to talk about the positive steps that our government is taking to improve the lives of Ontarians. Families are, after all, the backbone of this province.

Perhaps one of the most meaningful ways that our government moved forward on protecting the interests of families is through the progress that we have made on the child care front. Our government is making the child care system more affordable and flexible for all the people of Ontario. We initiated this change with our new child care plan in Bill 66. In conforming to the objectives of our government's new child care plan for Ontario, schedule 3 of Bill 66 succeeds in reducing red tape and administrative burden, making child care more affordable, increasing choice for families and improving the quality standards of care.

As a parent, Mr. Speaker, I know the considerations that young and growing families have to make during the early years of their children's lives. The objective of improving affordability is something that is clearly advanced in the budget of 2019. The fulfillment of this objective is realized in the—get ready for it, Mr. Speaker; hold on here—Ontario Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses tax credit, or CARE tax credit. We're going to call it that because it's a little easier to say. The CARE tax credit will support families with incomes of up to \$150,000 combined. In doing so, it will provide up to 300,000 families relief in paying for up to 75% of their eligible child care expenses.

We care about the families of this province, Mr. Speaker. We want to see future generations set up for success. This begins by investing in our children. What better way to provide our children with a leg up than to invest in their education? For all the opposition that our government has received on our education reforms, it is important that we find opportunities to set the record straight and to highlight the very positive strides that we are making on this front.

Something that our government has made clear from the start is that we intend on investing in educational infrastructure in order to make this province's social and economic path a sustainable one. Our government is making bold investments to enhance our schools and boost our education system. These include \$1.4 billion for school renewal in the school year 2019-20, and nearly \$13 billion in capital grants over the next 10 years to help build new schools and improve existing schools.

Beyond these general investments to enhance our educational infrastructure, our government is also taking a more focused look at our skilled trades and how we can gear our post-secondary institutions more towards revitalizing them. This is to say we are shifting funding for our universities and colleges to be more dependent on student and economic outcomes, taking action to ensure the Ontario Student Assistance Program is sustainable for future

generations. We want to give Ontario students a greater value for the dollars they invest in their education, and to ensure we can open pathways for students to enter into fields where there exists a high demand for skilled workers today, Mr. Speaker.

In order to achieve this, we must also look beyond the immediate scope of the university and college spheres. When students leave college or university, we want to ensure they have a seamless transition into their suited career path. Employment services can play an important role in achieving this outcome. Our government is transforming the way we deliver employment services for all job seekers, including those on social assistance, by creating one efficient, cost-effective system that is easy to use. When our students begin their careers, we want to make sure they are set up for success. This means removing unnecessary barriers to their day-to-day functions, whether it be personal or in their work settings.

Mr. Speaker, much of my riding is composed of rural townships. In these townships, as in many other parts of the province, one of the most irritating complications that one can encounter in their day-to-day life—and my colleague the member from Brantford—Brant, I'm sure, can attest to this—is lacklustre cellphone service. There are few things that are more frustrating than when you have to make an important call and your cellphone service drops. We need to fix that for rural Ontario, Mr. Speaker. Our government has committed to investing up to \$315 million over the next five years to expand broadband and cellular access, including up to \$150 million to unserved or underserved communities over four years, starting in 2020. This is a crucial infrastructural investment that will greatly strengthen the ability of businesses and families to function more smoothly.

The smart infrastructural investments being advanced by our government do not end there, Mr. Speaker. Another item that our government made early movement on and that is also outlined in the budget is the reforms we are making to improve the affordability and sustainability of our energy system. What I am referring to here in particular is the natural gas expansion being undertaken by our government. Our government is expanding access to 33,000 households in 80 communities, saving residential consumers—here's a great number—up to \$2,500 a year if they're switching, whether it be from wood or propane etc.

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Ontarians can expect us to deliver on this reform immediately, and there is no time to waste. Ontarians heard clearly in the presentation of the budget all of the clear ways that Bill 100 will improve their day-to-day lives, and now they want to see those positive measures put into action. Ontarians want better health care. They want better child care. They want better education. They want better transit. We can't take the next steps in delivering that to them until we pass this bill. That is why I will be voting in favour of the motion on the floor today, and I would strongly suggest that other members of the House do the same.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, am not too happy that we're talking about a time allocation motion, because at the end of the day, a time allocation motion means, "We don't want to hear from you anymore." Yet, this is a humongous bill with over 60 different schedules on which a lot of people have a lot to say. I have many members of my caucus who never even had an opportunity to do a two-minute hit on this hundreds-of-pages document.

How could it be that not only do they not want to hear from the MPPs who are there to represent the 14 million people of Ontario—we just heard the time allocation motion. It will be limited to maybe 20 people who will get to be heard, in a province as huge as ours. With a bill that transforms so many parts of the programs and services of the provincial government that all of us depend on, you should give us an opportunity to be heard.

I will try to put the voices of some of the people who have reached out to me about the bill who probably won't have an opportunity to be heard at all.

I'd like to start with Josée Pharand et son époux, Chad. Ils ont mis un nouveau service Internet en ligne, qui s'appelle #WeAreThe100Percent, qui encourage les familles à partager leurs histoires. Et plusieurs familles y participent. Josée Pharand and her husband, Chad, have a young girl, Manon, who is on the spectrum, and they have created this website to encourage people to share their stories. A lot of those people would like to share them with the minister. Many of them have written to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Unfortunately, as of today, they have not received any answers. I encourage people to go on the website, wearethe100percent.ca, and share their stories.

There's Chantal Chartrand, who is from Capreol in my riding and is the mother of Valérie, who is on the spectrum. Chantal wrote to the minister on February 17. She wrote a very good four-page letter explaining why the cuts to the ministry and the changes to the autism program will hurt her daughter and her daughter's chance of living a fulfilling life. She wrote to the minister on February 17. It would be really good if she were to receive an answer.

We have many other people who are trying to get heard. There's Laurie and Travis Zaldiner, who are also from my riding. They have a son. His name is Gavin. They have written to the minister on February 9 to basically talk about the recommendations for their son, which was for 28 hours a week of IBI services. There is no way, with this new program, that their son will ever be able to receive this. He was receiving one-on-one support in school and was progressing very well. Their school principal and some of the workers at the school also wrote in support of continuing with the intensive behavioural intervention worker who was working with Gavin. The changes it has made to this child's potential, the great progress he has made—all of this is not available to them anymore. Pablo Gil-Alfau, the principal of Chelmsford Public School, has also written in support of this family and this particular child, because without the support that they were getting

from the Ontario Autism Program, the continuation of this child's progress in school is seriously at risk.

There was also Mrs. Shannon Lavoie, who has a son named Teo. She's a constituent of the honourable minister, and she wanted to share with her the harmful effect that the change to the autism program was going to have. The minister happens to be her own MPP. She has written to the minister on February 10, and as of today has yet to receive an answer.

They are sharing some serious issues that have to do with very vulnerable children, and they deserve to be heard, because once this budget is passed and \$1 billion is taken out of the ministry, then the chances of changing things for the better are getting slimmer and slimmer all the time.

We also have been copied on many emails to the minister about Child Care Resources. Child Care Resources was the biggest provider of services to children on the spectrum. They have recently laid off four therapists and one supervisor—they used to have 20 therapists and five supervisors—and another round of layoffs is coming. Those are very precious resources in northern Ontario. This particular agency was barely able to provide services in French. They were not able to meet the need. We have a serious shortage of people who have the training and the skills to provide ABA and to provide IBI, to provide the services that children on the spectrum need to be able to reach their full potential. Now we're going from bad to worse. We're going to situations where we had long wait-lists, in part because of the way the program was designed but also in part—I live in northern Ontario—because the distances are great and because the cost of providing those services is way higher; I recognize this. To drive from Sudbury to Gogama is four hours of travel. This takes time. This takes resources. But Child Care Resources treated every child with respect and tried their best to meet their needs, although they did not have enough service providers, enough therapists, to do this. Now, with the changes, they have even less. We are looking at a situation where the hope for those families is going from bad to worse.

The letter that Laurie Zaldiner wrote to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services was dated February 9. Again, those people are still waiting for an answer. Mrs. Zaldiner was dealing with Behaviour Analysis North, which is a private practice that helps people gain access to services for people on the spectrum. But, then again, there are very few therapists. There is nothing in what the government has put forward that talks about equity of access, that talks about making sure that no matter where you live, no matter who you are, no matter your differences, whether it be language or culture or poverty or living in a northern or rural area—for all of those people, services were hard to get, with long wait-lists, but at least they had hope.

1010

Now, for all of the people in northern Ontario, in rural Ontario, all of the people with special needs, those hopes are gone. They are not going to have enough resources to

ever be able to purchase the services required, and even if they did receive the \$20,000 because a miracle happened and a kid in northern Ontario was diagnosed before the age of six and was able to recoup, there aren't enough professionals, there aren't enough therapists for us to hire.

The government has a role to play in ensuring equity of access, but they are turning away from those responsibilities and basically saying, "Here is your \$5,000. The specialists have said that your child needs 21 hours or 28 hours of intervention. They also need some speech language pathology. They also need a little bit of physiotherapy or occupational therapy. Take your 5,000 bucks and decide by yourself which therapist you should hire first, which services you will give your child." It is impossible for people to make those decisions, and if you live in northern and rural Ontario, it is impossible to find the therapists to provide those services. This is a lose-lose and it's really hard to swallow.

But this is just part of what's in the budget. Another huge part is this one little paragraph that talks about the health units. We have 35 health units right now. The government will bring that down to 10. There is no body of evidence that exists anywhere, Speaker, that tells you that regional public health will do a better job. That does not exist. There is no body of evidence that shows that if you cut public health, we will be healthier, we will decrease hallway health care, we will have a warm send-off. None of that exists. Much to the contrary, our public health units are there to keep us healthy.

The minister yesterday talked about how they have an advocacy department. She supports that they give immunizations and they keep track of outbreaks of contagious diseases, but do they really need an advocacy department? Well, let me tell you, Speaker, that if Toronto Public Health did not have this advocacy department, we would still be smoking in restaurants and bars in Ontario like they are in many other places. It was Toronto Public Health and the hard-working people in their advocacy department who did the hard work, against tremendous pushback, to get the restaurants and the bars to be smoke-free. It was really tough work, but they knew it was the right thing to do.

They brought it forward in Toronto. If you remember, they brought it in for a few months, and then they changed their mind and we went back to smoking in bars and restaurants. Then they were finally able to push it through for Toronto. Once Toronto did it, a few other municipalities also, because of the hard work of the public health advocacy department, were successful in getting their municipality to pass a bylaw that said we were not allowed to smoke in restaurants and bars. Now, after many, many other municipalities, the provincial government finally came forward.

Do any of you think that we would be better off if we were still smoking in bars and restaurants? I don't think so. The number of restaurant workers who were getting lung cancer, and bar workers who were getting lung cancer, because they were exposed to cigarette smoke for the entire shift, and all the rest of it—this is what public

health does. It is not sexy. It doesn't grab headlines. It requires a ton of work, but it works. It keeps us healthier.

And what is this government doing? Well, just for public health here in Toronto, they're cutting \$65 million this year. This is a budget that has already been approved and all of sudden, Toronto, if they want to continue what they have, will have to come up with \$65 million more, and the same will apply to the 34 other health units.

I see that you're trying to stand up. That means I have to sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That is correct. Thank you very much.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Seeing the time on the clock, this House will stand in recess until question period at 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask the members to introduce their guests, I'll remind them that after we've concluded the introduction of guests, I will be formally and officially welcoming our pages.

Introduction of visitors.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: On behalf of the member from Toronto–Danforth, I'd like to welcome Julie Dale here today. Julie is the mother of page Cameron Dale, and her older brother, Tom, is a friend of mine from Windsor. Julie grew up in Windsor, and Tom is one of the best cameramen that was ever hired by the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. Welcome back to Queen's Park, Julie.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, 150 members of the Ontario Co-operative Association and its francophone counterpart, Conseil de la coopération de l'Ontario, are at Queen's Park today for meetings with MPPs and for their 2019 annual reception from 5 to 7 in rooms 228 and 230. I am pleased to introduce Peter Cameron, their acting executive director and co-op development manager, who is in the members' gallery today.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to welcome representatives from the historic Canadian National Exhibition here today. In the Legislature we have the CNE Association president, Mr. John Kiru; board director Suzan Hall; and senior staff representatives John Peco, Maya Gorham and Sarah Fink.

The CNE will be hosting a reception this afternoon at 4:30 in the dining room. I encourage all of you to attend and check out the amazing CNE-inspired food and games.

Mr. Joel Harden: It's with great pleasure that I welcome Anthony Polci to the House today. Anthony is Leo Polci's father. Leo is a proud page—in fact, was the page captain, I believe, yesterday. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce two Oakville constituents, Mike Saffran and Mike Mestyan, of the Joshua Creek Residents' Association. Mike and Mike, welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome Henny and Ray Rabideau from my riding of Lambton–Kent–

Middlesex, who are visiting their granddaughter Kate, who is serving as a legislative page this session. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to introduce Mariam Nawaz. She's a Waterloo grad and this week she completes her four-month internship with Brown and Cohen. She's here today with the Ontario Co-operative Association for their lobby day.

WEARING OF HOCKEY JERSEY

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

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to rise on a point of order and ask for unanimous consent to wear a Niagara IceDogs hockey jersey in the Legislature. The member from Niagara and I had an ongoing bet. The Sudbury Wolves were knocked out early, so he has given me his jersey, which I've been told is the average IceDog size. I would like to have unanimous consent to wear it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Sudbury is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow him to wear a hockey jersey during question period today. Agreed? Agreed.

I would now ask the pages to assemble.

WEARING OF PINS

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Oh, point of order: the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe we have unanimous consent to wear pins to recognize CNE day today here at the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear pins recognizing CNE day here at the Legislature. Agreed? Agreed.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I would ask the pages to continue to assemble for their introduction.

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome this latest group of legislative pages. From the riding of Barrie-Innisfil, we have Caleah Burke; from the riding of Toronto-Danforth, Cameron Dale; from the riding of Durham, Emily Brown; from Parkdale-High Park, Helen DeBoni; from Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, Jadon Tsai; from Milton, we have Jedd Rafael Peralta; from Sarnia-Lambton, Kate Rabideau; from Ottawa Centre, Leo Kristal-Polci; from Scarborough-Agincourt, Maria Nastase; from the riding of King-Vaughan, Mary Calleja; from Brampton Centre, Nailani Cavero; from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Olivier Quesnel; from Mississauga Centre, Rishi Jarajapu; from London West, Romeo Lafrance; from Kitchener South-Hespeler, Sarah Fee; from Brampton East, Tabitha Terrance; from Scarborough-Rouge Park, Tarun Moturi; from Perth-Wellington, Thomas

Sheldon; from Ajax, Trenyce De Gannes; from Beaches-East York, Wolfgang Wai-Hahn; and from the riding of Waterloo, Zoe McCabe.

Welcome to the Legislature.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Acting Premier. The Ford government's classroom cuts are already impacting schools and students. Yesterday, Lorne Park Secondary School in Mississauga sent a notice home. The notice informed students that 30 courses had been cancelled due to the government cuts and that students enrolled in those courses would be removed.

Does the Acting Premier think this school is fear-mongering, or is she willing to admit that her classroom cuts have real impacts?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to rise today and again focus in on an education plan that works for you. It's going to be the plan that is going to bring education back on track in Ontario. I actually think the people who are fearmongering are not the school boards. It's the Leader of the Opposition and her party. It needs to quit once and for all, because the fact of the matter is, we can't forget that we inherited a fiscal mess. We all have to take responsibility and steps forward to make sure that we get the province back on track.

That said, though, we're going to be working with our school boards and we're going to be working very diligently to make sure that our number one priority is student achievement and the learning environment in the classroom for teachers and students is second to none. Again, we're going to be working with our school boards to make sure that attention is paid to student achievement and that learning environment in the classroom. We're going to get it right once and for all.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, perhaps the minister should have worked with Lorne Park Secondary, because it certainly doesn't work for students that 30 courses are being cancelled. Schools in rural Ontario are facing unique challenges, Speaker, as everybody in this chamber should already know. The Near North District School Board wrote the Minister of Education, warning that the government's so-called attrition protection will not prevent layoffs and that "recruitment and retention of qualified and talented individuals can be difficult in northern Ontario...." As another northern board chair puts it, "If the automotive teacher retires"—and we aren't allowed to recruit new teachers—"who's teaching auto? Who is qualified to do it?"

1040

I think that's a really great question, and it's one that the Premier needs to answer, the minister needs to answer

and the Acting Premier should answer. In fact, everybody on that side of the House should answer people in northern Ontario about the loss of courses that they're going to see from these cuts.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would suggest, respectfully, that perhaps the Leader of the Opposition should actually pay attention to what we're announcing, because when it comes to making sure we have the right people in the classrooms teaching our students across this province, from one end to another, we have been very clear. When it comes to mathematics, when it comes to STEM subjects, when it comes to skilled trades and every aspect of skilled trades, we're going to make sure that if a teacher retires, the proper teacher will be hired and will replace him.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, at the risk of tit-for-tat, I would, with all due respect, suggest that the Minister of Education pay attention to the school boards across this province who are ringing the alarm bells about the thoughtless cuts to education.

Parents and students don't want to be told that they're fearmongering. School boards don't want to be told that they're fearmongering. They know the fears are legitimate, Speaker. They're seeing them in schools right now. As we sit and breathe, they are seeing the cuts affecting schools. They deserve an education that allows young people the opportunity to succeed, not one that leaves them scrambling to deal with classroom cuts, as is what's happening right now.

Will this Ford government stop plowing ahead with cuts that leave students with larger classes, fewer teachers and put their futures at risk?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, the only people who are fearmongering and playing politics is the party opposite under the leadership of the leader, unfortunately. The fact of the matter is, the GSN numbers just went out to our school boards, as promised, on Friday. They're just working through their numbers right now. We're going to be working with our school boards to make sure we get it right.

Again, we want the right teachers in the classrooms, making sure that we have the best learning environments for our students. Again, we're going to be working with our school boards because, to be perfectly clear, no teacher will lose their job involuntarily because of our proposed changes.

The fact of the matter is, people are celebrating the fact that we're focusing on what is needed to get done to clean up the mess after 15 years of mismanagement, and we are going to get it right. We stand by our teachers, and most importantly, we stand by our students and our parents. Again, we're going to prove this party wrong—

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

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. Does the Acting Premier believe that

immunization, student nutrition and long-term care have a role to play in keeping Ontarians healthy and ending hallway medicine, and if she does, why is she making such dramatic cuts to public health?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. Yes, I think those are all important public health issues, but I'm confident that if the city of Toronto, first of all, has its priorities in place and spends government dollars wisely and taxpayers' monies wisely, they will be able to provide those essential services.

In fact, I think it should be noted that the city of Toronto's public health unit, over the last 10 years, has had a surplus of \$52 million, so about \$5 million per year. That would certainly help them with making up the difference with the small adjustments that we're making over three years. We also need to make sure that the government spends its money wisely on the things that are priorities.

Is it a priority to have an entire department based on advocacy in public health? For what? Aren't we all in favour of public health? Why is that necessary? Why is it necessary to have a department that has a study on the reactivation of—

Interjections.

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

I'll remind the members I had to stop the clock once the standing ovation started, because I could not hear the member who had the floor.

Start the clock. Supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, only a government that fears the voice of the people wants to get rid of all advocacy in the province of Ontario, and that's what this government is showing.

Public health units perform vital services across the province to keep people healthy, and the Ford government's callous cuts are putting health at risk. The Acting Premier has tried to explain away these cuts as a difference of opinion, but what the mayor of Toronto said—who the Acting Premier served with when he was leading her party—is crystal clear: These retroactive cuts to public health put everything from school to breakfast programs to immunization at risk.

Why doesn't the Acting Premier believe the medical experts, concerned citizens and her own former leader, and call for a reversal of these cuts?

Hon. Christine Elliott: There is a vast difference of opinion between the Ministry of Health's view of the situation and what's happening and the city of Toronto's. There is a difference of opinion with the city of Toronto, which we are trying to work through so that they will understand how we arrived at our calculations. We're trying to understand their calculations. I'm sure that we can resolve that.

But it is a question of priorities, priorities over having an audit department versus making sure children are vaccinated. I think the vaccinations are more important and I'm sure the people of Toronto think so as well.

The city of Toronto also needs to take a look at its own internal affairs. There is one budget here. To suggest that there aren't savings to be found is not true. There is money

to be found. If you take a look at the fact that recently, their own auditor found that a tree maintenance service was watering tree stumps and wasn't even following the proper GPS service—they were doing other things, but they weren't watering trees. That's millions of dollars wasted. They also spent—

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, as I live and breathe, a Conservative who doesn't like audits. Go figure. I have never seen anything like it in my life, Speaker.

Look, all of the experts are on one side and the differing opinion is the government's side. I'll go with all the experts, because they're the ones who are being upfront with the people of Ontario on the impacts of these cuts.

Here are some of the programs that these cuts are going to affect: breakfast programs for at-risk kids; dental clinics, which were supposed to be the cornerstone of the government's dental care plan for seniors; and immunization programs—immunization programs, Speaker—which are at risk at exactly the same time that fears of a measles outbreak are at the highest they've been in this province in a very, very long time.

This is not good for public health. This will make hall-way medicine much, much worse. Will this Ford government reconsider this reckless cut to public health?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Of course I support audits. I was a bank auditor myself for a number of years, so I respect what the auditor for the city of Toronto is saying with the millions of dollars wasted on watering tree stumps. I don't think that's in the public's best interest.

In addition, they bought a fleet of vehicles for over \$10 million that cost \$314,000 a year to maintain, that aren't even being properly used. In fact, the people who should be driving those vehicles are also being paid for their own personal mileage expenses.

That is not good leadership. That is not good management of public money. I think if the city of Toronto looked a little harder, they would be able to find more money for services.

I am confident that the essential services in public health—vaccinations, making sure that restaurants are inspected, making sure that breakfast clubs continue to be run—they're actually funded through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. They will continue, and all of those essential services will be preserved.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Minister of Health, Speaker. But I have to tell you, I knew the Premier wanted to be the mayor of Toronto; apparently the Minister of Health wants to be the mayor of Toronto as well.

Over the last week, I met with families across Ontario who were worried about the government's cuts to health care. Whether it's billions of dollars of cuts to public

health, the plan to slash ambulance service or the mega-agency that will allow unprecedented levels of for-profit care into our health care system, people have seen health care getting less reliable and more expensive.

1050

Last week, the government announced they intend to make even more dangerous cuts to Ontario's health care system by eliminating out-of-country coverage for emergency health services from the Ontario Health Insurance Plan, OHIP. Why is the minister forcing patients to pay for health services with their credit card instead of their OHIP card?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the leader of the official opposition, it's because it's not providing good value and it's also leading people to the erroneous impression that they would receive full coverage if they are injured while out of country when, in fact, the total that they would receive is about \$400. If you're injured out of country and you have to go into intensive care, it can be thousands of dollars per day. We want to make sure that the people of Ontario understand that when they go out of country, they need to make sure they have their own private insurance, which can be purchased very inexpensively, making sure that they are going to be covered.

Again, this wasn't even a program that was providing good coverage, and it was very expensive to maintain. About a third of the entire cost of this project was taken up by administration. That's not good value for taxpayers. That's not what we were elected to pursue. We are there to provide core services and make sure that taxpayers' money is being spent wisely.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Ford government has made it very, very clear to Ontarians that they are on their own when it comes to their health care if they happen to be travelling across the border.

The Canadian health act sets standards for health coverage across the country. One of the principles of the Canada Health Act is that provincial health plans must provide coverage for people when they are temporarily outside of the province. With this decision, the province is violating the Canada Health Act and asking patients to pay out of pocket for health services.

The Ford government promised that Ontarians would never be asked to pay out of pocket for health services. I'm going to say that again: The Ford government promised that Ontarians would never be asked to pay out of pocket for health services. But now you've got to tell the families of Ontario who are crossing the border, for example, for a kids' ball tournament, that they have to pay for private health insurance.

Why is this government asking people to pay for health care in the province of Ontario when they promised they wouldn't?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, I would say, through you, that this is a huge stretch by the leader of the official opposition. There is no legislation of any kind that is being disrespected or denied here. What we are trying

to do is to make sure that people's money is being spent wisely. I don't think any taxpayer in Ontario would think that to use a third of the cost of a program on administration only is a good use of those dollars.

We also want to make sure that people are going to be covered properly when they leave the country, to make sure that if they have an expensive health problem, it is going to be covered by insurance and that they're not going to have to sell their house or lose their personal assets. This is an important public announcement to people to let them know that they need to find their own insurance, which can be purchased very inexpensively, to make sure that they will be thoroughly covered when they're out of country.

That is our responsibility as a government: to make sure that government funds are spent wisely, and people are told the true cost and the true implications of some of these programs that are not providing value—

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

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. It's my understanding that the minister was in London this past week making an important announcement that will ensure the safety of our children during their commute to school. School buses are one of the safest ways for children to get to school. Statistics show that students are 70 times more likely to get to school safely when travelling in a school bus than by car. There are over 830,000 children who travel to and from school every day by bus.

In everything our government does—every program, policy or service change—we put people first. Can the Minister of Transportation share with the Legislature the details of his recent announcement and how it will better protect and ensure the safety of Ontario's children?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I thank the member from Cambridge for that question and for being a strong advocate for safety on our roads throughout the province. Our government is moving forward with regulations to allow evidence from stop-arm cameras on school buses to stand alone in court. That means there will be no requirement for additional witnesses. We wanted to help municipalities throughout Ontario improve school bus safety, and this will allow for more efficient enforcement and prosecution.

But, Mr. Speaker, that's not all. If passed, our legislation will put in place an option for municipalities to target drivers who threaten the safety of children, through monetary penalties without wasting time and money in court. We're making these changes in consultation with school bus providers and other road safety stakeholders because the safety of our most precious resource, our children, is our top priority, Mr. Speaker.

We hope these changes will help to reduce the number of children harmed while going to and from school by bus. We know these measures will hold irresponsible drivers responsible. I'd like to share more in the supplementary.

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

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Through you, Mr. Speaker, thank you to the Minister of Transportation for that great answer.

Last week, I was pleased to see the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, the member from Niagara West, in London with the Minister of Transportation to announce this great initiative. It's so good to see the different ministries of our government working together to protect our students.

Can the minister tell us more about this important legislation and what it can do to protect and ensure the safety of our children during their commute to school?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: The Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to continue to talk about the good things we're doing for education and our students across Ontario. Thank you to the member from Cambridge and thank you to my PA, the member from Niagara West, for joining the Minister of Transportation. I'd be remiss if I didn't say this is something that our government, our party, has long sought. Thank you for the great work from the member from Chatham-Kent; he got this ball started. I thank you for drawing attention to the importance of it.

We want to demonstrate that we are totally committed to the people who matter, and those are our students. We're focused on student success but we're also focused on student safety. This starts from the moment their bus picks them up at the start of the day. Stats show that children are most likely to be injured when they are boarding or leaving their school bus, or when they're crossing the road. My own neighbour had that very experience. That's why our government is proposing new legislation to use a school-bus-arm camera in court to target drivers that put kids at risk. Promise made—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The next question: the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Disaster relief assistance will be vitally important to the families and businesses affected by flooding across Ontario. Last year, when tornadoes devastated the Ottawa region, the minister told the House "that past governments haven't activated the" disaster relief assistance "program early enough and that claims took too long to process." That was last year. As of last month, only seven of 111 applicants have received money through the Ontario disaster program. What confidence can the people of Ontario have about their government's help in this disaster if they still haven't delivered on their promises from the last one?

Hon. Steve Clark: Thank you very much to the member for the question. First of all, I want to express, on behalf of all members, to all the regions that are struggling with the widespread flooding that is taking place in our province—yesterday I activated the DRAO Program in

Renfrew county and in Pembroke. I know that many members of this House have local communities that are in some pretty challenging conditions, so our thoughts and our prayers are with all the first responders, all the community volunteers and everyone battling this situation.

The question is very timely because there are a number of improvements that our government has made to the Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians Program. Our ministry has been on the site in many regions, both last year and in the days past, given some of the challenges that people are facing. We have to improve this program. There's no question. We have to do a better job in terms of fast-tracking some of these opportunities to make sure that people present all the information as early as possible. I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Families that were promised disaster relief by the Ford government just last year are frustrated by the government's failure to keep promises. Cindy Berry's home was hit by the tornado in 2018. She told CBC news last month, "Why did" the Premier "come out and say that there was money and there really isn't any money? Or if there's money, why is it so hard to get?" That's a good question.

Will the Ford government commit today that people affected by floods will have access to disaster relief funding as soon as possible?

1100

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, I want to thank the member for his carefully crafted question.

As I've said many times in this House, the Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians Program is not a replacement for insurance. Again, I want to stress that. Again, I want to say that we have made a number of improvements to streamline the application process. We have ensured that ministry personnel have been on the scene in many of these jurisdictions, especially the ones that the member referenced last year. We spent many hours in many community halls, helping residents understand what needs to be provided in this application process and what isn't covered in the application process, and as well, had other officials from the insurance industry and other partners involved in this process.

Yes, in some cases it is complex. We are trying to work through all of the applications and all of the issues around them. We will continue to improve this process. I want the member and all members to realize that this is something we take very seriously on this side of the House, and we will continue to improve this program.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. As many in this Legislature will recall, I've been calling for concrete barriers along Highway 401 from London to Tilbury to assist in preventing crossover accidents. As many in this Legislature also know, in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington, that stretch of the 401 between London and Tilbury is called "Carnage

Alley" because it's known to be a very dangerous stretch of highway that has unfortunately had many tragic accidents.

Mr. Speaker, for years I called on the previous Liberal government to install concrete barriers to prevent the crossover accidents that occur on this stretch of highway every single year. Unfortunately, the previous government did very little to address these very real safety concerns.

Our government for the people is committed to making Ontario's roads and highways amongst the safest in North America. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Transportation share with this Legislature what our government is doing to ensure the safety of Highway 401 between London and Tilbury?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks to the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington, a strong advocate across the board, representing not only his constituents but helping those across Ontario. I'm pleased to give a concrete answer to his question.

As the member has stated, there have been many accidents in Carnage Alley that have been tragic—too tragic. I've heard and met with many families over the past few years that have lost loved ones due to crossover accidents on this stretch of highway. One loss of a life is one too many.

This year's budget commits to the widening and improving of safety along the 128-kilometre stretch, from four to six lanes from Tilbury to London on the 401. We are committed to getting shovels in the ground as soon as possible, and we are committed to installing concrete barriers along the entire stretch.

I look forward to sharing the safety measures our government has put forward in our supplementary.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you to the Minister of Transportation for firming up and hardening that particular response on that dangerous situation that we have along the 401. My community of Chatham-Kent-Leamington will be thankful to hear our government's commitment to expand the highway to six lanes and finally install concrete barriers.

As the Minister of Transportation stated, one loss of life is one too many. I know the minister is aware of our concerns in our communities as a whole, and I know our government is committed to making this highway safer so that motorists and their loved ones can travel with some peace of mind. Can the Minister of Transportation share more about these safety measures our government has already implemented?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks again for that question from the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Our government's number one priority is keeping the people of Ontario safe, whether it be at home, work or during their commute. That is why we're working to ensure that the people of Ontario have a safe and efficient highway network. I've directed officials to speed up the process to install concrete barriers along Highway 401 between Tilbury and London. I can assure Ontarians that

we are expediting the planning work to get shovels into the ground as quickly as possible.

In addition, the Ministry of Transportation has taken measures to protect road users during this construction by implementing the following safety measures: We will be installing snow fencing at strategic locations, making enhancements of winter highway maintenance operations, working with the OPP and other road safety enforcement partners to increase speed enforcement and installing additional portable roadside variable messaging signs to display road safety messaging.

Unlike the previous government, I can assure Ontarians and the residents of southwestern Ontario that our government is committed to building these concrete barriers along Highway 401.

PUBLIC HEALTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

The government's decision to cut public health funding will leave a \$1-billion hole in Toronto Public Health's budget. One of the programs that Toronto Public Health funds is the city school nutrition program, which serves 200,000 children with breakfast, lunch and snacks. That's a lot of students that this decision is going to leave feeling hungry. Have you ever tried going to work hungry, Speaker? It is pretty hard to concentrate.

By cutting public health, the minister is making it harder for students to succeed in school and to break out of the cycle of poverty. How can the minister possibly think that this is an acceptable decision?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, I would agree with the member that the breakfast programs and so on are very important, but, as I indicated in a previous question, there is a significant difference of opinion with respect to the changes that are being made in public health funding by the province.

This is happening over a period of three years. The difference in funding amounts to one third of 1% of the city of Toronto's overall budget. It is clear that if the city of Toronto concentrates on priorities and makes sure that they keep track of eliminating waste in other areas, there will be money for those essential programs.

In fact, I think it should also be pointed out that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services contributes a significant amount of money to those school breakfast programs. That's not even touched by the amount of money that the municipality receives from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

I am confident that those programs will continue with the funding that the city of Toronto is going to receive both from the Ministry of Health and from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, this is \$65 million that the city of Toronto has to make up because of the government's decision.

Earlier, the minister questioned Toronto Public Health's priorities because they engaged in health promotion and advocacy. Did you know, Speaker, that if it were not for the advocacy of Toronto Public Health, we would still smoke in restaurants and bars in Ontario? This is what advocacy at the public health level does. It makes us healthy.

Evidence-based decision-making tells us that investing in health promotion works. It keeps us healthy, it saves the health care system money and it builds healthy communities. The city of Toronto and the 34 other public health units affected shouldn't have to make the tough decisions on what health programs to cut because the province does not want to pay its fair share.

Will the minister listen to her previous leader, agree to pause this decision and go back to the drawing board?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, through you, I would say that it's important to base these decisions on facts, not on some of the rhetoric that we've heard from the city of Toronto.

The city of Toronto has proposed a number that is far, far in excess of the amendments that the Ministry of Health is proposing to make. In fact, the actual difference is \$33 million for the first year, rising to \$42 million after three years. That is something that the municipality is able to accommodate with the population, with the economies of scale that they can absorb. It's also important to note that they have run surpluses over the last 10 years amounting to over \$52 million. That being the case, it's very clear that there is money they can find for some of these services.

The legislation, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, indicates that it is the responsibility of the municipalities to fund public health, yet the province is willing to pay its fair share, and I am confident that when the city applies its concentration to the priorities, like the breakfast programs, like the vaccinations, like helping—

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

1110

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. I have a private member's bill that proposes a sensible solution around consumers' rights and digital issues. Put simply, I believe consumers should have the right to repair their own electronic products. I believe it is unreasonable and uneconomical that manufacturers can disallow owners from repairing their devices by making parts and product manuals overly expensive or by insisting that the manufacturer can be the only one to repair that product.

The current approach is wasteful, bad for the environment and expensive for consumers. It forces people, too often, to simply throw away a product rather than repairing that product and supporting a local business that does that. Minister, will you support this bill on second reading this Thursday?

Hon. Bill Walker: Speaker, through you: Even in opposition, the Liberals continue to do what they did in government: propose legislation that sounds good in theory or a sound bite, but is completely unenforceable in practice and threatens consumer choice.

The ability to repair electronics more cheaply and easily is certainly a concept we support, but the broader implications of this bill were clearly not thought through. This bill would do the opposite of what it is intended to do—unintended consequences that we so often heard through 15 years. It would limit consumer choice by making electronics harder to access, as businesses could choose not to bring new products to market in Ontario. We want Ontarians to have access to state-of-the-art electronics. It would worsen Ontario's business climate, driving away innovation and jobs. Government shouldn't create roadblocks for consumer choice.

This bill would also affect the intellectual property of companies, and I trust the member realizes that this is actually federal government. If this bill became law, these jurisdictional issues would immediately open up Ontario's consumers and businesses to countless court challenges—challenges that would likely make it impossible to enforce the bill.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Minister. I get the feeling that that's a no, but thank you for the response.

The right to repair is a very simple concept, but it has wide-ranging implications. It's not just about mobile phones and iPads, but it's also about other sectors, like the agricultural sector. These days, farm equipment is often basically a computer on wheels, and farmers often have to take those products and send them away to get them repaired when they could have those products repaired locally. These delays do cost time and money.

Minister, as we see more automation, and globalization continues to change the way our economy operates, I think it's important that local economies and Ontarians get to fix those devices locally. It's a piece of legislation that's being proposed—which you should support—that protects the consumer, but most of all, it prepares us for the digital age.

Hon. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, again through you, I would ask the member, if he really wants to protect consumers, maybe you'd vote against the carbon tax that you're so adamant to put in.

As I've already said, this is a challenge in regard to intellectual property and jurisdiction of the federal government. Many states in the US have considered this right to repair, and not one has advanced the policy. It could also put Ontario in direct conflict with international treaties signed by the federal government that pertain to intellectual property law.

Mr. Speaker, we want to go the other way. We want to ensure that, with Ontarians, we're truly protecting them and giving them what they believe. We don't want them to get into situations where there could be liability. You repair your toaster, and at the end of the day, your house burns down—who's protecting that? Have you thought

through any of those types of implications, or is that an unintended consequence that you haven't thought through yet again?

Mr. Speaker, we're developing a provincial strategy that will actually help Ontario businesses and Ontarians and will benefit directly from our data economy while protecting the privacy and—

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

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Stephen Crawford: My question is also to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Every member of our government recognizes the importance of respecting taxpayer dollars and ensuring we are getting real value for that money. We do that by eliminating waste from government.

In December of this past year, the minister announced the government's surplus property disposition plan, which would remove unused buildings from the government's books and return them to productive use.

While the previous Liberal government may have been content to see empty buildings cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in maintenance costs, I know the minister recognizes that thousands become millions, and millions become billions.

Minister, could you inform this House on how yesterday's sale of property at 26 Grenville Street and 27 Grosvenor Street will help build local communities and deal with the \$15-billion deficit that the previous Liberal government saddled Ontario with?

Hon. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, through you, I want to thank the honourable member from Oakville, my friend and colleague, for all of his hard work for the people of Oakville.

This member is absolutely correct that the previous Liberal government allowed unused government properties to stay on the province's books for 15 years. These properties didn't just provide no value to taxpayers; they cost taxpayers over \$9.6 million per year.

We're doing government differently, Mr. Speaker. The successful sale of 26 Grenville Street and 27 Grosvenor Street will generate \$36 million for the people of Ontario, money that can be reinvested into core programs and services that matter most for the people we're given the privilege to represent. That property was costing taxpayers \$260,000 a year in operating and maintenance, with no value coming back to Ontarians. This land now, because of our action, will actually include more than 700 rental units, over 200 dedicated to affordable housing, as well as retail spaces and a new daycare.

Speaker, our government is committed to respecting the taxpayers and protecting what matters most.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the minister for that answer and for your work to respect the taxpayers of Ontario with common-sense solutions. I am proud to be

part of a government that is investing in the people of Ontario. That investment is seen across our entire government, including in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mr. Speaker, our government is making incredible investments into the housing sector here in Ontario, and we are starting with the most vulnerable, those who need it the most. Not only are we investing in housing, but we are making investments near important services like transit, schools, hospitals and daycares.

Can the minister explain how surplus land such as this will help provide much-needed housing, especially affordable housing?

Hon. Bill Walker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for Oakville for that question.

I was pleased to join Minister Walker yesterday to speak about what our government is doing to not just help save taxpayers' money, but also invest in government services and provide opportunities to have more housing when there's an incredibly bad shortage of affordable housing, especially rentals, in Ontario. Our government believes that everyone deserves to have a place to call home. It's imperative that we create the necessary environment to bring more housing to market faster and make housing more affordable.

The site that Minister Walker and I announced yesterday will be redeveloped into a mixed-use development that will have more than 700 rental units, with over 200 units becoming affordable housing, as well as retail spaces and even a daycare centre.

Our government is protecting what matters most by creating more homes and more choices for the people of Ontario.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Ms. Jill Andrew: My question is to the Acting Premier. The interlibrary loan service has been the backbone of small-town libraries in communities across Ontario. That vital service has vanished, thanks to yet another thoughtless cut in the Ford government budget.

Instead of reacting with concern, one MPP, the member for Niagara West, told concerned Ontarians to simply ask their local Conservative member to fetch the books they need.

The Southern Ontario Library Service reports that 153 libraries across Ontario received four book deliveries a week from this service. Will the Acting Premier be relieving the PC caucus from other responsibilities so they can devote themselves to delivering library books that were provided by this service?

Interjections.

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

The question is to the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Mr. Speaker, this process is about modernizing services across the province while we

protect what matters most. I don't understand the NDP's position in having a staff member drive a van around the province of Ontario dropping off books. It's odd that the NDP aren't considering their carbon footprint while this delivery program is being undertaken.

1120

As we rethink government services and modernize programs, if the southern library service used Canada Post like the north does, the delivery program could cost between \$300,000 and \$500,000, compared to the \$1.3 million that's being spent by having staff use delivery vans around the province of Ontario. It doesn't make any sense. It saves money, it's better for the environment and it's probably even faster than taking back roads from one library to the other.

Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to working with the library—

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Modernizing libraries has nothing to do with taking books away from seniors, for goodness' sake.

My question is to the Acting Premier. The Ford government likes to pretend that vital services can be replaced with phone calls and favours. It would be funny if there weren't real people across Ontario losing a vital service that they relied on. In small towns across Ontario and 47 First Nation communities across the north, it takes away a vital link. As the chair of Owen Sound's library board put it, this is "an attack against libraries."

Speaker, a library is a democratic public service and space. Will the Premier stop denying reality and restore these services now?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Once again, I have to start with what the facts are. We are spending \$1.4 million paying interest on a debt that the government has had to assume. We are spending \$40 million a day more than we are taking in in the province. There are efficient ways to be able to deliver services using Canada Post. There are alternatives.

At the end of the day, when you look at the reality of the situation and where the government stands, we are looking for transparent, sustainable ways of continuing services. The north is utilizing delivery services, and that is what the southern libraries should be doing as well. There is a solution to the problem and we will be meeting and working with the library services to ensure that the services continue.

The decision with respect to the library services cutting the interlibrary program—

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

Interjection.

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

Next question.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. Mike Harris: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Before we get

started, I just wanted to thank him for coming down to Waterloo region with parliamentary assistant Andrea Khanjin last week.

Speaker, Ontario is home to more than 30,000 species of plants, insects, fish and wildlife. While many of these species have sustainable populations, 243 are listed on the species-at-risk-in-Ontario list due to threats such as habitat loss, pollution, invasive species, and climate change and disease.

The Endangered Species Act came into effect in 2008 and has been criticized for being ineffective in its aim to protect and recover species at risk. On April 18, the minister announced our government's proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act. Since the announcement, the Prime Minister has criticized Ontario's approach to endangered species and made inaccurate statements about our intentions. Can the minister clarify for this House how these statements are factually inaccurate?

Hon. Rod Phillips: It was great to visit the member from Kitchener–Conestoga in his riding to see a state-of-the-art recycling plant. I thank him for his hospitality.

The member is correct. Over the weekend, the Prime Minister was opining on the Endangered Species Act. Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the Prime Minister read his own act, because what he failed to recognize is that the proposed and modernized species act that we are talking about, the reforms we're discussing, will ensure that Ontario's act remains stronger than the federal act.

Let me articulate a couple of reasons why. The federal act allows the Minister of the Environment to make decisions about timelines and to decide which species are endangered. Mr. Species—Mr. Speaker, in Ontario, science will remain the driving feature of which species are endangered.

Mr. Species, we have also set timelines—
Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to help the minister now. Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Speaker. It is clear that Ontario has and will continue to have stronger protection for Speakers and species at risk.

Speaker, I know that the people in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga want to ensure that the listing for species at risk remains based on science and will be happy to know that this remains the case. The Prime Minister's remarks are clearly misleading and a misrepresentation of what our government is proposing.

There have been attempts to make our proposed changes look as though we are weakening protections and ignoring our commitments when in fact we are doing the opposite. Can the minister clarify for this House what our proposed changes will accomplish?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member and Mr. Speaker. The modernized Endangered Species Act that we are proposing, the discussion paper that we have out, will ensure that science remains the basis of our assessment and will ensure, unlike the federal act, which I recommend

the Prime Minister read, that specific timelines will be met to make sure that protections are put in place.

Mr. Speaker, we are modernizing this act to make sure that, as I always talk about, we can have the balance of a healthy economy. We can protect endangered species and their habitats, but we can also have a healthy economy and make sure that job creators and others don't have to compete with important protections for endangered species.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is for the Minister of Education. Melissa Basta is a high school math teacher at Judith Nyman Secondary School in Brampton. For the last eight years, she has specialized in teaching at-risk and special-needs students at one of the few trade schools in Brampton.

Recently, Melissa along with several other teachers were issued surplus notices by their school board. The Premier and the minister have said repeatedly that no one will lose their job involuntarily because of the government's cuts to education. I believe the minister mentioned it at 10:42 a.m., so we can see that in Hansard. But Melissa wants to return to school in September to help her students achieve success. Why is the minister preventing her?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the insinuation, if you will. The fact of the matter is, we want our math teachers in class teaching math. It's a number one priority, and the fact of the matter is we also—and shop and trades and things like that. The fact of the matter is, again, we are specializing our focus on the skills that students need for the work world of today and tomorrow. Those specialized teachers that teach shop or math or STEM subjects—or arts, if you will—are very, very important in terms of the overall balance that a student needs in terms of their achievement.

We're going to be working with our school boards because, again, I'm very clear: Not one teacher will involuntarily lose their job because of our proposed changes. It's 11:28 and you can mark that. The fact of the matter is, a surplus notice—

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: So I assume Melissa Basta just doesn't exist. She's a figment of our imagination.

After being handed a pink slip, there are many things Melissa could be worrying about, but her worries were all for her students. She has first-hand experience of how one-on-one attention and exposure to new learning opportunities can help students find their place in the world. She is worried about the special-needs and at-risk students she has built relationships with. She is worried that larger class sizes and mandatory online courses will leave those students behind.

Melissa wants to know why the minister thinks it is acceptable to rip away opportunities from her students.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: What we're doing, Speaker, is modernizing education in Ontario. We're presenting so

many opportunities to give students the opportunity to learn life skills and job skills for the world of work, today and into tomorrow.

The fact of the matter is, we are doing everything that has been asked of us. We had the largest consultation last fall—72,000 people. The fact of the matter is, we are addressing absolutely what the people have been asking for. It comes to making sure that the subjects that are in the class going forward and into the future are reflecting the skills that students need, whether it be trades, whether it be science, whether it be math or life skills.

1130

SCIENCE NORTH

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. I know that our government has been putting the needs of northern Ontario first after it was neglected by the previous government for 15 years. We have made many important investments to stimulate economic growth and to create great jobs in the north.

Tourism is a critical part of northern Ontario's economy, and we have been supporting the sector since we were elected. Along the way, we are creating good jobs that make a huge difference in smaller communities.

Can the minister please tell the members of this House about yet another key investment our government has made in education-based tourism, to make a difference in northern Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook for that question. She knows, in fact she remembers, the importance of Science North—we used to call it Science Sudbury, Mr. Speaker—because it's a magnificent asset.

Frankly, many northerners didn't get access to it. That all changed about seven or eight years ago. A guy named Guy Labine, who is now the president and CEO, and I in my capacity as the Minister for FedNor, developed programs and projects that would fan out across all of northern Ontario, so people in Red Lake and people in Kenora, people in Dryden and all points in between, could get access to some of the programs.

Last week, I announced that we are investing \$1 million and creating four new jobs in THINK. It stands for the tinker, hack, innovate, network and know project. These are permanent installations in Kenora, down at the Fort Frances library technology centre. It's going to give young students an opportunity to tweak their curiosity around STEM subjects, Mr. Speaker, and we couldn't be happier out in northwestern Ontario that it's going to be—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Through you, Mr. Speaker, and back to the minister: As a former resident of northern Ontario—I was born and raised in Capreol—I am so, so proud to see this government for the people investing in northern Ontario and investing in its youth. These new

community hubs are critical for our youth, and I have no doubt that they will bring families from across Ontario to these exhibits.

Can the minister please inform the House of the important role that Science North plays in science education and tourism in communities right across northern Ontario?

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you once again to the member for Flamborough—Glanbrook for asking that question.

Since its opening by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip in 1984, Science North has been a catalyst for science education in Sudbury, Thunder Bay and countless northern and remote communities, by taking a fun and friendly approach to science education. As a one-of-a-kind attraction in Ontario's north, it welcomes many tourists and local children alike each and every day.

With this investment, we are creating and retaining good jobs, educating our young people about STEM fields and creating a unique new appeal to bring new visitors to these communities. I say with great—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: —alacrity that this investment will help more youth across Ontario explore STEM education and help tourism grow across this great province.

TREE PLANTING

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: My question is for the Acting Premier. I was surprised when the government decided to cut the 50 Million Tree Program, which aimed to plant 50 million trees across the province, creating good jobs and helping to grow our forests. I was surprised because the Conservative Party, back when they were in opposition, didn't think 50 million trees were enough. They voted unanimously in favour of the Speaker's motion to plant three times as many trees.

Speaker, when the Conservatives had the opportunity to put their words into actions, they chose instead to backtrack and cut a program they once championed. Why?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to stand and answer this question.

Mr. Speaker, our government came into office in June of last year, facing a \$15-billion deficit left by the previous government. We're working with our forestry industry to develop a strong and sustainable forestry industry in this province.

Every single year, the forestry industry already plants an average of 68 million trees across the province. That creates jobs for foresters, nurseries and tree planters. We were happy to see and learn yesterday that Forests Ontario is going to continue planting trees without the use of taxpayer dollars. This is excellent news for all taxpayers, for the forestry industry and for the government of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I had to interrupt the minister. I couldn't hear what he was saying.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Back to the Acting Premier: That is not the same program. We must do more to fight climate change. As extreme weather events become more common in this province, we need to be proactive and not simply react.

The 50 Million Tree Program is one of the easiest ways that Ontario can fight climate change. Will the Acting Premier admit that cutting the 50 Million Tree Program was wrong and reverse this bad decision?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: The simple answer is no. I'm amazed every single day, Mr. Speaker, that when the NDP ask questions, they're either defending the record of Justin Trudeau or they're defending the record of the former government. Of course, when they were the third party, the NDP continued to vote time and time again with the former Liberal government, whether it was Dalton McGuinty or Kathleen Wynne. In fact, 97% of the time, the NDP voted with the Liberals.

This is great news. The NDP should be happy that Forests Ontario is going to continue planting trees without the use of taxpayer dollars. That is great news for all taxpayers in the province of Ontario. Every single year in the province, the forestry industry is planting 68 million trees. This is something to be celebrated, so we're—

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

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Doug Downey: My question is for the magnanimous Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. Our government is working for northern Ontario, and I'd like to thank the minister for his strong support for municipalities and northerners in this Legislature.

Our government also values the contributions of other strong voices in northern Ontario, including the North-western Ontario Municipal Association. NOMA's on-going work is crucial and critical to the future of northern Ontario and to our province. NOMA advocates for positive policy changes and community improvements in the north, and it works to improve the lives of all northerners. Ontario's government for the people is proud to support NOMA and its important work, which aligns with our priorities.

Can the minister please tell the members of this House more about how our government shares NOMA's commitment to northern Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I was pleased to be in Thunder Bay last week, a beautiful city and the gateway to north-western Ontario. No less than five ministers—a record, as I understand it—showed up to the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association. We also met with business leaders who were quite outspoken about the carbon tax and the NDP's support for it, but their enthusiasm was for our

investments in jobs and the economy in northern and northwestern Ontario.

Wendy Landry, the president of NOMA, said, "Forestry plays a significant role for the economy in northwestern Ontario. It's encouraging that the government recognizes this and is looking to create a strategy to foster innovation while reducing red tape. This paves the way to identify new methods to promote made-in-Ontario wood products." Wendy knows, like we do, that there's a tremendous opportunity in northern Ontario. We're going to continue to build a strong economy, because a strong northern Ontario is a strong Ontario.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a number of points of order, but the member for Brantford—Brant informed me he had one. I'll let him go first.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome to the people's House Krystyna Brooks and her son Robert from my riding. She's a paramedic. She has dedicated her life to taking care of the people of Ontario and, arguably, we served on the fire department together for years. She taught me everything I needed to know about helping people in those situations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure for me to welcome Dorothy McCabe to Queen's Park today, mother of page Zoe.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, Speaker. On a point of order: I do want to correct the record on behalf of the member for Toronto—St. Paul's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto—St. Paul's on a point of order.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome the CEO of Girl Guides of Canada, Jill Zelmanovits, to Queen's Park, to the Legislative Assembly, to her House. I'd also like to say a big welcome and congratulations to Helen, her daughter, who is a page from my fantastic colleague the MPP for Parkdale—High Park's riding.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the same issue?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You can't correct another member's record.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It was an inaccuracy that was referenced in the House. It was a—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House is in recess until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Niagara West will sit down.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DAPHNE CLARKE

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: I wish to speak today about some changes to the post-secondary system in our province, our colleges and universities, that this government is making. They've recently announced that they're cutting \$700 million in student financial aid to college and university students. There's that, which causes great concern, but the other concern is that the government is also going to have 60% of the operating grant from the government to our colleges and universities tied to metrics. In other words, the government could withhold up to 60% of the operating funding of our colleges and universities.

The question is, why would they arm themselves with such a big bat in order to control our colleges and universities when the research clearly shows that this type of strategic mandate, or this type of funding, actually is detrimental to the quality of education that students receive? In fact, I'll quote from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, which is a crown agency. They say that "research on outcomes-based funding"—such as the government is doing—"of higher education has shown little evidence that these policies are associated with improved student outcomes."

The government is arming themselves with this enormous bat—60% of the operating funding for colleges and universities. They haven't said why they want to do this. It's actually going to be detrimental to the quality of education that students receive, and it jeopardizes and makes long-term planning for those colleges and universities virtually impossible.

PUBLIC HEROES AWARDS

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I would like to thank the Intercultural Dialogue Institute for hosting the 2019 Public Heroes Awards. It recognizes the dedication and excellence of individual members or team members of police, fire and paramedic services in the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP, the OPP, Ornge and Corrections Ontario.

I was honoured to be invited onto the selection committee. I admit that it was not an easy selection, because all of them had put themselves forward selflessly to protect us. A total of 12 awards were presented. As the MPP for Richmond Hill, I am happy to see Sergeant Robyn Kassam receive one of the awards.

I also had the honour of presenting the lifetime achievement award to Chief Jennifer Evans. She has served Peel Regional Police since 1983 and has done a lot of different things for the organization. In 2012, she was appointed as the chief of Peel Regional Police.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our brave men and women in uniform for protecting us. Our government values your contribution. You have our full support. We will better equip you to keep our communities safe.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We lost a dear friend recently down my way. Daphne Clarke was a community activist and a true trailblazer for racialized women. She came to Windsor from Jamaica in 1980.

She was a registered nurse who opened our first Black history bookstore. As a reporter many years ago, Daphne convinced me that I needed to buy and read a book on Mary Ann Shadd, who was a journalist and an abolitionist, the first woman publisher in Canada and the first Black publisher in North America. That deal cemented our friendship.

Daphne founded the non-profit Windsor Women Working with Immigrant Women. She was a former president of the Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor group and the Essex County Black Historical Society. She was active with the Windsor West Indian Association, the Underground Railroad Monument Committee, Windsor's multicultural council, the Carrousel of the Nations, St. Alphonsus Church, the Urban Alliance and so many other worthy organizations in our community.

Daphne Clarke was a strong woman who led by example. She was compassionate and had a heart of gold. For her many volunteer efforts, she was recognized many times by a grateful community. In 2016, she was given one of the 100 Black Canadian women awards. That added to her Queen Elizabeth Diamond and Golden Jubilee medals, her Governor General Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers, her leadership award from the Windsor and District Black Coalition, the volunteer recognition award from the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, as well as many others, including, in 1992, the commemorative medal for volunteers as we celebrated Canada's 125th anniversary.

As her dear friend, the author and historian Irene Moore Davis, wrote on Daphne's passing, "When an elder dies, a library burns."

Rest in peace, Daphne Clarke. You've set an example for us all.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'm happy to be able to rise in the House today and tell my constituents about Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act. I'm so excited because when I first ran for the member of provincial Parliament for Niagara West, I knocked on thousands and thousands of doors. At door after door, people were pleading for relief from their soaring hydro bills. It was by far the biggest issue during my by-election in November 2016.

Under the previous Liberal government, that never happened. They destroyed our electricity system through misguided ideological policies that forced families and businesses to pay far too much for hydro bills. They tried to fool the people of Ontario with the Fair Hydro Plan, which hid the true costs of the program from taxpayers. But voters saw through the Liberal government's scheme, and this is why they elected our government to restore transparency to the provincial electricity system.

Speaker, what a relief it is that we're delivering on the promise by proposing legislation that ensures that everyone in Ontario will not only see the true cost of electricity on their hydro bills but will also save \$400 million in servicing costs for ratepayers. After being elected, we immediately cancelled 791 renewable energy contracts, saving the people of Ontario almost \$800 million. We repealed the Green Energy Act to ensure that expensive renewable energy projects will never again be forced into unwilling communities. It's all part of our plan to restore Ontario's energy advantage that was lost under 15 years of Liberal mismanagement.

We have a long road ahead, but I can look my constituents in the eye and say, "Help is on the way."

MINISTRY HIRING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to give this government a quick tip as to how they can help constituents of mine in northern Ontario. Many of the communities in Nickel Belt are very small. They are run by a local services board. If people do not pay their taxes, the land goes back to the crown; it goes back to government. So here you have, in the middle of Gogama, in the middle of Foleyet, a piece of land that used to have a house on it. It has water, it has sewers, it has electricity, it's on a paved road and it has street lights—but you are not allowed to sell it. Why? Because the district office of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is so understaffed that they cannot handle the selling of this land.

Here you have a government who talks about being pro-business and here you have this government who talks about cutting red tape. Well, you have a prime example. You have a lot in the middle of a little community that people want to buy because it's located just beside the gas station, across the street from the LCBO. It's a perfect place to open up a new business. The land is owned by the crown, and nobody is allowed to buy it because the crown doesn't have enough staff in the district office because this government froze hiring in the public sector. I have a tip for them: This is not the way to grow the north.

1510

WILLIAM WINEGARD

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It is an honour to rise today to pay tribute to a real Canadian hero. Dr. William Winegard, a World War II veteran, president of the University of Guelph, MP and cabinet minister, husband and father, passed away on January 31.

Everyone I know in Guelph respected, appreciated and loved Bill. As a dedicated Rotarian, Bill lived the Rotary motto of "Service Above Self." He believed deeply in our shared responsibility to each other. He was always willing to volunteer and advocate for the public good. He especially loved reading to young students and advocating for veterans.

Mr. Speaker, the two of us had an opportunity to join members of the Guelph-Wellington community to pay

tribute to Bill's memory a couple of weeks ago at a beautiful service hosted by the University of Guelph. It is clear that Dr. Winegard will be missed but not forgotten. He will always be loved by those he touched, especially his family, whom I offer my deepest condolences. Your husband, father and grandfather, Dr. William Winegard, will leave, and has left, a remarkable legacy, and he will always be remembered in our hearts and our minds.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Aris Babikian: On April 24, 2019, Armenians in Ontario, Canada and around the world commemorated the 104th anniversary of the Armenian genocide that took place in the Ottoman Empire.

Last Sunday, I was proud to attend commemoration ceremonies with our Minister of the Environment, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, in addition to many fellow MPPs. We stood shoulder to shoulder with Ontario's vibrant Armenian community on an issue of principle and importance, not just to Armenians, but also to everyone who believes in human rights and justice. The Armenian National Committee of Toronto organized the event.

One hundred and four years ago, Armenians, alongside Greeks, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syriacs, were massacred, deported from their homelands, brutalized, and sadly, their communities were decimated. One and a half million Armenians were killed during the genocide. The trauma of that horrific period remains with the Armenian community today.

Sadly, to this day, some have continued to deny this dark period in the history of these communities, which has magnified the pain and the suffering that continues to be carried by children and grandchildren of survivors like myself.

Finally, I am proud to be part of a government and a caucus that stands up in solidarity with victims of genocides everywhere.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to send my heartfelt thanks and support for all those who have come from around the province today to fight for public health care: paramedics, nurses, PSWs and many more concerned Ontarians. We are with you, we are your voice here and we'll never let up on our fight for publicly funded, publicly run and publicly delivered health care.

Ford promised that people of this province would never have to pay out of their pocket for health care, yet that's exactly what he's making people do if they leave this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to interrupt the member and remind him that we refer to other members by their riding name or by a ministerial title, if applicable.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that, thank you—even for a short day trip, and go to the United States.

Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that the Canada Health Act states that residents will be covered by OHIP when they leave this province—that’s in the act—this PC government is removing that vital OHIP coverage for people who leave the province. This isn’t a few people; this is literally thousands, including in my riding. What was the Minister of Health’s response? They can purchase private health insurance if they leave Ontario. People already pay health care insurance through their taxes to this government. The PC government can pretend that people don’t depend on their OHIP coverage, but they need to listen to the people on the lawn—20,000 here today.

Ontarians will not accept the Conservatives going forward with this American-style move that puts profit before people and makes it a “no cash, no care” situation. If you’re a resident and taxpayer of this province, then you should get the health care coverage you already pay for, whether that’s at home—

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

DOCTORS’ DAY

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: May 1 is Doctors’ Day in Ontario. It is a day to recognize the significant contribution of doctors in providing safe, effective and quality care to patients and families across Ontario. I want to say thank you to all the doctors for making the health and well-being of Ontarians your life’s work.

Here in Ontario, we are grateful to have some of the best and most dedicated doctors in the world. As a nurse, I have many mentors and friends among my doctor colleagues. They have been instrumental in my nursing formation, often teaching me my vital nursing skills.

Our government’s priority continues to focus our health care investments where they will have the most impact: on direct front-line care. We want to support the important work being done by our hard-working and dedicated doctors, who provide patients with high-quality care each and every day across this province. By putting patients at the centre of what doctors do, they demonstrate each and every day what it means to deliver high-quality care. Together, we will strengthen Ontario’s public health care system and centre it around the needs of patients, families and caregivers. Thank you to all doctors.

ATTACKS IN SRI LANKA

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: We were all very devastated to hear of yet another unprecedented act of terror that occurred in our world on Easter Sunday, this time in Colombo, Sri Lanka. I want to also mention the horrific shooting that happened this past week in a synagogue. It truly grieves me to hear of all these senseless attacks on innocent people. No one should ever have to fear attending any place of worship. Places of worship are to be safe; no one should feel any other way.

Today, I stand here in this House with my colleagues to condemn these heinous attacks and offer our sincerest sympathies to the victims and their families. Our role as

MPPs is to bring communities together and promote peace. All religions and moral compasses forbid all forms of terror and extremism, including these heinous attacks that happened last week. All religions place a strong emphasis on especially protecting all places of worship, including and not limited to churches, synagogues, temples and mosques.

The loss of over 250 innocent worshippers and civilians during one of the most sacred days of the year for a Christian is unimaginable. The terrorist attacks that have happened these past few months are an affront to humanity. We must all come together to create peace and unite in solidarity to show that such acts of terrorism are not welcome in our city, province, country or world. Violence and hatred is never the answer.

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

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated April 30, 2019, of 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.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Ms. Kusendova from the Standing Committee on General Government presents the committee’s report as follows and moves its adoption.

Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 87, An Act to amend various statutes related to energy/Projet de loi 87, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l’énergie.

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

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

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

The division bells rang from 1520 to 1540.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe all the members are in their seats.

Ms. Kusendova has moved that the report of the Standing Committee on General Government be adopted. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Schreiner, Mike
Arthur, Ian	Hillier, Randy	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Lalonde, Marie-France	Singh, Gurratan
Burch, Jeff	Mantha, Michael	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Coteau, Michael	Miller, Paul	Tabuns, Peter
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Morrison, Suze	Wynne, Kathleen O.
French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 61; the nays are 23.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 10, 2019, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**TAMIL GENOCIDE EDUCATION
WEEK ACT, 2019****LOI DE 2019 SUR LA SEMAINE
DE SENSIBILISATION AU GÉNOCIDE
DES TAMOULS**

Mr. Thanigasalam moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to proclaim Tamil Genocide Education Week / Projet de loi 104, Loi proclamant la Semaine de sensibilisation au génocide des Tamouls.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Scarborough–Rouge River like to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: This May, the Tamil community will be remembering the lives lost in the Tamil genocide perpetrated by the Sri Lankan state. At this time, the passing of the Tamil Genocide Education Week bill by the government of Ontario will give them some hope. The Tamil community in Ontario have suffered mental, physical and emotional trauma from the genocide. By recognizing the Tamil genocide, it will allow for the community to begin a healing process and continue to contribute to Ontario.

Education is the most powerful weapon in the world. By educating, we can change the world. The aim is to educate Ontarians about not only the Tamil genocide but also others across the world. Through education—

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

PETITIONS**AUTISM TREATMENT**

Mr. Ian Arthur: I have another pile of petitions entitled “Support Ontario Families with Autism.” These just keep coming in.

“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;

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

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

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Emily to hand in.

HOMEOPATHY

Mr. Toby Barrett: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government is creating a new super Ontario health system;

“Whereas the College of Physicians and Surgeons state, in increasing numbers, patients are looking to complementary medicine for answers to complex medical problems, strategies for improved wellness, or relief from acute medical symptoms. Patients may seek advice or treatment

from Ontario physicians, or from other health care providers. Patients have the right to make health care decisions that accord with their own values, wishes and preferences. This includes decisions to pursue complementary/alternative medicine either as an adjunct to conventional medicine, or instead of conventional medicine;

“Whereas the results demonstrate that homeopathy can effectively integrate or, in some cases, substitute allopathic medicine;

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

“Petition in support of homeopaths, regulated health professionals mandated to be included in each and every team being created for the new Ontario health system.”

I affix my signature along with the other signatures contained herein.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Tom Rakovec: 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 students. I’m going to be signing this and I’m going to be giving it to page Leo.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a stack of petitions here from the Concerned Residents Coalition.

“Whereas we believe that Ontario must place due priority on our:

“—access to clean drinking water as a fundamental right;

“—protection of natural water recharge systems, surface water courses, and groundwater resources; and

1550

“Whereas aggregate extraction:

“—is the fourth-largest water-taking industry in the Grand River watershed, utilizing 5% of all water taken in

the Grand River watershed for aggregate washing and dewatering;

“—risks contaminating groundwater through linkages with surface water;

“—risks negative impacts on area private and municipal wells and nearby wetlands;

“—risks permanently changing the natural environment including fish habitat; and

“—aggregate companies pay no provincial fees for water-taking;

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

“(1) Ensure that the issuance of permits to take water prioritizes community water supply needs;

“(2) Protect the crucial water recharging moraines, including the Paris Galt moraine, by prohibiting aggregate mining in these areas;

“(3) Protect groundwater by prohibiting below-water-table extraction in the vicinity of private wells and rural municipalities;

“(4) Apply water-taking permit fees which represent a fair share of provincial and municipal costs to manage, administer and plan water-taking programs; and

“(5) Stop the hidden quarry in Rockwood in the Paris Galt moraine as our community has scientific evidence that significant impacts to our surface and groundwater systems and the natural environment will occur if this application is approved.”

I support this petition and will be signing it, and I ask page Rishi to bring it to the table.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Just before we do further petitions, please, government members, try to contain your jubilation. Thank you.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition called “Affordable Housing.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition entitled “Stop the Unfair Tolling of Highways in Durham Region.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Highway 412 and the planned Highway 418 are community highways that are primarily used for local traffic travelling to and from Durham region; and

“Whereas Highway 412 and the planned Highway 418 are the only north-south 400-series highways in the entire greater Toronto and Hamilton area that are tolled; and

“Whereas tolls on the 412 have left the highway underutilized, resulting in additional congestion across residential roadways in the region; and

“Whereas residents across Durham region have been advocating for the removal of these unfair tolls since their introduction;

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

“Immediately remove the tolls from the 412 highway and protect the planned 418 highway from any future tolls.”

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s my pleasure to present this petition for the first time, on behalf of the students from Brantford, Wilfrid Laurier and Waterloo.

“Increase Grants Not Loans, Access for All, Protect Student Rights.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas students in Ontario pay some of the highest tuition fees in the country and carry the heaviest debt loads, even with the recently announced 10% reduction; and

“Whereas many students will now be forced to take on more loans rather than previously available non-repayable grants; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has failed to take action on the chronic underfunding of colleges and universities; and

“Whereas students must have an autonomous voice that is independent of administration and government to advocate on our behalf; and

“Whereas the proposed ‘Student Choice Initiative’ undermines students’ ability to take collective action;

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

“—provide more grants, not loans;

“—eliminate tuition fees for all students;

“—increase public funding for public education;

“—protect students’ independent voices; and

“—defend the right to organize” on campus.

It’s my pleasure to support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and give it to page Helen.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have petitions coming in from all over the province. This is from Christine Bell from St. Catharines, and she has signed a petition:

“Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition entitled “Fund Our Schools.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas too many children are going to school in buildings without proper heating or cooling, with leaky roofs or stairways overdue for repair;

“Whereas after years of Conservative and Liberal governments neglecting schools, the backlog of needed repairs has reached \$16 billion;

“Whereas during the 2018 election, numerous members of the Conservative Party, including the current Minister of Education, pledged to provide adequate, stable funding for Ontario’s schools;

“Whereas less than three weeks into the legislative session,” the Premier “and the Conservative government have already cut \$100 million in much-needed school repairs, leaving our children and educators to suffer in classrooms that are unsafe and unhealthy;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Education to immediately reverse the decision to cut \$100 million in school repair funding, and invest the \$16 billion needed to tackle the repair backlog in Ontario’s schools.”

Of course, I support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with page Mary.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“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 fully support this petition. I’ll be affixing my name to it and giving it to page Jedd.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to present this petition on a day when we had so many join us on the lawns at Queen’s Park. This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Create a Minimum Long-Term-Care Standard.

“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 enthusiastically support this petition, will affix my signature and send it with Caleah.

1600

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Again, I have hundreds of signatures on this petition, and this is from Anne Saltel of Sioux Lookout.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I recognize the member for London–Fanshawe on a point of order.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to make a point of order to introduce a guest here in the Legislature. I would like to introduce Julie Dale. She is the mother of Cameron Dale, who was page captain yesterday. I was fortunate enough to meet her at the cafeteria yesterday. She is very excited that her son Cameron is here to serve as a page in the Legislature. Welcome, Julie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): And of course I could add to that that Ms. Dale lives in Toronto–Danforth, grew up in Windsor and is the younger sister of my good friend Tom Taylor, one of the best cameramen who ever worked for the CBC. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

ANNUAL REPORT, PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: the 2019 annual report from the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2019 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2019, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I recognize the member for Markham–Stouffville.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to rise today to speak on a very important part of what this government has been doing. But it's not just a part of what the government has been doing over the last year; it's also really the start of what we have been fighting for as Progressive Conservatives and Ontarians over the last 15 years: to start to move Ontario into a different direction, into a new direction.

As I looked at not only the budget—of course, we're speaking on the motion today and the speech that was given by the Minister of Finance—I looked at it perhaps a bit differently than some of the other members did. For me, the highlights of it, of course, were on three different themes: affordability, stability and prosperity. I'll touch on all of those themes by highlighting some of the areas that mean the most to me and mean the most to the people of my community.

When we were fighting an election—actually, going back before that, when we were in opposition and we were fighting against some of the policies that were being brought forward by the then-Liberal-NDP coalition government from 2003 to 2018, we fought very hard. We fought as a party because we didn't want to see the types of policies that we knew would destroy the province of Ontario, because we had been down this road before.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this might sound strange: As bad as it was when we took over and the people gave us the honour of serving again now—and let's be clear, it's bad; we've heard the \$15-billion deficit, we've heard the amount of debt—it really crystallizes when Ontarians have come to us again to solve the fiscal problems.

It has been very interesting to hear some of the debate here, in particular some of the questions and comments and some of the speeches of the members of the official opposition, because, as bad as this is—and it is; we've got a lot of work ahead of us—imagine, of course, the fiscal situation that faced the then-Harris government back in 1995, which assumed a deficit of \$11 billion. But we worked our way out of it then, and we will work our way out of it now.

Countless numbers of speeches have come from members on this side, and we've even heard from some of the members—to be fair, some of the members of the NDP talk about what we inherited, and we did inherit quite the mess: a \$15-billion deficit—a massive debt. What we saw was spending that increased extraordinarily during the last number of years, in particular during the last five or six years, of the government.

I know that the official opposition gets a little perturbed when we talk about the fact that they were in coalition for so many of those years, but let's not forget that part of that coalition was a minority government. I know that members of the Progressive Conservative caucus stood up day after day after day after day to try to put an end to the suffering that taxpayers were enduring under the Liberal government at the time, and day after day after day after day, the opposition stood up with them. They stood up with them, they propped them up, they kept them in power and did everything that they could to make sure that they would win an election in 2014 so that they could continue on adding on and piling on debt to the province of Ontario.

Why is that important? Why is it important, colleagues? When we talk about—and I know the opposition gets upset when we talk about debts and deficit. It stops us from being able to do the things, as the minister said, that matter most to the people of Ontario. This budget starts to put us back into the direction of not only making important investments—and I'll touch on some of those—but also putting us on track so that future generations can actually also strive to have a better Ontario than what we inherited, Mr. Speaker.

We talked about, of course, the \$15-billion deficit. We talked about the rise in the overall debt. This budget brings us back into balance. Now, I will say this: I'm perhaps more of a fiscal hawk than others. I will be honest, Mr. Speaker: I perhaps would have liked to see the budget come into balance a little bit quicker. But the Premier and the Minister of Finance helped me and the rest of my caucus—those of us who might have had different ideas—understand that taking \$15 billion out of the economy right now, this quickly, when the challenges that Ontario was facing—in particular, trading challenges coming from our friends down south, Brexit and some of the issues that they're facing in other parts of the world—probably wouldn't be a good idea. In particular, I think what struck me the most and what helped bring me onside to appreciating why we had to take a slower approach to bringing us into balance were the areas that we're focusing on: health care, education, transit and transportation, and, ultimately, affordability.

Why are those important? When you look at health care, during the election it struck me that my riding hadn't seen a long-term-care bed built in years—in years. One of the homes that was actually in the riding of the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill had a waiting list where, if you put your name on the waiting list now, in 82 years you might get a spot. Imagine that: an 82-year waiting list to get a long-term-care spot. Our pages needn't have applied because they weren't going to get in. That's how bad it had become. And why? Because we didn't have the money to make investments. So we've decided that we're going to take our time, we're going to bring ourselves back into balance and we're going to start to make those investments.

Since we've been elected, we're seeing that: over 500 long-term care beds in my riding. It's something that I'm very, very proud of. It's not just the work that I, as a

member of Parliament, or the Minister of Finance and my colleagues have done; it's the fact that we have long-term-care institutions that work so hard and that, even despite the lack of investment over the last 15 years, were ready and prepared. It shows how ready they were to receive the funding, get the funding and put a plan in action, and that's what we've done. Colleagues, we should all be proud of that. We should all be proud of that, because we're starting to make changes and starting to see things happening.

The budget also, in terms of health care, made other important announcements. We talked about modernizing our health care system and ending hallway health care. We have a plan that the minister has brought forward that will have a quantum of care that will bring everybody into the health care system, that will alleviate the tension and the stress that people feel when they get sick. That's a good thing. We're finally making those investments to modernize our health care system.

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It's a health care system we should be very proud of because, as I've said time and time again, people aren't upset by the type of care they get. By and large, they're proud of our health care system. But what they get aggravated with is trying to access that system. Where should parents go, or their parents or their grandparents? How do you get home care? How do you apply for a long-term-care bed? How do you access services at a hospital? These are the things that frustrate people, and we are taking steps through the new health care vision of the Minister of Health to change that and to finally take away that stress. We should all be proud of that, because we spend billions of dollars on health care. I'm sure that when the Progressive Conservative government of John Robarts brought in public health care for the people of Ontario, he probably couldn't have imagined how far we would have come and the good things that it would have meant.

One of the things I'm proud of most in this budget is that we're also bringing in dental care for seniors, and that's hugely important. You cannot overestimate how important that is. We're making those investments because we're putting Ontario back on a path of prosperity, and that's a good thing.

We've talked about education, and the minister has been very clear on this. There are some changes coming in education. I've talked ad nauseam. I'm sure we're all frustrated hearing from me how I have to spend a lot of money as a parent and how I sit at the Mathnasium in my riding with a number of parents who are frustrated that their kids aren't doing well in math. Well, we're making those changes, but we've also said, "Look, we know," as the member for Oshawa tabled a petition earlier today, "that schools need repair." This budget does that. It talks about the need to make repairs to our schools, to build new schools. I'm proud of the fact that the minister agreed with my community and will be funding a new school in the Cornell part of the riding. So we're making those types of investments.

You talk about transit and transportation. I've talked about it a lot since I've been here. I talked about it when I

was a federal member of Parliament; I talked about it as a candidate. In particular, the people in southeastern Markham, in the Cornell area, in the Box Grove area, have been waiting for access to public transportation for decades. We build 300,000 homes and then we leave them without access to a subway, we leave them without access to all-day GO trains, we leave them with roads that are in a state of disrepair, and we do it for years. This budget addresses that, finally. It's not just about the transit and transportation investments that we're making—and you've all heard the numbers, so I'm not going to tell you about the numbers. They're all in the budget, and they are great. But it's about where and how we are making these investments. We're making the investments in the Scarborough subway, not just for the people of Scarborough who need access and who have been waiting for years, but so the people in southeastern Markham will have that access to high-speed public transportation like a subway, like a light rail. They'll finally get that access, and we're doing that.

It's about roads and bridges, and we're doing that as well, because we have to recognize the fact that if Ontario is to prosper, it's going to do it by increasing opportunities for trade. When cars and trucks and when our small, medium and large job creators spend all day in traffic and in gridlock, that hurts our economy. So there are a lot of good things that we are doing on that front.

When I talk about affordability, Mr. Speaker, we all hear this—I know I cannot be the only member of provincial Parliament who is hearing from taxpayers saying that we could not go on the way we have, that we had to start investing in people. By investing in people, it doesn't mean taxing them more and it doesn't mean a new program that they can't access. It means leaving more money in their pocket. It has been extraordinarily frustrating over the last few days—I will admit to my frustration—hearing the NDP talk about governments losing revenue as though the taxpayer is nothing more than a source of revenue for the government. That's wrong. They work hard. They get up; they wait for transit; they work all day. They come back at 7 or 8 o'clock at night. They don't mind doing their part, but they want government also to do its part. So when I hear the members opposite talk about, "You're losing revenue streams; you're losing sources of revenues," I think of the parents in my riding who tell me that they can't afford to put money aside for their retirement. I look at the parents in my riding who are frustrated that they have a federal Liberal government who took away credits for sports, who took away credits for transit and transportation, who took away credits for culture and arts—the things that would have helped them be able to access these programs. They are frustrated by a carbon tax that they can't afford. They get frustrated and they get angry, and they're looking to us to be able to not only live within our means but to help them make these types of investments.

We can't look at our small, medium and large job creators and we can't look at families and just say, "You're just a source of helping government fund its services."

And what is very frustrating—it's frustrating, but we move on. It is what it is. What has been frustrating is to hear some of the debate that we've gotten from the members opposite. We have had an attack on our service industry by the members opposite—a full-blown attack on the service industry. They will talk about booze. You can't talk about booze. They say, "All the government does is talk about booze." But what is that industry, and what does it mean?

I know that a lot of my colleagues here on both sides of the House were probably excited by the fact that the Raptors are playing and the Toronto Maple Leafs were doing well, and that the Toronto Blue Jays have a lot of exciting things happening. But when you go into bars and restaurants, you see action and activity. You see service people working, paying taxes. You see people eating at restaurants. As opposed to being ashamed of that, we should celebrate that.

I've heard members from Niagara Falls and St. Catharines talk about modernizing how alcohol is distributed, the hours of operation, and suggesting that somehow that's a bad thing. Well, it's not. It's not a bad thing, especially in areas that rely so heavily on tourism to fund their operations for their families. That's part of it. As a government that is completely responsible for how alcohol is distributed, of course we're going to talk about it in the context of our budget. To not do so would be to set aside billions of dollars in revenue and billions of dollars in economic activity, would be to turn your back on those people who work in the industry, and would be to turn your back on the craft brewery industry that has become so alive in this province. We're not willing to do that. We want to help them prosper.

Why is it important ultimately to bring your budget back into balance? We heard a petition today about the 407, and I heard the member for Niagara Falls talk about the 407 yesterday. Colleagues, why do we have a tolled 407? Why do we have a tolled 407? Now, if you listen to the opposition, they'll tell you that it's Mike Harris's fault.

Ms. Catherine Fife: He sold it.

Mr. Paul Calandra: There you go: Mike Harris sold it. But why do we have a tolled 407? Because Bob Rae—in the one time that the NDP were given the honour of serving, they ran out of money. They had nothing left, so they couldn't afford to build a road. So what did he do?

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Yes, it is. He tolled the 407. The only parties to toll roads in this province have been the NDP and the Liberals. They're the only two parties, and it's the same story: Bankrupt the province; toll the road. Bankrupt the province; toll the road. That is what they have done.

When you look at our green energy programs, what have they done? Bankrupt the province and put it on the backs of the ratepayers. They hate to hear this. They hate to hear it. We talked about green energy. They hate to hear it. We talked about green energy, and they just—colleagues, they just voted against opening up and making the Fair Hydro Plan transparent. They voted against that.

So when we talk about the Liberal-NDP coalition, there it is. It can't be more vibrant. It is right there. They voted against the one thing that Ontario taxpayers will be paying for for many years. It's the same story because when they brought forward—now they're all saying, "We're investing in green energy." Now Saskatchewan and Alberta are paying three cents. Well, what did we hear when they were crafting these plans to bankrupt the province of Ontario? What did we hear? We heard, "Look, it's going to create thousands of jobs. Just listen to people like the Suzuki Foundation; they'll tell you how to do it." And what happened? We lost jobs—thousands and thousands of jobs.

We've come to a point where the province is struggling; we're struggling. One of the richest jurisdictions in the world is Ontario. When you look at the advantages that this province has: the proximity to a huge market in the United States; what should be a vibrant manufacturing sector; one of the most educated people, thanks to a Progressive Conservative government and Bill Davis, who brought in the college system—but how did we seize on that? We didn't, because government ruled exclusively by ideology across. It didn't look at what was important to the people of Ontario. And now, what we are doing is untangling that.

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As a government, you don't want to have to come in and untangle everything the previous government does. You don't want to do that. But when you have a government that has almost bankrupted the people of Ontario and you have an opposition party whose only attack is to smear—we heard it earlier today from the member for Niagara. The member for St. Paul's, I think, referenced a letter about some library funding—based on a fake letter. Did the member apologize? No, absolutely not. The tone of the debate that we've been hearing from the members opposite isn't about how you can balance the budget and reduce taxes. It's about the fact that they're upset we're not spending fast enough. It's about the fact that we're cutting taxes and we're leaving more money back in the taxpayers' pockets.

Well, that just doesn't work. It doesn't work for the people of Ontario. That's why we are making the changes that we are making. And finally, we're moving in a direction where we can afford to make investments. We're doing it a bit slower than I would have liked, but I understand. I understand the need to do it, because I'm proud of the fact that I have long-term-care beds in my riding, which I wouldn't have had had we moved as quickly as I would have liked. I'm proud that there's going to be a new school in my riding, which we would not have been able to do had we balanced the budget sooner. So although I'm a bit of a fiscal hawk, I understand why we made the decisions we are making.

Again, I say to the opposition this: Look, I understand. If you don't like something that's in the budget, then fight for it, but fight for it based on policy. Tell us what it is. What tax are you going to increase to make up for the spending you want to do? Tell us exactly where you would increase spending. What programs that we brought in are

you going to cut? What will you do? Don't just drive-by smear, because you do a disservice to this House. You do a disservice to the people of Ontario, and they expect better. They expect better from their members of provincial Parliament and they expect better from this House. Have disagreements; if you don't like something, then fight for what you want and do it in this place.

I am extraordinarily proud that finally we're coming back, we're bringing the budget back into balance, and then we can have a fulsome discussion on how the heck we're going to pay that \$340-billion debt. But let's first get the budget—

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Reading over this budget, there's a variety of concerns across the board. We see concerns in respect to the cuts to education, the cuts to health care. We see the fact that this budget is actually not putting the priorities of the people first. But one of the most fundamental issues with this budget is the fact that it threatens the very foundation upon which our democracy rests. When we look at the strength of our democracy throughout Ontario, throughout Canada, it's founded on the rule of law, the fact that people can stand up to government, that they can challenge government, that they can hold government accountable.

But this budget threatens that. It threatens it with schedule 17, with the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act, which repeals the Proceedings Against the Crown Act and replaces it with the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act.

What does this do? What does this repeal actually do? What is this change threatening? It threatens people's democratic right to hold this government accountable in a court of law, the very place that we have—if we have an issue with government, we take it up with government in the judicial system. But this very foundation, this very right, this very possibility to hold government accountable is now being threatened.

What are the results? If we're dissatisfied with government, if government puts forth policies that threaten the lives of Ontarians, it is our right to hold government accountable, as in situations like Walkerton. When we have a gross, gross lack of diligence, negligence, which hurt thousands of Ontarians—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It killed people.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: It killed people throughout this province. When we see issues like that, what we have—what we need—in those contexts is the judiciary. We have the court system. We have the legal system to hold government accountable. When we threaten that and with the stroke of a pen we take it away, all of a sudden the province becomes above the law. That is not how government should act, and that is not how democratic systems are upheld. They're upheld through the rule of law and through the judicial system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I wish to correct my record. I said, "Further debate." Obviously, I meant "Questions and comments."

Questions and comments? The member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's a pleasure to see you in the chair.

I must confess that I find it extremely difficult to be able to follow the member from Markham—Stouffville because his arguments are always so solid and right on. So to be able to add anything to that I think would be somewhat difficult.

But I do have to take issue with the member from Brampton East. What was so interesting was that the member from Markham—Stouffville actually asked the opposition to have an idea, to have a vision, to see what we could correct in the bill, but in the comments to that, again, we just see what was termed by the member a "smear campaign" against our government. The comments about schedule 17, despite our corrections to that by the Attorney General, comments like "threatening the lives of Ontarians": Mr. Speaker, that just does nothing to raise the level of debate.

Moving on from that—I can't leave this alone. Just to go back to the budget itself, I have to put in a shameless plug for my own little bit of this budget. Therefore, I would like to just talk about something that's near to my heart, and that is the support of those with post-traumatic stress disorder. Many in Ontario suffer from PTSD. They might be first responders or nurses or doctors, corrections workers or parole officers, among many others. The people that work in these positions perform vital jobs. Many of them do it with little thanks. That's why I'm so glad to see the measures included in this bill that go towards supporting both Ontario's first responders and those with PTSD. I hope that little tidbit, of itself, will be enough that the opposition will vote in favour of our budget.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's always entertaining to hear the member from Markham—Stouffville talk about responsible government; meanwhile, his government is downloading responsibilities onto municipalities.

I have here in my hand, hot off the press, a statement from Mayor Cam Guthrie, chair of LUMCO, representing 28 mayors and 67% of Ontario's population. Let me read a little bit of what these 28 mayors have to say:

"Big-city mayors from across Ontario are extremely concerned that the government of Ontario is engaging in downloading by stealth—implementing funding and governance changes to municipalities without any consultation, after cities have already approved our budgets.

"This amounts to millions of dollars per year in funding reductions to vital, front-line services including public health, policing, library services, child care, tourism, and flood management. This is on top of a cap on Ontario gas tax funding and ongoing uncertainty with major changes to ambulance services. The government of Ontario is effectively forcing municipalities to consider tax increases or service cuts to absorb the download in services it has proposed.

“The first line in” the finance minister’s “budget speech indicated the government would not raise taxes. The budget paper explicitly says that changes and costs need to be sustainable.... There is only one taxpayer.” How often have we heard that? “It is disingenuous to say that the changes are sustainable, if municipalities are left to consider how to make up the shortfalls.”

They go on to say, “We call on the government of Ontario to postpone the implementation of these funding cuts to at least 2020, to allow for proper discussion with municipalities and local residents. We call on the government of Ontario to be transparent about its intentions and engage with cities before downloading more services.”

Shame on—

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

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Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: In budget 2019, our government is protecting what matters most. Our government of Ontario recognized that—to protect a world-class health care and education system that puts people at the centre of decision-making.

I got an opportunity to speak to young families, seniors, small business owners. Young families are excited about the new child care tax credit, Mr. Speaker, a tax credit that would be one of the most flexible child care initiatives ever introduced in Ontario. It is a plan that would put parents, not the government, at the centre of the child care decision-making process.

I got a chance to speak to seniors in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge Park, and they’re happy that we’re introducing a new dental program for low-income seniors who lack benefits.

When it comes to mental health and addictions, we are investing \$3.8 billion in mental health, addiction and housing supports over 10 years, beginning with the creation of mental health and housing assistance systems.

In terms of Scarborough–Rouge Park, the beautiful riding, we’ve got the highest auto insurance rates in the province. Right now, with this budget, we are putting drivers first by lowering costs, increasing consumer choice and increasing competition in the auto insurance market.

Like the member from Markham–Stouffville mentioned, the three-stop Scarborough subway that comes more into Scarborough—which is the most comprehensive plan, compared to all the previous plans—actually puts Scarborough first, and also makes transit accessible for all Scarborough citizens.

Mr. Speaker, we are putting Ontario back on track with no new taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I will return to the member from Markham–Stouffville to wrap up this portion of the debate.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Let me thank all the colleagues who gave some remarks.

To the member from Brampton East: Look, I think the member for York Centre and the Attorney General were very clear on why what he’s talking about is just incorrect, but I appreciate the fact that he’s focused on one aspect.

He’s not concerned about how much taxpayers pay. He’s not really concerned about the fact that we have large deficits and debt to pay off. But he’s focused on that one, and I appreciate the fact that he has done that.

The member for Brantford–Brant raised a really good point. He brought something forward, he fought for it and he had it included in the budget. He was a volunteer firefighter, so I thank him for his service. I appreciate the fact that his hard work was recognized by the Minister of Finance.

The member for Scarborough–Rouge Park talked about what I think is the most important feature of this budget: the fact that it’s about affordability. It’s about child care that people can afford. It’s about putting more money back into people’s pockets. It’s about making it less expensive for people to live their lives. That’s what we’re here to do, as well as provide good services. Our job isn’t to bankrupt the people of Ontario and say, “Don’t worry about it. We got it all under control.” Clearly, the highest debt and deficit hasn’t worked.

When I hear the member for Niagara Centre—perhaps the most frustrating of all. Did he have a suggestion? No, he read a letter from municipalities. What does he want to cut? How does he want to balance the budget? No idea whatsoever. He wants to continue to spend out of control. As a councillor, how did you bring taxes down for your people in your community? Were you not concerned about that at all? Well, we’re concerned about it. Do you know why we’re concerned about it? Because there is another generation that follows us. You can’t just simply live for right now, pat yourselves on the back and say, “Good job. Everybody is failing in our schools—great job. We don’t have transit and transportation—great job. We have high taxes—great job.” We’re not about that—

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: It’s my pleasure to rise in the House today to raise my concerns about this budget and, specifically, with this government’s misplaced priorities within this budget.

First of all, Speaker, I have to note that I have heard from dozens of constituents who have raised significant and overwhelming concerns about many parts of this government’s proposed budget. From the devastating cuts to legal aid to the deep cuts to our public education system, as well as a lack of accountability towards keeping up with rising health care costs, this budget is a failure for Ontarians.

Every day, this government is taking things from bad to worse. We know that the former Liberal government left a mess for future generations to clean up. But let me be perfectly clear: Balancing the books on the backs of the most vulnerable is cruel and it is unnecessary. It also breeds a climate of uncertainty and fear in this province. Just last week, a constituent named Beth wrote to me saying, “The provincial government is not reliable, it has no understanding of the time frames within which business operates, and thus it will create a less stable economic environment.”

Speaker, I'd like to use my time today to talk about some of the most concerning cuts in this budget to my constituents in Toronto Centre, primarily education, legal aid and health care. But I'd also like to start by looking at the budget through a gender lens.

When I was reading the content of the budget and the budget papers, I came upon a startling realization, one that I feel truly reflects the priorities of this government, or, I should say, the total lack of priority for women in Ontario. In the entire document of the budget papers, all 382 pages, the word "women" only appears four times, and two of those are in reference to men and women. The singular form "woman" does not appear at all.

I don't think that this budget or the government's track record would pass the Bechdel test. For those of you who are not familiar with the Bechdel test, it's a measure of the representation of women in fiction, used primarily in films, to test the measure of representation. The test asks whether the work features at least two women who have names and who talk to each other about something other than a man.

Gender-based budgeting is a common concept that's adopted by many governments across the world to shed a light on the different ways in which budgetary items affect women differently, a practice that seems to have been missed entirely by this government. In fact—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member for Carleton, come to order, please.

Ms. Suze Morrison: In fact, there are briefing notes on gender-based or gender-responsive budgeting from many countries as well as the UN and the World Bank.

Here's how the folks at TD Economics—the analysis team at that bank—explain gender-based budgeting: "In simplified terms, gender-based budgeting takes into consideration the potentially differing impacts of government policies on men and women.

"While relatively new to Canada, gender-based budgeting is practised in a number of advanced and emerging economies.

"An illustrative example of potential benefits: Were Canada able to halve the current labour force participation rate gap between women and men, the resulting impact on economic growth would likely be sufficient to counteract the drag of an aging population on the economy."

The TD economists go on further to say that gender-based budgeting "offers the potential for 'win-win' outcomes to correct structural biases and impediments, and simultaneously drive stronger economic outcomes for men and women alike."

It seems that researchers at one of the largest financial institutions in Canada see some merit in the concept of gender-based budgeting, while this government has trouble including the word "women" at all in the budget, let alone addressing the real concerns of women across this province: issues like violence against women, like cuts to the minimum wage, like pay equity and more.

Of course, it's also impossible to tell how much money the former Ministry of the Status of Women is actually

receiving in this budget, because this government has completely collapsed that ministry under the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, and it no longer has its own top line in the budget. This government sent a strong message when it collapsed that ministry into community and social services, which is that women are not a priority of this government.

Speaker, we must not make the mistake of thinking that the deep cuts coming from this government will not have an impact on the women of our province. We know that poverty, homelessness and precarious work disproportionately affect women, and so too will the cuts that are being proposed by this government. The cuts to legal aid, the cuts to education, the cuts to the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, the cuts to social services: All will have a nefarious, negative effect on women.

Let us not forget that this is the same government that cut taxes for the wealthiest while crying that the cupboard was dry for rape crisis centres. They iced the Pay Transparency Act and refused to take any meaningful steps to address the gender wage gap, and then they went and cut the \$15 minimum wage, which we know disproportionately impacts women, who make up the majority of minimum wage earners in this province.

These cuts will all disproportionately affect Indigenous women, queer and trans women, Black women, racialized women, women with disabilities and many more.

I caution this government to stop furthering the crisis that already exists for women in Ontario and to offer true, meaningful and reliable investments where our constituents need them. And I might suggest that you start with a \$15 minimum wage and pay equity.

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I'd like to turn next to the cuts in this budget that will hurt my constituents the most, and I'd like to start with education.

The truly deep cuts to our public education system are so frightening that they keep me and my colleagues up at night. Contrary to the minister's dismissive words about fearmongering, people across Ontario are truly scared. Over the past few weeks, my office has received over 1,000 emails, letters and phone calls about the cuts to education alone. Parents, children, education workers and teachers are all afraid of the layoffs and the deep cuts that will further cripple our system.

A meaningful example of the way the cuts will hurt children is a very, very special school in my riding called Inglenook. Inglenook is a gem in the heart of Toronto Centre. It's a small alternative school that has become a safe space for many youth, including queer and trans students, who frequently live through abuse and trauma.

Last fall and early this winter, I had the opportunity to visit the school and have a chat with some of the students. As a follow-up, the students from the Inglenook law class visited the Legislature and sat in on question period.

This special school, like many others, is facing the possibility of real cuts because of the changes to the student-teacher ratios for secondary classes.

Here's what my constituents have been saying to me. I have a letter from Lola, who is an Inglenook alumni. She says, "As an alumni of Inglenook Community High School I know that the loss of a teacher or more will have a 20% to 30% reduction in program. It will change the environment that Inglenook has worked so hard to build and refine over the years. This environment has offered a haven to students who find the mainstream educational system has failed them, who are at high risk of dropping out of school and/or are high-needs students.... Alternative schools like Inglenook keep kids in school. They provide a voice and a place for those students who would otherwise fall through the cracks.

"I can wholeheartedly say that attending Inglenook Community High School quite literally saved my life, and offered me kindness, community, understanding, knowledge, and joy in the process. I know for a fact that many other students had similar experiences.

"I am now in the process of becoming a psychologist at the University of Toronto, and would not be where I am today without the hard work, commitment, and love from the wonderful and passionate educators. My life and education was deeply affected by my ability to access these vital resources."

Again, that was from a student, a former alumni of Inglenook.

I have another email here from Theresa, who is the parent of a child who attends Inglenook. Theresa says, "I am the parent of a child in an alternative school called Inglenook Community High School. The work they do in the school is nothing short of astonishing. Many students do not fit into the mainstream school system. My child attended a large high school for one semester and got lost in the system. Attending this alternative school has completely changed her high school experience. The teachers are incredibly committed and offer flexibility in learning which is impossible to accommodate in a large institution.

"Successful learning requires teacher attention—and not by an overextended individual who is scrambling to meet the needs of too many children at once.

"Our children deserve more."

I also have a letter from another Inglenook alumni, Maya, who says, "I personally have attended three alternative schools throughout my teenage years. Alternative schools have provided me many important lessons, memories, and opportunities, and helped me to succeed in high school and post-secondary, where I am today. The loss of even one teacher will result in loss of programs, student clubs, and a change in course curriculum, which will have a heavy impact on students and discourage them from attending school. Bigger classrooms and less students will not positively impact students or staff, and will especially have consequences on alternative schools across Ontario.

"Please reconsider."

Again, that's a former Inglenook student.

Finally, I have another letter from a parent of a child who currently attends Inglenook, and this one was really hard to read. It says, "The new teacher-student ratio

formula will affect my daughter's school, Inglenook Community High School, whereby potentially 20% of the school program could be lost.

"This school in particular is a vital aspect in my daughter's education and success. She struggled at Catholic school, bullied and assaulted and lacked administrative support.

"We moved her to Inglenook, which provides support, encouragement and a healing environment. It's amazing.

"It's a small school with a small group of students and teachers. Any reduction would have a dramatic impact on what should really be the model for all high school environments.

"As a police officer of 32 years, I am well aware of the impact of mental health, conflict and parental concerns with our youth. The students at Inglenook are too vulnerable to have their incredible support structure affected by 'policy.'"

Speaker, these emails are heartbreaking, and they're only a tiny sampling of the outpouring of angry and scared communications that my office has received about these proposed deep cuts to education. My colleagues on this side of the aisle have no shortage of desperate messages from parents urging the government to reverse their devastating cuts to our public education system.

Just a few days ago, we learned that the Toronto District School Board is projecting an initial budgetary shortfall of \$21 million to \$54 million a year—hardly an amount that schools can make up by being administratively flexible. The cuts to education are attacking one of our most vital services, and they will be felt for many, many years to come.

It's been said in this House before, and I will say it again, that it is unconscionable to balance the budget on the backs of our children. I'd also like to say that it's unconscionable to balance the books on vulnerable folks seeking justice from our legal system—which brings me to the next issue I'd like to speak to, which is the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario, which I have to say are completely callous and out of line.

The cuts to Legal Aid Ontario are among the most cruel and short-sighted measurements this government is proposing in this budget. Again, my constituents have been very vocal on this issue and have gone out of their way to share their frustrations with me.

One constituent shared this email with me: "As an articling student at a community legal clinic in Toronto, I know that these cuts will have an immediate, direct, and adverse impact on the rights of your most vulnerable constituents. These are my clients. They are overwhelmingly impoverished and mentally ill, and they rely upon Legal Aid Ontario for advice and representation when fighting deportation and eviction.

"The cuts to" legal aid also "mean that by this time next year, more tenants will be evicted, more people will be underhoused, and more people will be returned to countries in which they are unsafe. In addition, the cuts will increase the numbers of self-represented litigants

appearing before our courts and tribunals, delaying and denying justice for those who seek it.”

I have another one. The next email reads, “I am incredibly disappointed by the cuts to legal aid by the government. While many of the government’s cuts to health care, education, public libraries, green energy, and more are also deeply devastating and wrong to me, as a member of the legal community I feel in particular that I must express my disapproval of these cuts to legal aid.

“The Attorney General attempted to justify some of the cuts by citing a statistic that the number of people served by legal aid has dropped 10% over the past years. This is misleading. The income cut-off for eligibility for legal aid funding has consistently fallen behind the cost of living so that fewer and fewer people qualify for legal aid funding. These cuts will ... add to delays, slowing down and clogging courts in a system that is already heavily backlogged.

“What is the government doing to improve access to justice and protect the legal rights of members of the public going to court? Why cut 30% of funding to legal aid and completely cut off services to refugee claimants and immigrants?

“We don’t need more time for drinking; we need action and funding for people going through our court system and improvements to the operation of our courts.”

It’s clear that the cruel cuts to legal aid are going to put more vulnerable people at risk. They’re going to put women who are fleeing domestic violence at risk, they’re going to affect tenants who are trying to fight unjust and unfair evictions, and they’re going to endanger the lives of refugees who are trying to escape life-threatening persecutions in the countries they come from.

All people deserve access to justice, full stop. It is completely immoral, the cuts to legal aid. I have no words for how immoral and unjust this is. You are leaving the most vulnerable people in this province behind.

Speaker, it’s no secret that many constituents from Toronto Centre and across our province feel personally attacked and hurt by this government’s callous budget decisions. And it’s not a short list of cuts. It’s a clear demonstration of this government’s backward priorities.

1650

To name a few that I haven’t had a chance to fully explore in the course of my debate—and I know I only have a few minutes left—health care spending will not keep pace with inflation in this province. This is a cut, in real terms. We need to be making significant investments in health care to address the current hallway medicine crisis that this province is experiencing, not cutting and privatizing services.

The previous Liberal government, in fact, underfunded education, and the deep cuts proposed by the current government will make things worse. I’ve already spoken at great length today about the fears that my constituents have in regard to these cuts, but let me be clear: Students in this province deserve so, so much better than what they are getting from this government.

When we look at post-secondary education, funding there is being decreased and it’s unclear how performance-tied funding will impact colleges and universities in the long run. The drastic changes to OSAP will hit vulnerable students the hardest. Students deserve to have an environment that enables them to learn and not have to worry about how deep in debt they will be when they graduate.

When we look at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, that ministry as a whole is planning to cut a billion dollars, literally balancing our books on the backs of the most vulnerable Ontarians. It’s appalling and it’s no way to do a budget in our province, let alone—like I said at the beginning, there has been no effort to invest in gender-based budgeting or looking at how this budget will impact the most vulnerable people in this province.

When we look at transit, again, you’re ripping up transit plans across the GTA, throwing away years and years of hard work, and we have no concept of how transit will be built and how it will be paid for. Meanwhile, folks here in Toronto who use the TTC continue to face delays every single day.

And finally, there’s no plan on how to address climate change in a meaningful way. The implementation of cap-and-trade would have provided funding for needed initiatives, including affordable housing and energy retrofits in community housing.

This is a bleak picture for the future of Ontario for the next four years. But we can do better. We can do so much better. My colleagues on this side of the aisle and our entire caucus will continue fighting on behalf of Ontarians who believe that things can get better, that we can have a province with a strong public education system that puts students first; that we can have a province that prioritizes publicly funded, not-for-profit health care and that listens to front-line workers and experts; that we can have a province where people aren’t denied access to justice just because they are refugees.

We will continue to stand up on behalf of our constituents and on behalf of marginalized communities across this province and for all Ontarians who know that this Conservative government doesn’t share their priorities, that we deserve so much more than a budget that is about nothing more than booze and branding and leaves the rest of us behind.

We can build an Ontario where the government is accountable, transparent and predictable, where decisions about the things that matter most to people don’t seem arbitrary, a place where government is serious about the role it plays in providing a stable environment for everyone.

Thank you so much, Speaker. It was an absolute pleasure to rise and speak to this budget today. Again, I strongly encourage the government members to rethink how this budget impacts the most vulnerable among us, primarily women, refugees, our students, our youth across this province. Do better. We have to do better for everyone.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'm really pleased to be here today because I think someone didn't read the budget. As the minister responsible for children and youth, community and social services, immigration, refugees, poverty reduction and, of course, women's issues, I take great offence to what I just heard with respect to that member and the fearmongering that she and the irresponsible opposition have engaged in over the past number of weeks.

Let me be perfectly clear: When they talk about cuts, they don't want to ever mention the fact that the Minister of Health, our Deputy Premier, increased the health budget in the province of Ontario by \$1.3 billion. They never, when they talk about education cuts, want to talk about the fact that the education minister increased her budget by \$700 million. And the member opposite, when she's suggesting we're cutting services to children, the vulnerable, women's issues, neglects to inform this Legislature that this Ministry of Community and Social Services with responsibility for children, refugees, as well as women, has increased our budget by \$300 million. Why? Because we're here, and our motivation is simple: It is to protect what matters most, and we've done all of that without an increase in any tax in the province of Ontario.

In fact, what we've done is gone one step further, when we're talking about vulnerable people: We are ensuring that we have a CARE tax credit so that child care in the province of Ontario will be eligible for more tax reductions for moms and dads right across the province. I think that's important.

We've also engaged with the LIFT tax credit, which is going to make sure that those who are low-income and working minimum wage don't have to pay income tax. Why wouldn't the NDP support something like that? Why? Because they don't believe in the dignity of the job, they don't believe in the dignity of self-reliance, and they don't want the narrative that we have, which is protecting what matters most for the next generation.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thanks to the excellent member for Toronto Centre for raising concerns that we don't really hear coming from the government side.

They're talking about balancing the budget, and they are cutting those taxes for corporations and some of the richest Ontarians but punishing those who need the help the most. It's really weird, because the whole concept of downloading—I'm an Ontarian and I'm also a Torontonian. So they're going to take this pencil that I have as an Ontarian and they're going to download it to me as a Torontonian, but now, in their minds, it's gone; they're balancing. They're still making people pay for it.

What they're going to do is download things from the province to their kin on right-leaning municipal governments, hoping for them to make cuts. If you actually listen to what is coming out of these types of city councils—because I worked on a city council as an EA to a city councillor. What was happening there? The same programs that we're talking about protecting are the ones

that for those councillors are the first in line that they want to cut. So when you download to them, they're just going to say, "What can we cut from?" Certainly, they're going to look at cutting breakfast programs.

The concept of fearmongering: This is not fearmongering. Groups are reaching out to MPPs. I'm sure your email inboxes are flooded with the same concerns that we're hearing. They are scared. School boards are scared. Municipalities are scared. Families with members who are on the autism spectrum are incredibly scared. They're reaching out to you; they're reaching out to us. In fact, they're coming out to us because they're being stonewalled by government MPPs, who are ignoring them or refusing to meet with them. Individuals that come out here are labelled as professional protesters. These are the people that are standing up for the future of our province.

Whenever anything gets put into committee and we submit amendments, they're completely ignored. That's not surprising, because all the decisions made by this government come from Dean French and nobody else. They're not interested in what we have to say, and that's just the way it works.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments? The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've been a little quiet today. I've got a bit of a sore voice. So I hope that—

Mr. Jeff Burch: Yay.

Mr. Mike Harris: Yes, I know. You're welcome.

But you know what? We hear a lot of rhetoric again coming from the other side of the House, as per usual, and we're being told that we're out of touch. Well, Mr. Speaker, when we go door to door—and I don't know if some of my colleagues have had the opportunity to already go knocking on doors since last June—do you know what we hear? It's that families and people across this province want affordability, and I think this budget provides that. I'm going to give you some highlights right here.

We're providing over \$26 billion—with a B, Mr. Speaker—in savings to families and individuals over the next six years; eliminating over \$3 billion in tax increases planned or imposed by the previous government; returning over \$10 billion to the pockets of families and businesses by cancelling—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Harris: Yes, definitely celebrate that one.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I approve.

Mr. Mike Harris: I approve as well.

Cancelling the previous Liberal government's cap-and-trade system is going to save us \$10 billion. We're bringing over \$2 billion in relief to low-income families and individuals through our LIFT tax credit. And my personal favourite, Mr. Speaker: helping families with the new CARE tax credit, totalling over \$2 billion in savings for families and cancelling \$150 million in scheduled fee increases.

1700

Just going back to the CARE tax credit quickly, this is something that is fantastic, especially for rural Ontario.

We've got a lot of people who represent rural Ontario here. Having the flexibility to be able to—I see I'm out of time, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from Toronto Centre. She cares deeply about her constituents. She goes door to door and she actually listens to the constituents in her riding. In fact, she'll take meetings with people if they have issues around autism or education or housing. It's quite a concept, I have to say.

She did reference the importance of the school called Inglebrook. What we feel on this side of the House is that investing in education is an investment. We don't see it as an expenditure because the return on that investment to the economy, to the justice system, to the health care system—these are real. This is research; it is evidence. That is what policy should be made on.

In fact, the large mayors in the province of Ontario just put out a very fact-oriented document calling this government on their downloading by stealth, implementing funding and governance changes to municipalities without any consultation after cities have already adopted their budgets. How's that for due diligence? The mayors from Barrie, Brantford, Cambridge, the town of Oakville, the city of Ottawa—as the member from Nepean walks past—from the city of Vaughan, the town of Whitby: These mayors are calling this government on your fiscal mismanagement.

The media actually, following the Treasury Board's comments—and this is what the Treasury Board President has said about this budget. He has said that shifting the location of alcohol sales will add \$3.5 billion to the provincial GDP, when sales in Ontario last year totalled \$9 billion. When the member talks about priorities, it is very clear. It is not in education and health care for this government. They have put all their chips on the alcohol card, and they're betting—and it's a bad bet—that investing in alcohol sales is a way to balance the budget, and that is a shameful position for any government to take in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We'll return now to the member for Toronto Centre to wrap up this portion of the debate this afternoon.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, the member for Kitchener–Conestoga and my colleagues from Humber River–Black Creek and Waterloo for their comments. I want to thank you all.

I've had a chance to address the bill over the last few weeks and thank my members on this side of the bench for working as hard and as diligently as you do to continue to hold this government accountable.

Speaker, budget bills reflect government priorities. Broadly speaking, they show the public where the government is willing to invest, where they are not and what they're willing to cut. It's revealing, and it's an eye-opening process. The multiple deep cuts that are proposed

in this budget bill that we are debating are a clear indication that education, health care, legal aid, Indigenous people, women, racialized and LGBTQ folks are not a priority of this government. In fact, while the word “women” appears in the budget papers only four times, “LGBTQ” doesn't appear in the document at all. On the other hand, the word “alcohol” appears 35 times and “beer” another 12. It's very clear where this government's priorities lie. As the member from Waterloo said, you've put all your chips on the table on the alcohol amendments, and you're leaving the rest of us behind. At the end of the day, this is a budget that tells Ontarians a story, and it's not one that we want any part of.

Education and health care are being cut. Hospitals and school boards are getting ready to make significant layoffs. Indigenous affairs and legal aid are facing deep, deep cuts to the tune of millions. But we can create a province that is just and fair and equitable and spends provincial dollars on folks who are in most need of them, and I strongly encourage the government members to do just that.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's a privilege today to be able to rise on behalf of the people of Niagara West and speak to a truly monumental piece of legislation, a defining piece of legislation for our government, for the future of Ontario and for the future of the people of Ontario. I have the great privilege of being able to speak in this House having served not only in the government benches, but also having had the privilege to serve in the role of opposition.

Speaker, today I have the opportunity to also quote from the Minister of Finance, and I will be beginning my speech by doing so. The Minister of Finance, when he presented his first budget, our first budget as a government, said that this budget is “a plan for the people, by the people and, most importantly, a plan that puts the people first.”

“Under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, our government has started down a path to balance so that we can protect what matters most: our vital services such as health care and education.

“We are working smarter, spending smarter and re-inventing the way government serves the people. And we are taking steps to attract businesses, create jobs, and provide opportunities for our emerging engineers, nurses and tradespeople.”

With that as a preface to this contribution to debate this afternoon, Speaker, I want to touch on something that was brought forward already earlier this afternoon in the debate by the member for Markham–Stouffville, who made a very strong case for not just the need to balance the budget from simply a public service protection perspective, although we acknowledge that is very, very important, but it is also a moral imperative.

This afternoon, I would like to speak a little more about that moral imperative as the youngest member of the Legislature and as someone who sees the staggering growth in debt as a concern not only for myself but for my

entire generation. I think I have the unique opportunity to be able to speak to some of the challenges that we face in a way that perhaps none of the other members of the Legislature will completely be able to understand, having not only been born after the millennial generation—I know there are a few millennials—but being the only gen-Z member of the Legislature and being able to speak to what I see as a threat, a threat to the sustainability of our public services.

I'm going to speak a little bit more about that, but I want to speak and quote first an article from the Foundation for Economic Education that is called, "The Moral Case for a Balanced Budget." It's written by Joseph Fulda, who is an assistant professor at Hofstra University. He says in this, "There is much talk these days about balanced budgets, but the talk is about figures when it should be about values, about the economic consequences of imbalance when it should be about its moral propriety. The compelling moral case for a balanced budget—against both deficits and surpluses—deserves wider attention.

"The earliest American champion of fiscal integrity, Thomas Jefferson, reasoned that 'every generation coming equally, by the laws of the Creator of the World, to the free possession of the earth He made for their subsistence, unencumbered by their predecessors, who, like them, were but tenants for Life,' 'the principle of spending money to be paid by posterity, under the name of funding, is but swindling futurity on a large scale.'" This was written, Mr. Speaker, on March 1 of 1987.

We look some 32 years later, and we see that not a lot has changed. Unfortunately, in fact, we've seen in our beloved province, in beautiful Ontario, that the situation has only become worse. Although I quote from this particular writer of American persuasion, his words also ring true for our situation today here in the province of Ontario. In order to illustrate that, Speaker, I wanted to speak about some of the things that we've seen change over my lifetime. I've had the privilege of being able to—well, maybe not walk the whole time, but to walk the beautiful trails of Niagara and be able to swim in the Great Lakes for 21 years. Speaker, what have we seen change in a few of those years? I'm going to take for an example the year 2000. What we saw in the year 2000 was a budget that was brought forward by a Progressive Conservative government of a slightly different stripe, with slightly different characters, but following a situation that had become extremely dire under the former New Democratic government.

Let's talk a little bit about what those numbers are. Speaker, we are not making drastic cuts. We are making substantial and important changes in the way our resources are spent to ensure value for money and to ensure that the services that Ontarians depend upon are provided effectively and efficiently.

1710

We are not cutting drastically. But to hear some of the fearmongering that we've heard from members of the opposition, and some of those in the broader media or broader population—I think we ignore some of the

realities of what we see the numbers come down to. So I want to say to the people who are watching this afternoon: Take a look at what the budget of the year 2000 looked like. It's not that long ago. It's under 20 years ago. Less than two decades ago, what was the provincial budget of Ontario? I did a little bit of digging. At that time, the provincial budget was \$65 billion.

Mr. Norman Miller: It was \$68 billion in 2001.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: In 2001. In 2000, it was \$65 billion—\$65 billion. It's a lot of money. Absolutely, I don't want to belittle the amount, because I think that's how we have to understand this in the broader context.

We hear, "Well, it doesn't quite reach the amount that we want." Well, when is enough? When is enough for the members of the opposition? What do they want to see? Do they want a \$200-billion budget? Do you know what we have today, Speaker? We have today, in the province of Ontario, just last year alone, \$154 billion. We've gone from \$68 billion or \$65 billion to \$154 billion, and we're increasing. We're increasing, Speaker.

To see it more than double in under 20 years is not a question of there not being enough money. If we look at what the actual spending was when it came down to the individual ministries, what have we seen? What have we seen change? Again, this is more than the New Democrats spent when they were in government, apparently, but apparently it's not enough.

So let's look. For example, in education, we've seen education go from the combined total of \$14 billion in secondary, post-secondary and elementary education—it has gone from \$14 billion, and today we're at \$41 billion. That's 19 years. Nineteen years: That's how old I was when I got elected.

Let's look at another number: health care. The NDP love to talk about the changes in the health care system. How dare we dare streamline services and ensure that we're actually providing the health care that constituents in my riding expect and deserve? How dare we consider looking at reducing the administrative costs of providing surgeries, of providing effective emergency room services? How dare we? We are the cruellest government that they have ever seen.

Well, Speaker, let's take a look. Let's take a look at the numbers. What was the provincial budget, when it came to health care, in the year 2000? Again, 19 years: It's not a long time. The province has been around for over 150 years. This is not that long when you consider it. Okay, so we had \$22.2 billion. That's a lot of money; I'm not going to argue with that. It's a lot of money. I can pretty much say without a doubt that none of us here in this room could ever hope to see that type of cash flow through the hands of probably all of us combined, if we were out there in private industry, working hard, trying to make a living, trying to start businesses, trying to hire people and trying to be job creators. That's a big business. That's a lot of money; I understand that. And that's all going to health care.

So 19 years later, with 15 years of Liberal government in between, they spent a lot. We know they spent a lot

because we see the numbers and we see what our debt is. We're paying almost \$13 billion a year in interest payments on this debt.

Surely they had to have not spent that much—I mean, if it's just on the interest payments. How much debt is there? Let's take a look at what that number has gone from, in the year 2000. Today we're at \$63.5 billion—from \$22 billion to \$63.5 billion. “But there's a money problem,” say the NDP. “There's a money problem,” say the Liberals.

Well, let's talk about what that actually looks like. Yes, there's a problem. There's a problem, because my hospital, the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, that my predecessor Tim Hudak fought for, that I fought for, that my Liberal predecessor all the way back in 2003 fought for but that the former Liberal government wouldn't bring forward—and which I'm proud to say our Minister of Health and our Premier have committed to building in Niagara—let's take a look at the average cost of that hospital.

I know this isn't a huge hospital. This isn't a Holland Bloorview. This isn't one of these enormous—this is a community hospital, servicing a rapidly growing area. Let's talk about what a typical hospital in this range would look like. Let's say \$200 million, \$250 million, depending on who you're talking to, with inflation. We're recognizing those costs. Okay. So if you're spending \$12 billion a year, Speaker, on interest—and we're not; we're spending more like \$13 billion—you're talking about over 50 brand new hospitals—50, five-zero; that's not 15—50 hospitals that could be built in communities across this province.

I know there are members on the opposite side who represent rural areas. I know there are members on the opposite side who represent areas in the north, who represent areas that are desperately underserved. But why is that? It's because pouring more money on a problem without fixing the actual issue of addressing how that money is being spent is the definition of insanity. And that's what we saw for 15 years, Speaker.

I'm going to make a little bit of an admission, and I'm a little bit embarrassed to say this: I don't remember when Mike Harris was in government. I'm too young. I don't remember when the former Mike Harris who they love to talk about day in and day out—about how “You know, we're going back to the Mike Harris days.” Speaker, I don't remember when he was in government. I'm too young, and there are a lot of other Ontarians who are too young. But do you know what we can remember?

Interjection: Bob Rae.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: No, we can't remember Bob Rae either. But what we can remember is that when we look back at the 15 years that the Liberals were in power, we have seen what our inheritance is, what our legacy is.

I grew up in a family. I have seven siblings. I love my siblings very much. I have 23—or 22 with another one on the way—nephews and nieces. I love my family.

My parents worked hard. They had a farm. There were a lot of tough years in the pork industry. They had to make sacrifices in order to put food on the table. I remember

there were times when we were only allowed to have two or three slices of cheese on bread because pig prices weren't good. The recession hit my family hard, and I remember those times.

My parents stuck it through and they're doing fine. But I know that when they leave—and I hope it's not for a very long time—when they leave this earth and go to be with their Heavenly Father, they want to leave an inheritance to their children. Maybe it's not even to me. Maybe it's to a cause. Maybe it's to a foundation. They want to be able to ensure that they're able to help out those that they have given their blood, sweat and tears to. They've paid their taxes. They've worked hard. Yet do you know what the inheritance of the last government was? Do you know what it was?

Interjection: Debt.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It was debt, and not just a little bit, either. We're not talking a few thousand dollars. Let's be honest. If you woke up one morning and, heaven forbid it, your parents had passed and they left you a debt, that would be a situation. You have to pay for the funeral, everything else is going on, and they leave you a debt; let's say \$10,000. That would be a tough situation. But you love them, obviously, and that's not something you're going to hold against them. It's just a reality. It would be difficult for a lot of people.

Now imagine every man, woman and child in Ontario: \$43,000. So you're a family of four and now you're owing over \$170,000. You're owing almost \$200,000 in debt, and you haven't even done anything. You were born. The second you were born, you owed that money. That's because governments simply haven't had the fiscal restraint or responsibility to do what needed to be done.

Now my peers, young people like myself who—I go to school, Speaker. I'm still at Brock part-time. I'm very proud of being a part-time student. They worry. They worry about what the future holds. That's because they see the cost. They see what that debt is going to cost them when they come out of university, and they know that those are future taxes. And if they're not future taxes, they're currently being removed from the cost of services—\$12 billion.

What is the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services' budget? She's a fine minister, I might add. It's \$16 billion. That's a lot of money. It's a big budget. We've had a lot of discussions in this House, whether it was the autism discussion or a lot of different services that we've had discussions about. Thirteen billion dollars in addition to that \$16 billion would go a heck of a long way. I know that minister. If she had an extra \$13 billion, she would love to help many more people.

I speak as the parliamentary assistant, also, for education. In education, an extra \$13 billion would build a lot of schools. It would hire a lot of special education assistants. It would hire a lot of teachers. It would be amazing to have that. But we don't. We don't have it. And why is that? It's because a government spent without metrics. A government for 15 years didn't see the need to actually ensure

they were getting value for money, and really, Speaker, that's what taxpayers asked for.

1720

You know, one of the first rules of good government—what's the first rule of good government? I hope everyone in this House can answer it. “Do no harm.” It's a very, very simple motto. The first rule of government is to do no harm. Speaker, to see a government go from \$65 billion to over \$160 billion without having anything to show for it—barely anything to show for spending hundreds of billions of dollars in addition to what they had originally budgeted—is unconscionable. It's immoral. That's why our government is taking steps to ensure that we're creating a path back to balance. Why? It's not just to balance the budget.

I like to hear the NDP. They love to talk with emotion. They love to talk about the sky is falling. We love to hear that from the Liberals as well. The heart, the heart. Listen, I understand. It's important to lead with your motive, and our motive is to ensure that we have sustainable public services—the health care, education, what matters most—not just today, not just tomorrow, but in the future: five years down the road, 10 years down the road, 20 years down the road. That's the reality that we don't seem to understand from other members in this House.

The other members in this House want to spend on all sorts of things without actually ensuring value for that money. I don't have a problem with spending taxpayers' dollars if you're seeing value for that. I don't have a problem with ensuring that we're actually building schools, roads and bridges. But I do have a problem with seeing tens of billions of dollars being wasted through interest payments, being wasted through things such as—whether it was Ornge or whether it was on the gas plant scandal, these are things that have not only added to the public debt and to future taxes, but also have created a severe challenge for governments such as ours that came in with a mandate to clean up the mess and are now facing some of these challenges.

Our government's approach, Speaker, has not been what the opposition wanted. They wanted to spend, spend, spend, tax, tax, tax with no plan to ever get back to budget. But our government's approach is both thoughtful and measured. It's built on four clear priorities.

First, we're restoring accountability and trust. We're introducing a credible, sustainable and fully costed plan that will return the province to fiscal balance in five years. Our plan is projected to generate average savings and cost avoidance of eight cents for every dollar spent. I remember back in the campaign: “Oh, you can't save four cents on the dollar. Four pennies? Who can do that?” That was from the opposition. Well, guess what, Speaker? We're doubling it. We're doing them better. We're doing eight cents on every dollar.

We're also protecting what matters most by adopting bold new ways to deliver world-class services such as health care and education while supporting front-line workers. We're putting people first by making life more affordable and convenient with the new Childcare Access

and Relief from Expenses—CARE—credit, a plan to make auto insurance more accessible and affordable, an expanded rapid transit system and a reduced estate administration tax.

Fourth, we're making Ontario open for business and open for jobs by lowering business costs and making it easier for employers—job creators—to hire workers and for workers to find a job.

Speaker, the difference between us and the other parties in the Legislature is very stark. Our government stands firmly on the side of hard-working taxpayers. We understand the moral imperative that we have for future generations. We understand the task that we have been given to not just have our spending today but also to ensure that the spending that we do today is targeted in such a way that it provides value for the future and to ensure that future generations don't have to shoulder the staggering debt load of our decisions.

Speaker, we're doing the right things to ensure that Ontario has a future that is bright, strong and free. Because of that, I am proud to support this budget, I'm proud to add my voice to the debate, and I look forward to hearing from the other members of the Legislature.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member opposite. I do want to emphasize that an NDP government does certainly know—we have concerns about the debt and also the interest payments. You might have noticed that the BC government has just passed a balanced budget. So it can be done and it should be done.

I do have a lot of concerns about this budget. I feel that this budget is balanced on the backs of the poor, while at the same time there have been numerous tax cuts for wealthy people in some of our largest corporations. Quite frankly, I just don't think that's right. It's not the way that a government should behave if it wants to be a government for everyday people.

I've had many people contact me over the last two weeks to express their concerns about what is in this budget and how it's going to affect people in our riding. I met with eight legal aid lawyers who talked about the impact the cuts to legal aid are going to have on the clients they serve and the needs they have, from dealing with low-income and moderate-income people who are facing illegal rent evictions—which is a crisis in my riding; whenever I go out canvassing, I meet many people who are worried about what their landlord is going to do—to injured workers, to refugees and asylum seekers. They really fear that these cuts will have long-term repercussions on these people and their lives, and also a long-term impact on our legal system; because these people will continue to go to court, and some judges will find that those people's costs will have to be covered.

I also have concerns about the public health cuts that we're experiencing, as someone who lives in Toronto—from dental and health to vaccinations to lunch programs.

What concerns me most about this, what expresses my overall concern with this budget, is that it leads to short-

term pain, but overall, it will lead to bigger long-term pain, because—

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I was quite taken aback by the debate by our member from Niagara. He brought up so many good points. I look back, and he talked about his large family. I'm from a large family. I don't go back that far, but I remember the struggle my parents had just raising us on a farm and the need to pay off our debts, knowing that if we didn't look after the finances, we wouldn't have the farm. Too many people, too many friends of theirs lost their farms over the years. I think you can bring that up today.

It disturbs me when I hear the members opposite talk about cuts to services, the cuts to hospitals. Did anybody during the election campaign hear from people that they were overjoyed with the health care system? I don't think so. It's not what I heard. Does anybody over on the other side know somebody whom the system has failed? Definitely.

As the member said, we've doubled the health care budget over the last number of years. It has to work. We have to make these changes. We've increased spending by another \$1.3 billion, but yes, there will be changes. Health care practitioners are not being laid off. We're reorganizing the system because it's broken. It's not working.

I had a neighbour who passed away a number of years ago who did not have to pass away, but the system failed her. She couldn't get the tests that she needed to get done. Over four months, she was still trying to get a diagnosis. In the end, it was curable, but it was too late to take the treatment. That's what we've seen over and over again.

So when I hear that we're making cuts, it's disingenuous. It's not true. Let's look at the reorganizations that are required in this system, because it's failing us today, it's failing the people in my riding and I'm sure it's failing the people in your riding as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I would ask the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to withdraw the remark.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I withdraw.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the opportunity to make some remarks on the speech given by the member from Niagara West. I appreciate that the member reminded us he has the opportunity to be the youngest member here in the Legislature, and I remember when he was first elected, to much attention.

The member opposite and I have had the chance to have a few conversations over the last stretch, and one of the conversations—that I hope he doesn't mind that I'll bring to this Legislature, especially now as he has the opportunity to serve as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. Clearly, the member opposite has had access to enough education to prepare him for this space, which is saying a lot. In his role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, I hope that he will fight for the

opportunity for every child in the province to have access to a strong education, to have access to a strong public education.

1730

The member opposite didn't have the opportunity to go to public education, as he has told me. But those who do go deserve it to be funded, and appropriately resourced and scaffolded, and that it has to be strong and it has to be what children across the province need. They have to be able to get there; they have to be able to get what they deserve. I challenge him to ensure that that is what he does while he is here, because he said we are not to do harm in this space.

But it's very tough to sit as an opposition member and watch this government, that is setting out, in this budget and in every chance they get in front of a microphone, to do that harm. We perceive it as harm. They are real people who come to our constituency offices in crisis, with concerns. We're hearing more and more from the folks who will never be able to qualify for that child care credit because they'll never be able to pay for it up front. The children who don't stand to inherit from their parents might actually want to inherit a planet, though, as I would challenge this government.

We all have a duty, and it is for the next generation, as the member reminds us, so we should probably get at it.

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

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Je remercie le député de Niagara-Ouest pour son discours au sujet du projet de loi 100.

Monsieur le Président, les membres de l'opposition font tout un cinéma chaque fois qu'on parle d'équilibrer le budget. Si nous mettons fin à un programme parce qu'il a largement dépassé sa date de péremption, ils hurlent à pleins poumons qu'il s'agit d'une compression budgétaire. Mais les chiffres ne mentent pas : c'est uniquement en rééquilibrant le budget que nous pourrions continuer à investir dans les programmes essentiels comme les soins de santé, l'éducation et les autres services sur lesquels la population de l'Ontario compte.

L'équilibrage budgétaire, c'est un impératif financier et moral qui est dans l'intérêt public, et, monsieur le Président, le budget ne s'équilibre pas tout seul. Équilibrer le budget : voilà comment nous protégeons l'essentiel.

Alors, parlons un peu des soins de santé : notre gouvernement croit qu'il est temps que les patients soient au centre de notre système de soins. Parlons de chiffres : nous fournirons approximativement 17 milliards de dollars pour moderniser nos hôpitaux et en augmenter la capacité. Notre gouvernement est en voie de créer 15 000 nouveaux lits de soins de longue durée. Cette initiative représenterait un financement de 1,75 milliard de dollars au cours des cinq prochaines années. Aussi, notre gouvernement investit 90 millions de dollars dans un nouveau programme dentaire pour les personnes âgées.

Monsieur le Président, grâce au leadership de M^{me} Elliott, la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, le système de santé continuera de s'améliorer au bénéfice

de toutes les familles et tous les patients de l'Ontario, et je suis fière d'appuyer le projet de loi 100.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We will now return to the member from Niagara West to wrap up this portion of the debate.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Merci aussi à la députée de Mississauga-Centre pour votre contribution aujourd'hui, pour le discours, and also to all the other members of the Legislature—the members for University–Rosedale, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Oshawa—who had the chance to respond to my debate this afternoon. They all made good points, and I really appreciate them. Thank you also for the opposition's contribution. Having served there in opposition, it is an important role and I recognize that, and I want to thank them for that. It is indeed a task that is not easy, and it is one that is so vital to the proper functioning of a Westminster democracy such as the one we have.

The primary point I wanted to make in my contributions today, and the one I want people to take away, is that throwing more money at the situation doesn't necessarily fix it—seeing \$22 billion in health care going to \$63.5 billion today in less than two decades, seeing \$14 billion in education go to \$41 billion in less than two decades. Yet seeing the crisis that we have in both of these spaces, both of these fundamental and principal sectors of government service, says that we have to think smarter and harder about how we're spending our money in a way that respects taxpayers, but also in a way that ensures value for money.

That's really the challenge I wanted to leave with the members of the Legislature today. I believe our budget strikes the right balance. It ensures that we have a sustainable path to balance, but it also ensures that we're protecting the core services that we depend upon. It ensures that we are demanding more out of these services—that we're working harder, we're working smarter, and we're working in a way that respects every single tax dollar.

That's really the message I wanted to leave today on the floor: to make sure that when we think about problems, we don't just think, "Okay, if we throw more money at it, everything will be fine." We almost tripled our provincial budget and, yet today, we don't have a whole lot to show for it. That's where I think we can improve.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon and bring the concerns of the people from Waterloo to this Legislature. I may not have as much time as I would like, because this is, of course, a very big bill that now is going to be time-allocated.

It's really interesting how time allocation has reared its ugly head, if you will, because I know that my colleagues whom I've served with in this Legislature for six years don't like it. They certainly didn't like it when they were over on this side of the House. In fact, the Minister of Finance at the time referred to time allocation in this way.

He said, "We've seen this time and time again"—and this is the member for Nipissing—"from this government, where bills that are up for debate are time-allocated. What that means is, they are stopping the debate." They are basically saying to people, "We've had enough. We've heard enough from you. We don't want you to have an opportunity any longer to stand here in the Legislature...." He goes on to say, "That's what I find so reprehensible about bringing in time allocation. If it were once or twice in the six years that I've been here—but it's every week; it's every month; it's every year. It's non-stop with these Liberals"—you can just replace "Liberals" with "Conservatives" now.

Of course, it must be uncomfortable for some of the members to be in this position. If they are so proud of this piece of legislation, this budget bill, then why not debate it in its entirety? Because there is so much in here.

The people—we just got notice on our phones and our computers that there's another protest tomorrow on the front lawn of Queen's Park. This will be the third this week. They're not protesting because they're happy. These are citizens in the province of Ontario who are travelling from all over this great province to have their voices heard, to demonstrate their right to demonstrate, to show their dissatisfaction with this government, with this bill, with these measures, with the policies thus far that Ford Nation has brought in. They have that right to do so—thus far, because we've actually seen this government limit the rights of citizens in the province of Ontario through legislation, and by limiting their ability to access legal aid, for instance. So the people in this province have a genuine concern, and we want to validate that. That actually is our job as legislators: to bring those concerns.

Yesterday, there were parents who have children who are on the disability spectrum, be they children with autism or physical disabilities—completely and utterly heartbreaking, if you took the time to go out and listen to some of those parents. I've said this already: The parents in Waterloo whom I had a round table with last week in my dining room—we had lunch, and I listened and I learned. I would highly recommend that the minister do the same: Listen and learn and not talk so much. Just focus on what you are hearing, and if you have the power to fix it, then do so. That is the moral imperative that have we have as legislators.

And then, of course, educators: That was a larger protest than even yesterday's, or perhaps today's for health care. We have seen people rise up. The last time they rose up in this manner was during the original Mike Harris years. People feel very strongly about their education system and their health care system and endangered species and the energy sector, and they have been voicing that concern. I'm sure, for a lot of members on the government side of the House—they're not hearing good things. Let's be clear about that.

So rebranding and re-visioning it and talking it out here in this Legislature actually doesn't really mean anything, because we know what people are saying too in the House.

I must tell you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Sorry to interrupt the member from Waterloo, especially since your mother is in the gallery this afternoon. But pursuant to standing order 58(d), I am now required to put the question.

On April 11, 2019, Mr. Fedeli moved, seconded by Mr. Ford, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be—wait, this just in:

“To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I respectfully request that the vote on government order 17 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, May 1.”

Signed by Lorne Coe, MPP, chief government whip of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Infrastructure—

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Transportation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Therefore, I don’t recognize you. I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The Minister of Transportation has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: No, on division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Carried on division. Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1742.

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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
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Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
Wayne Gates, Michael Gravelle
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stephen Crawford
Doug Downey, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Kaleed Rasheed
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Dave Smith
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Chris Glover
Christine Hogarth, Logan Kanapathi
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Dave Smith, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Parm Gill
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Jane McKenna
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Lorne Coe, Michael Coteau
Mike Harris, Faisal Hassan
Jane McKenna, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Toby Barrett, Catherine Fife
Goldie Ghamari, Jim McDonell
Norman Miller, Suze Morrison
Michael Parsa, Peggy Sattler
Kinga Surma
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Will Bouma, Paul Calandra
Lorne Coe, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
John Fraser, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie