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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 30 May 2019 / Jeudi 30 mai 2019

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Bringing Choice and Fairness to the People Act
(Beverage Alcohol Retail Sales), 2019, Bill 115,
Mr. Fedeli / Loi de 2019 visant à offrir à la
population plus de choix et un accès équitable en
matière de vente au détail de boissons alcooliques,
projet de loi 115, M. Fedeli**

Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	5393	Mr. Michael Parsa	5425
Mr. Doug Downey	5396	Ms. Christine Hogarth.....	5427
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5400	Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	5428
Mr. John Fraser	5401	Ms. Donna Skelly.....	5429
Mr. Michael Parsa.....	5401	Ms. Suze Morrison.....	5429
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	5401	Mr. Norman Miller.....	5429
Mr. Doug Downey	5401	Ms. Christine Hogarth.....	5430
Ms. Sandy Shaw.....	5402	Ms. Jessica Bell.....	5430
Mme Natalia Kusendova.....	5411	Mr. Chris Glover	5431
Ms. Jessica Bell.....	5411	Mr. Daryl Kramp.....	5433
Miss Kinga Surma.....	5411	Mr. Taras Natyshak	5433
Ms. Suze Morrison.....	5411	Mr. Billy Pang.....	5433
Ms. Sandy Shaw.....	5412	Mr. Michael Mantha.....	5434
Mrs. Gila Martow.....	5412	Ms. Jessica Bell.....	5434
Mr. Mike Harris	5414	Mr. Mike Schreiner	5434
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5415	Mr. Michael Parsa	5435
Mr. Dave Smith.....	5415	Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5435
Mr. Wayne Gates	5416	Mr. Chris Glover	5435
Ms. Donna Skelly.....	5416	Mr. Amarjot Sandhu.....	5436
Mr. Mike Harris	5416	Mr. Mike Schreiner	5436
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	5417	Mr. Dave Smith.....	5436
Hon. Doug Ford	5420	Hon. Doug Ford	5439
Mr. Faisal Hassan.....	5420	Mr. Taras Natyshak	5439
Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios.....	5420	Ms. Goldie Ghamari.....	5439
Mr. Michael Mantha	5421	Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5440
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	5421	Mr. Dave Smith.....	5440
Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers.....	5422	Mr. Taras Natyshak	5440
Mr. Dave Smith.....	5424	Mr. Aris Babikian.....	5443
Mr. Chris Glover	5424	Mr. Michael Mantha.....	5443
Mr. Mike Harris	5425	Miss Kinga Surma.....	5444
Ms. Jessica Bell.....	5425	Ms. Suze Morrison.....	5444
Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers.....	5425	Mr. Taras Natyshak	5444
		Mr. Stephen Lecce.....	5445
		Mr. Faisal Hassan.....	5447
		Mr. Jim McDonell.....	5448
		Mr. Michael Mantha.....	5448
		Mr. Sheref Sabawy.....	5448
		Mr. Stephen Lecce.....	5448
		Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5449

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 30 May 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 30 mai 2019

Report continued from volume A.

1540

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BRINGING CHOICE AND FAIRNESS
TO THE PEOPLE ACT (BEVERAGE
ALCOHOL RETAIL SALES), 2019
LOI DE 2019 VISANT À OFFRIR
À LA POPULATION PLUS DE CHOIX
ET UN ACCÈS ÉQUITABLE EN MATIÈRE
DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL
DE BOISSONS ALCOOLIQUES

Mr. Fedeli moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 115, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act with
respect to the termination of a specified agreement / *Projet*
de loi 115, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools en ce qui
concerne la résiliation d'un accord particulier.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I
return to the minister.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I'll be split-
ting my time with the member for Barrie–Springwater–
Oro-Medonte—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm
sorry to interrupt the minister for a moment. If the mem-
bers of the House are staying, they are welcome to, and if
they are leaving, they are welcome to, but please do so
quietly. The House will come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise
to speak about Bill 115, Bringing Choice and Fairness to
the People Act. We campaigned on a promise to put the
people first, including by growing jobs and expanding
choice and convenience for Ontario consumers. After
reviewing the report prepared by special adviser Ken
Hughes, we introduced the Bringing Choice and Fairness
to the People Act to ensure Ontario consumers can get the
choice, convenience and fairness they want.

We campaigned on a promise to put people first. This
is not just about beer and wine, this is not just about choice
and convenience; this is about creating fairness for Ontario
consumers.

Most people in the province of Ontario would not be
aware that the government does not own the Beer Store.
Most people think we own the Beer Store. We do own the
LCBO and its beautiful brand, but we do not own the Beer
Store. The province's beer distribution, including the Beer

Store, is owned by three global beer multinationals that
were handed a sweetheart deal by the previous Liberal
government. The previous government was more inter-
ested in protecting profits than convenience, choice and
fairness for the people of Ontario. It is a near monopoly
that is a bad deal for consumers and businesses, and is
deeply unfair to the people of Ontario.

Convenience means not having to always wait in a huge
lineup, taking up your precious weekend time with friends
and families. Convenience can mean one-stop shopping,
the convenience of being able to pick up a case of beer for
a barbecue at the same time you're buying your burgers,
buns and salads. Convenience means only making one trip
to the store, saving you time and money. Convenience is
being able to pick up a bottle of wine for dinner with
friends even if it's on a holiday weekend.

Choice means having more access to local products to
support our craft brewers and distillers within our own
area. Choice means being able to support a local store in
our local community instead of supporting huge multi-
national corporations.

Speaker, the safe, responsible sale and consumption of
alcohol in Ontario is and will continue to be a top priority
for our government. We want to ensure any proposed
improvements would uphold the safety and health of our
communities and our roads. Our special adviser, Ken
Hughes, has been hard at work on the changes our govern-
ment is proposing to make. His experience as chair of
Alberta Health Services is informing our government's
approach, ensuring we introduce change responsibly.

I want to read a couple of quotes from special adviser
Ken Hughes's report. This is a quote:

"Ontario has a once in a generation opportunity to make
meaningful change that will allow small businesses to
flourish and create jobs while providing choice and
convenience for the purchase of beverage alcohol. Over
the past 92 years, successive governments have incremen-
tally let rules, loopholes, institutions, and special interests
develop a near-monopoly beer distribution system that
primarily benefits a few larger brewers. Now is the chance
to create a system built for the consumer, for the citizen,
for the people."

This is from our special adviser, Ken Hughes. I'll read
a few more of his quotes a little later.

Again, Speaker, the province's current beer distribution
system is owned not by the people of Ontario but by three
global beer giants who were handed a sweetheart deal by
the previous government. It's a near monopoly that's bad
for consumers, bad for business and deeply unfair to the
people of Ontario.

Now, as I mentioned, Ken Hughes was our special adviser for our beverage alcohol review, and he had a mission to provide guidance to all of us here in the Legislature on how our government can modernize Ontario's beverage alcohol system. His report lays out clearly how unfair the current system is for everyday consumers and businesses in our province. His report, which can be found on the Ministry of Finance site online, shows how the agreement with the Beer Store and its multinational owners is the primary roadblock to us fulfilling our commitment to the people of Ontario to create a more fair and convenient alcohol retail system throughout the province.

Again, our special adviser has clearly stated, "This is a bad deal for Ontarians because it gives control over the beer market to three dominant beer companies. This stifles competition, keeps prices artificially high, and prevents new craft beer entrepreneurs from getting a strong foothold in the market." He goes on to say, "It also limits real choice."

Speaker, many of us—in fact, probably all of us—in this Legislature, have these young entrepreneur craft brewers in our local communities and our ridings, and this deal is primarily in the way of them continuing to grow.

Now, let me talk a little about what's called the Master Framework Agreement. This is the sweetheart deal. If passed and proclaimed, our bill, Bill 115, would terminate the previous government's unfair 10-year agreement with the Beer Store. The Master Framework Agreement with the Beer Store and the three large global brewers who own it has severely restricted choice and convenience for consumers and has limited the opportunity for our businesses to grow. It has limited their opportunity to innovate and it has truly limited their opportunity to create jobs in all of our communities.

I'll take a moment, Speaker, to explain how the agreement with the Beer Store is unfair to our businesses and our consumers. The agreement also effectively gives the Beer Store a near monopoly—it actually gives them a monopoly on selling 12- and 24-packs of beer in most local markets in the province. This forces consumers to buy from them if they want the convenience of buying in bulk.

The agreement also puts limits on new outlets for selling alcohol. The agreement restricts the number of new grocery stores that can sell alcohol to 450 across the entire province, and once the government reaches that limit, which is not far from now, more stores can't be authorized to open until that exclusive agreement expires in 2025. Now, considering that Ontario currently has the fewest number of outlets selling beverage alcohol per capita of any province in the country, this tells you that convenience and choice is not what's happening in Ontario. This is particularly unfair for people in Ontario who don't live in large cities, who don't have access to a vehicle or don't have the time or the wherewithal to travel long distances to buy beer. In order to reach the national average—just to be the same as the national average on a per capita basis—Ontario would need to open an additional 4,000 retail outlets—just to be the same as the national average.

1550

Speaker, this agreement is also bad, as I've said, for many of the small and independently owned brewers that don't benefit from owning a significant share of the Beer Store. Craft beer sales make up less than 2% of sales at the Beer Store. That's how restricted this is. But they make up more than 10% of the sales at our own government-owned LCBO, and they make up more than 15% of the sales at the grocery stores that they're allowed to sell in today. Clearly, something is wrong, but clearly there's a robust demand for our exciting craft beers and there's an opportunity for growth in these small breweries.

The agreement keeps in place an anti-competitive, anti-consumer beer distribution system controlled by some of the largest beer companies in the world, and it only exists in Ontario. Nowhere else in the world is a group of the largest global brewers given a near monopoly and effective control over 70% of the beer retail market. Again, as I said at the beginning, most people in Ontario—and I'm going to admit, when I was first elected eight years ago, I didn't know this either. I just presumed, like I think most of Ontario, that the people of Ontario owned the LCBO, and we do, and I incorrectly presumed that the people of Ontario owned the Beer Store. Everybody thinks that. The people of Ontario do not own the Beer Store. It is owned by three global beer giants. It is an unfair agreement that puts the interests of large global brewers ahead of the people of Ontario and ahead of small businesses.

Now, you've been hearing the ads and you've been hearing all of the people out there, the—

Interjection: Propaganda.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The propaganda, thank you, that's out there, all of the horror stories that are coming. Speaker, you have to ask yourself why these multinational companies do not want the government to sell more of their products in more grocery stores, more convenience stores and more big box stores. Why wouldn't somebody who is making a product want us to sell more of their product elsewhere for them? That's how lucrative the sweetheart deal is that the Beer Store has with the previous Liberal government. It was a good deal for multinational companies and their profit margins, but it's a bad deal for the people who want to enjoy a cold beer at the cottage on a hot summer day, but who would have to drive for miles to reach the nearest Beer Store.

Now, I can tell you it's a bad deal for the neighbourhood corner store owners and operators who miss out on the potential sales that could help them grow and create local jobs. I'll read you another quote from Ken Hughes's report. He says that "the citizens of Ontario have long suffered under an anti-competitive, anti-consumer beer distribution system controlled by some of the largest beer companies in the world." This is his quote in the independent report to us. "Nowhere else in the world is a consortium of the largest global brewers given effective control over 70% of the beer retail market, including the exclusive right to sell 12 and 24 packs...."

"Nowhere else in the world does a government give the biggest beer companies special privileges at the expense

of consumers and the rest of the industry. The existing [Master Framework Agreement] negotiated by the previous government is a terrible deal for Ontario consumers and small businesses. Left alone, it will continue the unfairness of the current system for the next six years.”

It’s a bad deal, as I said, Speaker, for the craft breweries that put so much hard work in creating a high-quality product, only to struggle to get a foothold in the market. Now, I know in my community of North Bay, a town of 55,000, there are four craft brewers that I’m aware of. I think there’s another microbrewery that I have not seen, but I understand there are four craft brewers in the city who are part of being able to be shut out from some of these markets. These are business people who invested their money, opened a business, desperately trying to create a product, only to have somebody in the way of their sales.

In Ontario, you cannot get a beer when you want at a price you would expect because of the Master Framework Agreement. Again, Speaker, I have said this earlier: This is not just about beer and wine, and it’s not just about choice and convenience. This is about fairness. Over the past 92 years, successive governments have slowly but surely, as I said earlier, let these rules and these loopholes and all of these special interests develop this near-monopoly beer distribution system that primarily benefits but a few, larger brewers. It’s a system that would hold back on consumer convenience, fair competition, and small business growth for another six years.

Now, Mr. Hughes went on to say that “that near-monopoly has come at a cost to consumers in Ontario. It has severely restricted choice and convenience for consumers, and in fact”—as I mentioned earlier—“Ontario currently has the fewest number of outlets per capita selling beverage alcohol of any province in Canada. The current situation is not fair to consumers, or to our smaller craft beer entrepreneurs, innovators and job creators.”

Now is the chance to create a system built for the consumer. As we’ve said in this Legislature many times, from the government for the people, Speaker, Ontario is ready for a change. Our government launched a comprehensive consultation, going to the people to hear what they thought of the alcohol retail system in our province. We listened to more than 33,000 consumers and businesses that shared their views on how beverage alcohol choice and convenience could be addressed in Ontario. We also spoke to stakeholders in the retail alcohol market: big brewers, small brewers, winemakers, grape growers, retailers, consumer groups, restaurants, bars.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make meaningful change that will allow these small businesses to thrive and create jobs, while providing choice and convenience to consumers. I can tell you, Speaker, I’m going home later on today—tonight, actually—and tomorrow—on my way in to North Bay from my home in Corbeil, I stop and I shoot the breeze on Friday mornings with our small convenience store. It’s a little outlet convenience store in Callander, across the street from Tiny Italy, the restaurant where I’ll have breakfast tomorrow

morning. Every single Friday when I go in there, whoever is working behind the counter—the first thing they say to me when I walk in the door is, “Are we going to be able to sell beer and wine here?” It’s non-stop. It does not fail. So on the weekend, when I visit them—either tomorrow morning, or I’ll see them again Saturday morning when I go in to shoot the breeze—I will take a photo with them, and I will share that photo, and I will share exactly what whoever it is behind the counter has to say, word for word. It will be the very first thing out of their mouth. I guarantee you right now that the first thing they’re going to say is, “When are we going to be able to sell beer and wine?” especially now that we’ve brought the bill forward. They’ve been saying that to me since the election, because we campaigned on that. We promised the people that we would be bringing beer and wine to corner stores, big box stores and more grocery stores. So I will share that photo and their words.

1600

We are taking the advice of the special adviser to consider our parliamentary tools that we have—access to those tools that will allow us to fulfill our promise to the people. Our legislation, if passed and proclaimed, would help bring fairness and convenience to Ontario’s alcohol retail system and allow our government to move forward with our promise to bring choice and convenience to consumers and new opportunities for businesses.

Again, though, I do want to reiterate our government’s commitment to social responsibility: The safe, responsible sale and consumption of alcohol in Ontario is and will continue to be a top priority for our government. We want to ensure that any proposed improvements would uphold the safety and health of our communities and our roads. That is one of the reasons why we appointed Ken Hughes—specifically Ken Hughes. His experience as chair of Alberta Health Services is helping inform our government’s approach, ensuring that we introduce change responsibly. We’re encouraged that this sense of social responsibility is shared by convenience store owners, by our brewers and by other retailers.

Our government is respecting consumers and finally treating adults like adults. The people of Ontario are mature enough to make the decisions that work best for them. We’re also committed to helping them keep more money in their pockets while giving them more choice and convenience.

Modernizing the alcohol retail system promises to significantly benefit the Ontario economy.

I’ll read some quotes from the Retail Council of Canada, which produced a report based on Statistics Canada data. “The province of Ontario only has 2,702 locations that can retail alcohol in one form or another. As pointed out earlier this month in Ontario’s 2019 budget, that represents 2.4 outlets per 10,000 persons ranking us last in the country—and well below the national average....

“To move to the national average”—as I mentioned earlier—“Ontario would need to increase the number of locations by 4,028.” That also would mean an increase to Ontario’s GDP—that’s our growth—of \$3.5 billion a year.

The retail council also goes on to say that Ontario stands to gain 9,000 jobs in addition to \$3.5 billion added to the GDP.

The retail council also surveyed their own membership. They found that the net of tax price of popular beers was an average of 8.3% more expensive in Ontario relative to Quebec. We would need about 10,000 new retail locations to match the per capita number in Quebec—10,000 more just to match what they're doing there. Their price, as I said, is 8.3% less than the price in Ontario. That's why this deal, our legislation could save people of Ontario hundreds of millions of dollars every year by creating more opportunity and one-stop shopping. But the agreement with the Beer Store stands in the way, and if it remains, it means six more years of stifled competition, limited choice and inconvenience for businesses and adult consumers.

It's time Ontario joins the rest of Canada and most of the world in making the purchase of alcohol more convenient for consumers. It's time that we open up the market for creative, dedicated and hard-working craft brewers so they can showcase their products, grow and create great new jobs. It's time that convenience stores, which play such an important role in neighbourhoods and small towns across Ontario, be able to meet the demands of their customers and also grow and create jobs.

Now, I've stood in this Legislature eight years and I've told this story a few times. When I leave my home in Corbeil, if I turn—and this is why I'm telling this story, is because in the GTHA and some of the larger centres, you may not appreciate the fact that there already is beer and wine in corner stores in rural and northern Ontario. It's something you don't necessarily see here, but if I leave my home in Corbeil and turn right and drive just a little bit down Highway 94, I come to the Lucky 13. Now, I can pull in there and get gas. You can also buy groceries, fireworks, tires, and beer, wine, and alcohol.

If I turn left down Highway 94, through Callander and off to Nipissing township, I'll stop at Young's general store. Again, they have gasoline—it's a gas station. You get your car worked on there. They sell fireworks, groceries, lottery tickets, beer, wine, alcohol. This is commonplace in northern and rural Ontario. This is not, "Oh, my gosh. What's going to happen if we have beer and wine in corner stores?" We have had it there as long as I remember.

If I don't go down the Nipissing highway and I keep going straight, I will come to Trout Creek, the bottom end, the lowest, southernmost end of my riding. I will go into Tariq's general store. I love going in and seeing Tariq and his wife, Samanta. We have a great opportunity to talk about them moving to Canada and buying a business, growing their business. We shoot the breeze on Saturday afternoons at Tariq's general store. He sells groceries. He's the only one around for groceries. Tariq sells snacks, newspapers, fireworks, ice cream, beer, wine and alcohol. That's Tariq's general store.

That's how we live in rural and northern Ontario. We do this. This is not groundbreaking. It's restrictive. There

are very few. There's only a couple hundred—209—of these kinds of stores throughout Ontario, but they're some of my favourite places throughout the north, where we know and enjoy the owners of these places—as I say, Samanta and Tariq. My friend Joe Bennett and his wife, Jan, introduced us to them. The six of us have had dinner many times. They actually came here, Sam, Tariq and Joe and Jan Bennett, for the reading of the budget, because I've talked about Tariq in this Legislature so many times. He thought, "I've got to come and see this room that Vic is talking about me in."

Alcohol reform is something long-desired by the people of Ontario. I have given examples of how we handle this in the north and rural Ontario, but I would say to you that lifestyles have changed. People are busier. They expect more flexibility and convenience. With this legislation, we are moving another step forward on Premier Ford's promise, all of our promise, to improve customer choice and convenience and enable more opportunities for businesses in the beverage alcohol sector.

1610

Speaker, we call on all of our colleagues in the House to support Bill 115. Support an alcohol retail system that is more modern, more efficient and more fair to consumers and businesses in this great province. Speaker, this is for the people.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order.

I recognize the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte.

Mr. Doug Downey: I think I'll pick up exactly where the minister left off in terms of explaining a reality that we live with in our own communities.

Speaker, I grew up in a little town called Bond Head. There are two Bond Heads; one has Bond Lake and the other one has the postal code. The one that I grew up in has the postal code. It's up Highway 400. In Bond Head, there are about 400 people. If you wanted to buy beer or wine in Bond Head, you had to go south to Schomberg in the great riding of King–Vaughan, or you had to go some distance to the west to Alliston in the riding of Simcoe–Grey, or you had to go into Bradford. Now, just so I can orient you, as you're driving up the 400, the big flag at the Husky—that's halfway in between Bond Head and Bradford. That's the space that I grew up in.

There was a phenomenon in Bond Head called Sunday Beer. Sunday Beer was the beer that you borrowed from your neighbour that he didn't want to drink because it was crappy, but that's all you could get.

You had to leave town to get alcohol. And this wasn't a puritan thing; it was just a practical thing. We had a corner store. We had a Becker's, actually. It became something else later on. We had a gas station. We had George Alexandropoulos's pizza place, just known as George's. That was about it for retail. But you certainly had no hope of getting alcohol legally unless you borrowed it from your neighbour.

Madam Speaker, I want to use an analogy about fairness and what I think the people of Ontario would say if

we picked a different product. Let's not talk about alcohol for a moment. I think everybody remembers Blockbuster for videos. You could get VHS, Beta, all that stuff. I could only imagine what the public would say if the government stepped in and said, "You can only rent movies from Blockbuster." Because we used to go down and rent them from Becker's. You couldn't get them on demand. That's wasn't a thing; it didn't exist. Can you imagine if the government passed a law that said you can only rent a movie from Blockbuster? I think people would have been incensed. But they would have borrowed it from neighbours and all sorts of other things.

The fairness piece of this, the fairness piece of three foreign national companies controlling the access to alcohol, controlling beer in Ontario—and we have to understand how we got here. Somebody didn't just decide this was a good idea. Things evolve. This has evolved, and we're trying to evolve further. In our platform, we committed to the further expansion of beer and wine in corner stores, grocery stores and box stores based on market demand and not government decree, maintaining the LCBO's role in wholesale and distribution and as a location for the people of Ontario to buy their beer and wine.

Madam Speaker, I want to be really clear on this point, because in Ken Hughes's report he very specifically says, he recommends maintaining the LCBO as a valuable government asset. So I don't want any illusions that there's anything happening there. I'm just talking about the distribution of beer and the sale of beer in beer stores.

Cast back to 1927—Prohibition—and how we move forward. And I don't know—there's different ages of members in here, but I suspect most members will remember. I was just knee-high to my father when we'd go into the Beer Store and the beer was in the back. It was behind walls. You had to fill out a slip to order the beer that you wanted and then they would bring the beer out and off you would go. It was a very, very controlled environment. That comes from the evolution of control from Prohibition, and it's based on a couple of core beliefs.

The first core belief is that adults can't be trusted. It has to be part of that, that adults can't be trusted. Part of our system that's existed for 92 years has been designed to be awkward and inconvenient for that reason: because adults can't be trusted.

There's also a bit of an assumption that the private sector retailers, with the exception of a small group of insiders, don't have the capacity to balance market competition and social responsibility. I don't accept that premise. I don't think that that's the way we operate in Ontario. Things have evolved. We've come a long ways from Prohibition. There are lots of great stories about Toronto the Good and how things were—even in Christie Pits—back in the day. But things have changed and demands have changed, and it's fundamentally not fair that three foreign nationals control the sale of beer in Ontario.

This has been studied before; this is not really a novel idea, to be honest with you, but it hasn't moved forward.

It's been studied several times: 1968, 1973, 1977, 1983, 1986, 2005 and 2015. Reports were issued about modernizing beer and wine in retail, and yet very little has actually happened to respect adults and decision-making and to create fairness.

I've mentioned a couple of times about the foreign nationals. I just want to give scale. This is who controls the sale of beer in Ontario. There are three main ones: Molson, the seventh-largest brewer in the world by volume, located in Denver, Colorado. We have Labatt—Anheuser-Busch InBev is the parent company. Just the scale of this market: They merged in 2016 at a cost of \$100 billion. That's almost a third of our provincial debt, which we know to be a problem. That's a big number. That's how big this business is. Labatt owns almost half—45%—of the Beer Store. Molson owns almost half of the Beer Store, at 51%.

There's a third owner, Sleeman. I thought, just being somebody who was a casual consumer—I thought for a long time that Sleeman was a craft brew. It really started that way. It started as a craft brew. But it wasn't a Sunday beer; it was a good one. But Sleeman was bought by Sapporo; it was sold in 2006. It still presents as a craft beer, but they're a 4% owner in the Beer Store. Sapporo also is not a Canadian company.

There's an impact when foreign companies own Canadian assets and control Canadian distribution. I think most people will remember the Labatt brewery in Rexdale. It closed down in 2005. They demolished the place in 2007. They're not making less beer, they're just not making it here. So you have to ask yourself, who is making it in Canada? Who is making it in Ontario? Well, there are craft beer people all over Ontario. It's a really proud, proud thing. I see the member from Algoma-Manitoulin—Railside is a great craft beer from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Split Rail.

Mr. Doug Downey: Split Rail, sorry. Railside is in London.

Each of our ridings has craft breweries that we're very proud of. We talk a lot about shopping local and sourcing local and supporting Ontario product and Canadian product, but we're doing the exact opposite with the Beer Store monopoly. We're doing the exact opposite.

I want to tell a quick story of how the craft beer market is engaging in its communities. About eight years ago now, a friend of mine was hosting a garden tour. I don't know if people have gone on garden tours. They do them as fundraisers, to go around and see people's properties and show off their place a little bit. There was a fellow, Mike Davenport—his wife, Cindy, actually, was the one who was hosting the garden tour. But Mike did his part. He fixed up his garage. He got everything sparkling clean and got his motorbike out and some of his toys. Afterwards, he was on the radio—he used to sell cars, so he had some really neat cars. He was on the radio talking about something, and Jack Latimer, the radio host, said to him, "So how was the garden tour?" He said, "Actually, I was a little disappointed because we had tons of people through

but nobody went through my garage.” And Jack, just a bright light, said, “Well, you should do a man cave tour.” That sat for about three years, just that comment.

1620

Years later—about five years ago; I was Chair of Big Brothers Big Sisters—the executive director for Big Brothers Big Sisters, James Maxwell, was having lunch with Mike Davenport, and they had a conversation about this, about the radio conversation. James came back to me, and I said, “Wow. That’s a great idea. That’s a great fundraiser. Let’s do a man cave tour.”

Of course, if you’re going to do a man cave tour, you need to have places to go. That was pretty easy; people are proud to show off the things that they have. And it’s open to men and women; it’s just called a man cave tour. But they were really proud to show off stuff. We went to six restaurants—we decided six was the magic number—that they would each host at one. Then we went to craft breweries. Within a day, they committed, because it was a local issue and it was to support a local cause. All the money went to charity. They were really quick to do that. I can tell you, to try and navigate the Beer Store was a very different experience.

So talking about shopping local and supporting local, the craft brewers have been doing this, and it’s a growth area. You can go on craft beer walks. You can go on craft tours.

I should finish the story about the man cave tour. We then, of course, had buses donated by the local hockey team—by the Orillia Terriers and by some others—so that we could move people around. It was all adults, and everybody was responsible. But what a great way to put people together with local product. It’s now in its fifth year, I’m happy to say, and it has raised a ton of money for Big Brothers Big Sisters.

That’s just one example of the role that a local interest can play in our communities. It can play out all over Ontario. It happens everywhere. So it’s a little frustrating to hear opposition to opening up the market to competition, because the near monopoly really isn’t competition.

When we did our 33,000 consultations—33,000 inputs, surveys—we heard a lot about competition and fairness, fundamental fairness, about foreign interests owning the Beer Store. We also did round tables. I hosted three round tables that had dozens of people at them, in all sectors. Mothers Against Drunk Driving were there. We had the wine council there. We had craft brewers there. We had police show up, so that we could have their perspective in terms of safety, because safety is really important. It’s very important for what we’re doing. Although people need to be treated like adults, we need safeguards as well. We heard a couple of things. We heard that people do want the convenience. We heard that people do want to be able to stop in at the corner store, especially on a holiday weekend or at any time on the way home, because they have company coming for dinner and they want to grab a bottle of wine. They don’t understand why that’s not possible. When you go to other jurisdictions and you go to other provinces, it’s just commonplace.

We talk a lot about Quebec as a comparator. It’s a very different environment there. It operates very well. They don’t have the problems that people are suggesting we’re going to have here. In terms of underage shopping, there have been blind studies done. The government actually spends money doing blind shopping, going in and sending in people to test whether they’re going to card or not. But the industry has done it itself. The compliance rate with convenience stores on cigarettes, because that’s our closest comparable, is 97%. It’s higher than the LCBO; it’s higher than the Beer Store. There are a couple of reasons for that. The reason is because that corner store is the lifeblood of the family that owns it. They will not take the risk. They will card because they will not take the risk of losing their biggest asset, their livelihood. I just think it’s important for people to understand that human behaviour, because what we’re doing, if the bill passes, is putting product in a position that is safeguarded by people who are responsible. The convenience stores in Ontario are little social hubs of our communities.

If I hearken back to Bond Head and the Becker’s store that was there, when you were kids, you’d ride your bike down to Becker’s, not because you needed to buy something, but because all the kids were riding their bikes down to Becker’s. You were trying to figure out what to do and, next thing you know, you’re at the park and doing something else. So there’s no reason why it shouldn’t be a social hub and it shouldn’t be a touch point for everybody for all products.

It’s a bit of an artificial construct that was set up. When the Liberals went down the road of striking this deal, they reinforced a monopoly in the face of what could have been competition, and it has been looked at several times, as I mentioned.

How will this affect craft beer? Because I was talking about craft beer. Currently, craft beer is only 2% of the sales in the Beer Store—2%. But what we see in other jurisdictions is that craft beer sales in other sales outlets are significantly higher, because people want to buy local and they want to support local and they want to source local. It makes up 10% of sales in the LCBO, so I’m not just speculating about other jurisdictions—2% through the Beer Store; 10% in the LCBO.

Can you imagine what would happen if it was available in the corner store or if it was available in the grocery store? And we’re seeing some of that. The data so far tells us that, in grocery stores, craft beer sales are up to 15% of their sales. We’re not forcing the consumer to do anything; we’re allowing the consumer to make choices.

Some other pieces that we are doing as a government is extending the hours of alcohol sales. We’re extending hours from 9 o’clock in the morning, seven days a week. Again, that accommodates the modern living. I can tell you, in my area, I’m not far from the OPP headquarters. No big surprise, the OPP headquarters is a 24-hour job. It’s a 24-hour system. We have hospitals in our areas; those are 24-hour operations. I’m not terribly far from Casino Rama, which runs long, long hours—24 hours. I’m talking about the workers; I’m not talking about the

consumers. Those workers—Kubota sometimes runs 24 hours. It supplies mining and it supplies pipeline stuff.

When those people get off work, their 9 o'clock in the morning is like our 9 o'clock at night, so it's just matching up what makes sense for convenience and fairness and treating people like adults, and being able to—when we were first discussing this in the House about opening up at 9 o'clock in the morning, the Masters tournament was on at 9 o'clock. I know people that would have come together at a local pub to watch the Masters with each other and maybe have a pint, or people who were in golf tournaments who actually tee off at 9 o'clock and might want to have a Caesar hole somewhere. We're not making the Wild West; we're just matching with what people do and what they want to do. Putting beer and wine in corner stores is doing exactly that. They want the convenience and they want the ability to access product when they want it.

Now, the minister talked about the number of stores, and I'm just going to repeat this: We have fewer stores that can sell alcohol than any other province compared against population—so based on population, fewer stores than any other province. Again, Quebec is a pretty good comparator because it's such a large province. There are 8,000 retail stores in Quebec. I haven't done the math on what that is per-population—but just in a gross number, 8,000 selling alcohol. In Ontario, with a bigger population, we're at 3,000—3,000. It's not even in scale, and that's without doing the per-population numbers. So we really want to open up for convenience for people so they have access to the right things at the right time when they need it and how they need it.

Now, Speaker, I want to go to some of the recommendations in Ken Hughes's report. It's an excellent report. I commend it to you. He clearly has strong background in both government policy and the field in general. It's not a terribly long report. It's quite comprehensive. It's only 25 pages, so I do commend it to you. But he makes several recommendations. We heard from the minister why, and we may get to that. I want people to understand what the actual recommendations are:

1630

“(1) Do everything possible under the Master Framework Agreement to authorize additional alcohol retail outlets.” The why on that is because we only have 3,000; even Quebec has 8,000. It's pretty straightforward.

“(2) Consider other available options within its powers that would provide ways to expand retail sales should the negotiations with [the Beer Store] and its owners prove unsuccessful.

“(3) Take a phased approach toward authorizing new retailers and beverage alcohol products available for sale.” Just to break that down a little bit, you don't have to do everything right away, but you phase it and let people know where you're headed, and that's what we're doing.

“(4) Enable price competition between retailers.” Now, what we heard at the round tables—and I don't know if Ken Hughes heard this as well; I suspect he did. At the round tables, we had dozens of people. One thing we did

hear was that in the smaller sales outlets, there's a suggestion that there should be a price floor so that there's some consistency, but this doesn't say whether he suggests there should be higher prices so that you can compete on that, but it's certainly something worthy of discussion—because I don't mind for convenience. If I stop at my local store on the way home and a bottle of wine that I could buy in the LCBO for \$12 happens to be \$14, I'm paying the extra \$2 for the convenience. I'm okay with that. That's a choice I make for leaving it to the last minute, and that's fine. I certainly encourage us to have price competition on that level.

“(5)”—and there are nine for those who are counting—“Continue to consult with Ontario winemakers and grape growers to determine how Ontario's wine industry will be best supported in an expanded retail environment in a manner that respects international trade obligations.” Now, there's a lot packed into that, but right at the core of it is that we have a proud wine industry. We have a successful wine industry. When I go out for dinner, I ask for Ontario wine and not just because I'm trying to support local, but because it's good wine and I can count on it. So we need to do things to protect that proud industry, and we have to make sure we stay within the boundaries of international trade obligations. We don't want to do something inadvertent.

“(6) Continue to engage Ontario's important spirits industry.” This move for beer and wine is—he's right to not ignore the spirits industry because the spirits industry is a really, really Ontario-based product. I won't run through all the names, but if it's rye, the corn comes from Ontario. It's a fully sourced and produced product in Ontario, and 70% of the spirits made in Ontario are shipped out. It's a real good industry. Now, I have a particular affinity for Wiser's and not because I love exclusively the Wiser's product, but my dad was born in Corbyville, where Wiser's was produced. My grandfather was a manager at the Corbyville Distillery. He passed away when my dad was 10, so I didn't know him, but I've run into several people since—and it's in the riding of—I'm going to get it wrong, and if I say it's Mr. Kramp's riding, I'm going to get corrected to say his riding, so I won't.

Madam Speaker, the history of spirits in this province is a proud history, and so we do—I just want to hesitate on that one for a moment and reinforce that we have to engage Ontario's important spirits industry.

“(7) Maintain the LCBO as a valuable government asset.” That's black and white, clear, not conditional, not if this or that or but. Maintain it as a government asset—I think that's really important to underscore because, in years past, every time the government does a review or there's fearmongering or concern—it's not even fearmongering, it's just concern because it's such a valuable, well-respected organization.

“(8) Work with retailers, beverage alcohol manufacturers and public health experts to ensure increasing convenience does not lead to increased social costs related to alcohol.”

It's interesting, because I met with the Korean convenience store association. They were part of the consultation. They have already drafted, effectively, a Smart Serve guide for employees. A lot of the organizations are so keen that they've already started down that road, to make sure that safety and security—obviously, for their employees, but for things like carding—are in place, to make sure that it is run, because they want to protect their businesses. They want to make sure that their members are protected.

So not increasing the social costs related to alcohol is one of nine recommendations, and it's a strong one.

“(9) Reduce unnecessary regulatory burden and address inefficiencies that increase costs for industry.”

There is a fair bit in that, and there's a lot of consultation to be done on that. In terms of cutting red tape, putting the protections in place and addressing the inefficiencies—there are inefficiencies in our current system. I won't presuppose which ones we're going to tackle and in what order, but just to acknowledge that they exist. I think everybody would acknowledge they exist, when they talk to people working in the field. There are some choices to be made there, but we'll make choices based on feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders. It's really important that we get the experiential, that we get the important distribution, sale, resale and packaging and all of that. We have to make sure that it's efficient, that it takes costs out of the system but protects the public at the same time.

I know that change is hard. Change is hard for people, to imagine what the new world looks like a little bit. Sometimes people are concerned that if you change something—“It's just that I'm more comfortable where I am.” But that's not a good choice. It's not a good choice in this instance, because we're stifling a market and we're stifling innovation. We're causing inconvenience, and we're treating people like they're not adults. It's not who we are as a province. This isn't even political; this isn't even a partisan thing. It's not who we are as a province. People need to be able to make decisions for themselves—*informed decisions and safe decisions*, but they have to be able to make decisions for themselves.

One good example of that is the tailgating that we've talked about. Again, you put boundaries on it. You might have to get a permit. Drinking in parks, whether that's something that municipalities—they get to control parks, if any, and what some of the rules are around that. So it's not a free-for-all, but it is respecting people making their own decisions.

The Master Framework Agreement gives the Beer Store the exclusive right to sell 12- and 24-packs in most of their local markets, forcing customers to buy from the Beer Store if they want to purchase in bulk.

Madam Speaker, a two-four, to me, is not bulk. For the average person, I think, a two-four is not bulk. For me to have to go into the LCBO and only be able to buy six-packs, or have to buy a flat at an increased cost—it's much more expensive to buy four sixes than it is to buy one two-four. I just don't think that it's anything but unfair. That's why the cost of beer in Ontario, when you take taxes out of it, is almost 10% higher here for the same two-four than

in Quebec. I'm convinced that the reason for that is because they can.

I have no problem with companies making a profit or setting a price based on demand. But I do have a problem when the previous government gives them a monopoly and then leaves them free to do the same thing. That's not competition. That's a gift. It's a gift to the monopoly, and I don't think it's something that when we talk about our values as a province and we talk about the free market—that's not a free market. It's a monopoly, and it's a monopoly that's owned by foreign interests. I just can't imagine, if anybody started from zero on this process, that you would design that. I think you would fight it all the way along. We should be fighting it at this point as well.

1640

We need to fix the system for people, for fairness, for convenience, and to respect them. We need to make sure that people have choices and we need to encourage shop local. We need to encourage source and shop local at every turn, and opening up the market for beer and wine in corner stores does exactly that. We know it on the numbers. We know the sales are higher in convenience stores. We know the sales are higher in the LCBO.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to address this bill. I gather I'll have a longer opportunity later this evening.

Speaker, this is quite an extraordinary development that we're seeing take place in front of us in this Legislature. I say that not because I'm a defender of multinational brewing companies, because I'm not. But I do say that when you've got a contract in place the breaking of which or the abrogation of which could put this province at risk for substantial damages—calculations or speculations in the media of hundreds of millions, perhaps up to a billion—that should give us pause.

If the Minister of Finance, if this government, doesn't like this agreement, fair enough. The least-risky course for the people of Ontario is to wait until the agreement comes to its end and renegotiate at that point.

In part, I speak from having had the experience of being in this Legislature and watching the Liberals go through the gas plant scandal.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I know some of the Liberals don't like me saying that. But the reality was that contracts were cancelled, abrogated, because the government had a political problem and they felt they could do that and get away with it. In the end, we were stuck with a billion dollars.

This government seems to have learned nothing from that, even though the Minister of Finance sat on the committee of inquiry with me. We went through the emails. We looked at the risks that the government completely ignored. This government is doing the same. It is ignoring the risk of very big expenses.

When the Minister of Finance talks about the problem of wait times in the Beer Store—people having to line up

to get beer—I have to tell you, we have a much bigger problem in this province and that’s hallway medicine: people being stuck in hallways waiting for a room. And if you were to ask people in Ontario, “Which do you think is most important for us to address? Is it hallway medicine or lineups in beer stores?” I don’t think there would be any contest. This approach on the part of the government is putting our health care system at risk.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It’s a pleasure to speak after the member from Toronto–Danforth. I don’t take that to heart. I do agree with the beginning of his debate: that the risk that’s involved here is significant.

I don’t quite understand the government’s obsession with alcohol—50 times in the budget: Let’s drink in a park; let’s drink at 9 o’clock in the morning; let’s expand sales right away. It’s mentioned 50 times in the budget. That’s incredible.

What the minister is failing to disclose right now is the risk: how much it’s going to cost. Maybe he’s hoping that the government of Canada might bear that cost. It might be on them because of international agreements. Either he can’t say or he won’t disclose because he knows what the number is.

It’s also a reputational risk. This is the same government that’s torn up some 700 contracts in hydro, right? The trick is they’re legislating them. So it’s not just tearing up the contract, but now they’re trying to say, “Hey, I can exempt myself from liability.” And that’s wrong. It sends a wrong message to the international community.

So what’s the rush? There are six years left on this contract. Why would you not negotiate a further liberalization of alcohol sales, of craft beer and wine in corner stores? You know where you’re going to be in six years, so what’s the rush? What’s this sense of urgency? Why all this time and energy and money on expanding beer and wine sales in corner stores? When I knock on doors, I think this is number 99 out of 100 in priorities for Ontarians.

Speaker, I’d just like to finish by saying I wish the government had the same sense of urgency for things like the child advocate, the CASs in this province, getting information to parents of children with autism. I think their sense of urgency is misplaced and not aligned with the priorities of Ontarians.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: The one thing that my colleague from Toronto–Danforth is right about: We’re certainly not going to take any lessons from the previous government, after their record.

Speaker, when it comes to this bill, this was put forward after it was reviewed by special adviser Ken Hughes, in order to bring choice and fairness to the people and ensure that Ontario consumers can get the choice, convenience and fairness that they want and they deserve. This puts us in line with other jurisdictions like Quebec, where half of my family comes from. When we go to Quebec, it’s most often a one-stop shop for us; we go into a convenience

store and we pick up what we want, including some alcoholic beverages for the family. It’s a one-stop shop, and we go home afterwards—whereas here, you have to make multiple stops in order to get everything you need before you go home. That takes away time from your family, your friends. It’s certainly not convenient for Ontarians.

The minister referred to it as a near-monopoly that’s a bad deal for consumers and businesses—absolutely. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development in charge of small businesses—they were asking for fairness, and that’s not asking too much. When we talk about convenience, it means not having to wait in a huge lineup, it means making only one stop when picking up groceries, it means being able to support our local store owners instead of having large, multinational corporations.

As the minister also said earlier, this isn’t just about beer and wine, it isn’t just about choice and convenience; it’s about—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I appreciate the opportunity to speak briefly on this bill, on behalf of my constituents, the people of Davenport.

This is a confusing bill. It’s confusing that this government is in such a hurry to pass this legislation when, arguably, as others have said previously, including the member from Toronto–Danforth, the priorities of Ontarians just don’t seem to be beer.

I will say, I like a cold beer, like anyone. In fact, in my riding, we have a number of craft breweries, really fantastic places I highly recommend and would be happy to take any of my colleagues to for a visit. But none of them are asking for this. This is what’s so hilarious to me. Actually, most of the craft breweries in my riding are saying that corner stores being able to sell beer is going to kill them; it’s going to limit people’s choices. They are actually dealing very much with a very real issue that this government fails to address.

Why is this government so interested in talking about beer? Fifty times in the budget they talked about beer. While this government is literally cutting everything, finding cuts to everything, the fact that they would spend billions on breaking up the Beer Store, which, by the way, our children and grandchildren will pay for—I think the answer is very clear to anybody listening today, and that is politics, because as soon as the polls start to dip, suddenly the government says, “Whoa, wait a minute. Let’s talk about beer. Let’s talk about beer in corner stores. Let’s talk about beer in parks. Let’s talk about beer on the backs of trucks at 9 a.m.” This is not what Ontarians want to see.

They want to see this government actually dealing with the health care crisis. They want to see this government dealing with the opioid crisis. They want to see teachers—adults—in our schools, not courses being cancelled.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte.

Mr. Doug Downey: I want to thank the members from Toronto–Danforth, Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill and Davenport.

It has come up several times, both from the member of the former party and just now—why are we talking about beer so much? Well, I'll tell you why we're talking about beer so much: because in 1968, in 1973, in 1977, in 1983, in 1986, in 2005 and in 2015, people kept doing reports, but they didn't do anything about it. This is a government that does stuff about things. We're not just talking about it; we're making it happen. If all of the problems weren't stacked up over time, if the previous governments did anything about it, we wouldn't have to. But they didn't, so we are.

1650

Madam Speaker, I think when the average person watches the debate in this House, when the average person feels like they're being mocked for having a drink at 9 o'clock in the morning or having a tailgate party, that's the disconnect that happens for the average person and their government. So we're fixing that. We're respecting them. We're respecting them as adults. We're saying, "We're not mocking you for the choices you want to make. We're going to let you be an adult. We're going to let you make choices. We're going to allow convenience to happen. We're going to allow product to be where you are and not make you come to us." Just because we're the government doesn't mean we have to make people come to us. We have to open doors and let the market take care of choice and convenience.

And just because it has always been foreign-owned doesn't mean it has to continue to be foreign-owned. There's no magic in that. I can tell you, I talk to a lot of craft brewers, and we're hearing different things. That's possible, but we'll continue to consult, and we will get it right.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member from King–Vaughan on a point of order.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I would like, on behalf of the member from Etobicoke Centre, to request unanimous consent for the member to wear her Toronto Raptors jersey in the Legislature for the remainder of the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Mr. Lecce is seeking unanimous consent for the member for Etobicoke Centre to wear her Raptors jersey in the House for the remainder of the day. Agreed? Agreed.

Further debate?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Before I begin to discuss this bill, I just wanted to say that earlier today we had some debate on my private member's bill. We discussed Bill 114, the Nancy Rose Act to create pediatric palliative hospice care. It was passed, and so I wanted to again express my thanks, on behalf of my family and all of the bereaved parents in Ontario, for the support from the government side. It's something that I think will speak well of all of us in this House, so thank you for that.

The member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte talked about a movie. I would say, if this Legislature was a movie, people would say, "What kind of a movie is that?" Because we have just gone from discussing care for

sick and dying children, where we were crying and hugging it out, to now, where we're moving into discussing a bill that we have a fundamental disagreement on. Such is the strange life of a legislator, I would have to say. It makes for a strange life, but I'm sure it would not make for a very good movie, to be honest with you.

So here we go. We are here again discussing what? Beer. I have to say, really, how much more is there to say about beer? But apparently, there is quite a lot to say about beer in this Legislature.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, I can't believe it. I can't believe that we have to discuss beer again. What is it that they say on Seinfeld? "Say it isn't so." But it is so, and here we are, discussing beer.

I have an hour on the clock—58 minutes, in fact—to talk about beer. I really do wish that rather than talking about beer for 58 minutes—given some of the dialogue from the other side and some of the reasons put forward, I'd rather be drinking beer for the next 58 minutes. But we'll see what happens when the House is adjourned.

Let's talk about this government's—it cannot be understated—apparent obsession with beer and alcohol. Many times it has been said that a budget of about 350 pages mentions the word "beer" about 50 times; the word "poverty" doesn't get mentioned once—absolutely zero—and very few, if any, references to the environment or to Indigenous communities. So clearly, the priority is beer, not things like the opioid crisis, not things like the fires in Pikangikum and flooding in communities. We are here spending our precious time talking about beer.

We've had buck-a-beer, right? How could we forget buck-a-beer? It's actually quite a failed promise to deliver buck-a-beer to the people of Ontario. We now have the ability to have tailgating parties. I guess we can buy beer and alcohol at 9 o'clock in the morning now.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: That's right.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. So those are some of the things that this government is taking pride in and that's their legacy that they would like to be known by, but now we also have to talk about putting beer in convenience stores.

Madam Speaker, I have no problem with adults making adult decisions. That's what we do. I believe that adults make decisions that are best for them. But despite what we keep hearing across the aisle, this is not the thing that the people of Ontario are talking about. They're not concerned about this at all—not at all. Now, instead of talking about the opioid crisis, hallway health care, the climate change crisis, instead of talking about these important things, we are talking about putting beer in corner stores.

Really, this legislation seemed to come out of the blue. I don't remember that—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: A drop in the polls.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, maybe. It's convenient timing, I would have to say. We can talk about that later. But when we have a government that seems to be getting negative reviews, a drop in the polls, all of a sudden now we're talking about beer. It seems to be a bit of a distraction, but it's a very serious issue that this is used as a distraction

when this will have very serious consequences for the people of Ontario.

What are some of those serious consequences that this government seems to have dropped on us out of the blue and seems so in a rush to pass? Like young men in a hurry, as they say, they rush to pass this.

Ms. Marit Stiles: A panic, almost.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: A bit of a panic even, yes—a bit of a panic to get this bill passed. What is the risk that this bill introduced? It's something that the Minister of Finance and all the speakers from the government side seem to not want to speak about. They seem to want to undersell the significant risk that this legislation will put Ontario in. What is that risk? The risk is that we are prepared to spend hundreds of millions of dollars—it's been estimated at as much as a billion dollars—to rip up a duly signed contract. That's a lot of money, and we'll talk about that. That's a lot of money that could be used to support our hospitals, support our kids with autism. It's a lot of money. This government seems quite prepared to roll the dice on a court challenge that will, at the very least, require legal fees—we say that a lot in this House; this is a government that's doing very well for the lawyers in Ontario—and penalties to break up duly signed legal contracts. I have to repeat this: We are here, yet again, talking about a government that is ripping up contracts, duly signed contracts that were signed in good faith in this province of Ontario. I forget the number that we heard, but it's a significant number. Did I hear 700 contracts? I might have to correct my record.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: A billion dollars' worth.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, a billion dollars' worth of contracts. So really, there are two questions that we need to understand: Why is this government proposing this legislation, and, as you've said, why are they proposing it now? The timing does seem to be suspiciously coincidental with a significant plunge in the polls for the Premier's popularity.

That was a lot of P's I just went through there.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Alliteration.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes.

I think what we need to talk about are some of the facts and evidence, because really, in so many ways, what this government is proposing doesn't make any sense. In so many ways, that's very typical of the government's legislation that they present. They don't present any evidence for the legislation that they are proposing. They don't seem to want to have fulsome debate in the House. We have time allocation on every single bill in front of this House—I think every single bill that we have dealt with in this House has been time-allocated. We say it over and over again: What that means is that you are limiting input on your legislation, legislation that I have to say, frankly, could use some input. Some of it's not ready for prime time, but here we are discussing this legislation. Let's listen to Her Majesty's loyal opposition, listen to some of the input we have from our constituents. Don't limit debate. Let's make this legislation—let's try to polish this, if it's even possible. But no; we're going to time-allocate that bill.

1700

The other thing that this government doesn't want to do in order to make sure that they have evidence-based, informed legislation is really give the people of Ontario an opportunity to weigh in on legislation that will impact their lives significantly.

We have heard time and time again, with significant bills—Bill 74, the health care bill, which will upend our health care system—how they limited appearances at committee to one day. There were thousands and thousands of people who wrote in who wanted to be able to depute at that committee on the health care bill, and this government allocated one day—one day to a debate on a health care bill. Not the least of which, you had to be able to come to Toronto. If you were lucky enough to be one of the, let's say, 30 people who were able to depute this bill and if you were lucky enough to be able to travel to Toronto, you might have been able to have some input on a bill that would significantly change your life.

But it didn't travel. We didn't see it go to Far North communities, from one corner of the province to the other. Those people might have some concerns about how we're going to transform health care in a way that may not serve them well. But no; this government really doesn't want to consult or listen to evidence or listen to people other than, I would have to say, their insiders, and consultants that are personally picked by this government.

Let's just say that the number of outlets selling alcohol has already doubled since 2015, when we had the introduction of beer being sold in grocery stores. I have to say also that it's double the number of men that I've seen in grocery stores since this has happened, but that may be just a coincidence. I might have to get some money to study that that piece of—

Interjection: Observation.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —observation; thank you. But the evidence shows that this has not created new jobs in this sector. When the government says that this is going to create thousands and thousands of jobs, I'm just not taking them at their word, because they haven't put forward any evidence that this is so.

When access to alcohol has doubled over the past four years, why are we risking jobs, why are we tearing up contracts and why are we wasting time in this House talking about beer over and over again till it's mind-numbing? Why are we talking about that when we could be talking about the issues that real Ontarians care about?

I have to say that there are a lot of questions about convenience store lobbying on the part of this government that have remained unanswered. I can only intuit, from the fact that the government is not providing evidence or providing any background information as to why this is an urgent bill before us, that it has a lot to do with some of the lobbying that has happened inside the Premier's office. We know, because we stand around and we talk about this all the time, that Ontario families are looking for better health care. They have been hoping and waiting for an end to overcrowded emergency departments. During the campaign, that was the number one thing that I heard at

the door: People wanted an end to the kinds of crushing wait—the kinds of health care services that they never thought they would experience in Ontario. That was what they were talking about: health care lines, not lines at Beer Stores. That never came up once, Madam Speaker, at all.

We hear about families. We've had families in the gallery, almost since day one, who are dealing with these cuts to autism services for their children. This is something that is heartbreaking to hear. These are families that do not know what the future of the services will be for their children. They literally are pleading to say, "We are just trying to keep our kids safe. We're trying keep our kids out of jail. We're trying to make sure that our kids are a healthy, functioning part of society."

The sad part of all of this is that we know—evidence; there's a word. Evidence shows that autism treatments work. But yet we have a government that is prepared to let parents live with the kind of anxiety and the kind of suffering that they are going through now because they are having to cut kids' services and they're having to pay out of their own pocket for the services that they need, and most families can't afford this, so really they're just watching their kids regress. Over and over again, they've asked the government to make sure that this doesn't happen. The government seems to be silent on this, not providing any clear evidence as to how these autism services are going to roll out, moving forward, but guess what? Here we are, talking about beer.

You don't have to take my word for it, because my guess, Madam Speaker, is that the government side won't take my word for it. So I'm just going to share with you some of the many, many emails that I got in my office when it became apparent that this is what the government was focused on. Let me just read you one of my constituents' letters:

"Although increased convenience of purchasing alcohol might be a nice thing, I am very concerned about the potential penalties that could occur with the severing of this contract. I have read and heard in various news outlets that it could cost the province anywhere from hundreds of millions to upwards of a billion dollars. How is this going to help with the elimination of the current provincial deficit?" It's a pretty good question; we should pose that to the Minister of Finance.

"The current government made significant cuts to health care and education, among other cabinet portfolios, in the name of savings. But then they're willing to waste all this money for the convenience of purchasing alcohol? My mind is blown. In addition, the Ford government is touting the idea of Ontario being open for business. What company or entrepreneur in their right mind would want to engage in any sort of trade in a place that cancels legally negotiated contracts willy-nilly?"

Listen, I couldn't put it better. This constituent has nailed this right on the head, that this is the government that is prepared to risk billions of dollars in taxpayer money to serve what appears to be the convenience store lobby. This is a government that's prepared, on the international stage, to risk our reputation as a good place to do business.

We have contracts that have been ripped up by—these Beer Store contracts are multinational companies, but guess what? These are the same type of companies that the government is now courting to come and develop Ontario Place. Really, if you were someone who was being asked by this government to put your capital at risk, to come here, as entrepreneurs do, and risk an investment, and you saw the way that this government treated companies and contracts, my guess is that you would head for the hills.

We just have to look at Tesla. We had the court challenge that went to Tesla. As the province of Ontario taxpayers, we had to reach into our pockets to pay out money to Tesla, because this government thought it was a good idea to take Tesla on in court. They're doing really well for the lawyers, this government for the lawyers, again.

The other thing that is a priority for my constituents, and I imagine it's the same for you across the way, is health care. Health care is the number one priority. I received a letter from a health care worker who also is more concerned about lineups in hallways than they are about lineups at Beer Stores. I will read this out:

"This morning I am reading that my government is considering breaking a contract that could cost us in the hundreds of millions—hundreds of millions of dollars—for beer that we don't need. And yet health care workers and teachers are scared for their jobs. This government, my government, claims to be for the people. Aren't I one of those people?" Yes, you are. "Living scared that I won't be able to pay my bills hardly feels like I have a government for me. Why are we so obsessed with beer, especially when a contract renegotiation could occur as soon as 2025? Should not our goal in the year 2019 be to be making our health and education services better and better than years of the past? We are one of the most prosperous countries on the planet, and yet all we ever do is cut: cut funding, cut teachers, cut nurses. In the 11 years I have been in the hospital, should not the goal have been to increase wages and provide more services? Should we not strive to be better than in the past? I don't believe that we can't afford to do these things when we can afford millions for beer."

And this is a health care worker. This is someone who the government should be listening to.

When we did the pre-budget consultations in the finance and economic affairs committee, we heard in pre-budget consultation from people in Ontario about the budget and we heard from people when the budget was tabled. I have to tell you that we heard from health care workers that they were not consulted. We heard from organizations like the Ontario Nurses' Association, the RNAO. We heard from organizations that represented personal support workers in hospitals, health care workers who look after our sick and our families in long-term care. Not a person said that they were consulted.

1710

I would like to be perfectly clear: The Ontario Nurses' Association, which represents 65,000 nurses, was not consulted on a budget bill that makes significant impacts to our health care system.

Yet again, this is a government that seems to be moving quickly on beer, and listening to somebody about why it's important to put beer in corner stores, but they're certainly not listening to the people who work in our hospitals and represent workers. And for our parents, our children, the people who need health care—they don't seem to have their best interests at heart.

Let me read another letter, shall I? Another constituent writes, "Recent decisions to increase access to alcohol and reduce its costs fly in the face of both health and financial responsibility. They are certainly not based on sound science. I fail to see why the province of Ontario is rapidly navigating backwards, despite the abundant research showing that the health and financial costs of alcohol increase as costs decrease and ease of access increases. Offhand comments from the government dismissing the possibility of increased harm are dismaying. As our representatives, it is your responsibility to be informed by the best available information and to legislate accordingly."

Really, I couldn't agree more. It is our responsibility to take into account all of the data, all of the information and all of the impacts that this will have. It's okay to talk about bringing choice and fairness. It's really okay to talk about convenience of beer. That's something that you can talk about. But you need to look at the other side. You need to look at the consequences of what you're doing, unintended or otherwise.

We know that in this province, we struggle with people who have mental health and addictions problems. This is a serious issue. It hurts families; it hurts our economy. These are serious issues. For this government to just, willy-nilly, as my constituents say, move on making alcohol access easier, without addressing the impacts, is sheer negligence on the part of this government.

We have a government that we have seen talk words when it comes to supporting mental health and addictions, but you know what?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: All talk, no action.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: All talk, no action. I would say, let's put your money where your words are. What we have seen is a government whose first move was to cut mental health spending by \$330 million.

Then we had the most recent FAO report, that looked into the health care spending of this government. I believe that the FAO said that we are looking at a \$2.4-billion cut to health care spending in general. Most shamefully, I would say, there was a \$69-million cut to mental health services for children—for children.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Shameful.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is shameful. What the government proposes doesn't talk in any way about addictions, doesn't talk about the consequences of easier access to alcohol.

It doesn't talk in any way about the ability for children, kids, to have easier access and easier, convenient alcohol. There's no real clear plan to ensure that if you are moving access to alcohol from the Beer Store, where there is a proven system of ensuring that the people who are buying beer are of age, that they are not inebriated—there's a

system in place. But now we're just going to move it to the convenience stores, without hearing the government's plan to ensure that we are not going backwards, that we're not devolving into a system where we are not protecting the most vulnerable, our kids and our youth, with this access to alcohol.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga—who, earlier today, we were hugging, but clearly the mood has changed—would like to say that this is the same as access to cigarettes. But they're not the same; it is not the same. This is a false equivalence. If you go to a convenience store now to buy cigarettes, you can't even see the cigarettes. They're behind flaps, I guess you call them. It's quite clear that there's a serious point of control.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: There are warning signs.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The manufacturers ensure that there are warning signs. There are significant controls there.

The other thing is that when a child, a kid or someone gets cigarettes, they may smoke a pack of cigarettes, and the consequences of that may accumulate over a lifetime. But if someone underage, someone young, happens to be able to get themselves a six-pack of alcohol, they consume it right away, and the impact, the risk that they face, is immediate. There was an instance, I believe it was in Ottawa, where a young girl was able to get access to two cans of high-potency alcohol, and there was a tragedy. She drank these, she was young, and she drowned, actually, because of the impact of this alcohol. That is the story that we need to be talking about here: How are we going to ensure, with this ease of access to alcohol, that this convenience does not put our young children in harm's way? I have heard nothing from the government side about how we are going to make sure that doesn't happen.

This government talks a lot about the finances. The minister talks about a billion here and a billion there. He has his ability to spout off the numbers. His notion is that this is a government that seems to be fiscally prudent and that seems to be a government that is looking after the taxpayers' dollars. But this bill completely puts that notion to rest. This is a government that really is not fiscally prudent. This is not a government that is concerned about taxpayer dollars. This is a government that is actually spending big. There is evidence of the spending of this government. They are spending big; they're just not spending it on things that most Ontarians care about. They are not spending it on us, on our health care or on our education.

Since the government took office, that spending tally has started to rack up. The very first thing I recall was the government fired Mayo Schmidt, the \$6-million man, and made him a \$9-million man.

The government and, in particular, the Premier's meddling in Ontario's electricity system: He demanded the chief of staff, which happened to be an old political foe of the government—he insisted that this person be fired. That costs us \$500,000.

This continual and inappropriate meddling on behalf of the Premier led to American regulators blocking a sale of Hydro One. This is a company based in the US—further

evidence that international companies and international investors don't think this is a good place to do business. So Avista's controller blocked the acquisition on the part of Hydro One, and that cancellation of a deal that was in the works cost about \$138 million in cancel penalties and fees, and it ballooned to almost \$200 million when you factor in financing charges and interest. So that's a big-ticket item there that could have gone a long way to relieving some of the hallway health care issues that we're talking about.

We have a government that talks constantly about concerns with the federal government. It honestly feels like they are campaigning on behalf of Scheer in this province. They seem quite prepared to spend up to \$30 million on another legal battle to fight the federal government's price on carbon.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's all about politics.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's all about politics. It's just actually Scheer madness, wouldn't you say?

Ms. Marit Stiles: It is Scheer madness.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would have to say that we here on this side of the House don't think that the federal government's climate change plan is substantial enough. But at the same time, we would not risk \$30 million of taxpayers' money for some vindictive, perhaps politically motivated, court challenge—because you know what? It's not our money. We're not paying the lawyers out of our own pockets. The government seems willing, though, to put their hands into taxpayers' pockets to pay out lawyers whenever they are unhappy with some of the results of court decisions.

Now, we also have a government that—the impact of these decisions is starting to be evident. I mean, Moody's has already downgraded the province's credit rating, and they really said, specifically, that it had to do especially with not just the cuts that the government is unveiling, but that it had to do with the government's revenue projections. This government has got a problem on both sides of the balance sheet, and Moody's has factored that into their credit rating.

1720

We also have the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, who clearly do not agree with this government's cutting and the lack of investment that the government is putting forward in the province. In fact, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has said many times that this government is offside with what their members believe and what their members are hoping for from a government.

The government gave up \$2.7 billion of cap-and-trade revenue—that's a big-ticket item—with no plan to replace that revenue. This government likes to talk about how the government's finances are similar to our personal pocket-books, but here's a question that I have: If you had a deficit, if you had a debt you had to pay in your house, would you forgo huge amounts of revenue—essentially, would you quit your job until you found another job to replace your revenue? I don't think so. I think that would be an unwise, imprudent thing to do. The other thing I would say is—and this is what the government is doing—

would you spend money on beer and alcohol when you can't afford your health care services, when you can't afford education, when you don't have access to child care? My guess is that that would not be a very wise financial decision on the personal finances side, and, Madam Speaker, I say here that it is not a wise, sound financial decision on the part of the government.

It really needs to be said that this contract-cutting or cancelling contracts, this willy-nilly cancelling of contracts on the part of the government, will have long-lasting implications on the reputation of this province. I've said that already, and I can't underscore enough the fact that people, companies, investors want predictability. Does that sound like this government? They want stability. Does stability seem like what we're getting from this government? Two of the most important things that a company that wants to invest and put their money and capital at risk to come to this province, two of the most fundamental things that a company would require, are not evidenced with this government.

But do you know what I have to say? If this government is in the mood to rip up contracts, I think we have some suggestions for them. Really, is that what you would like to do? Because I know something that the people of Ontario are angry about: They are angry about the sale of the 407. They were angry about it when Premier Harris sold the 407, and all these years later, every time they ride the 407, they're still angry about it. And so, there's the contract that this government may want to look into, just to see what's in there, how this could support the people who have to pay these huge fees to multinational, international companies who have a monopoly to drive on a road the taxpayers paid for.

I would have to say that we recently saw SNC-Lavalin—

Interjection.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The member from Kitchener-Conestoga seems particularly sensitive when I bring up the 407, and we'd have to wonder why that is.

Ms. Marit Stiles: A little bit sensitive. I wonder what it is.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: A little snowflaky.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This is a very serious discussion.

SNC-Lavalin, very recently, were going to sell a 10% share in the 407, and the 10% share was valued at \$2.8 billion. That's 10%. I can even do the math; I don't need the Minister of Finance to do the math. The math is the math, as the Premier would like to say. That would make the 407 worth \$28 billion. That's a huge amount of money. This former Premier sold that for about \$3.1 billion. That's a hefty markup. There's a contract that this government might like to look into.

Let's talk about the previous government's decision to sell off parts of Hydro One. My sense is that this previous Liberal government—as I knocked on doors, that was something that really annoyed people. They were, in fact,

not just annoyed; they were downright angry. They felt betrayed and let down by a Premier who said that they would never sell off our hydro system, and yet they went ahead and did that.

So if this government thinks that they're above the law, if this government thinks that they can just rip up contracts, why don't they pick something that would actually help the people of Ontario? Make the 407 more accessible for people. Make hydro more affordable by bringing it back into public hands. But as it is now, this government has brought the debt of Hydro One onto the books. So the taxpayers of Ontario need to know that this government is going to be costing the people of Ontario about \$2.5 billion every year to continue to subsidize the privatization of Hydro One. My guess is, there is a deal that the people of Ontario would like the government to look into, rather than just worry about beer.

I want to ask the government: How is it that Ontario families should be forced to accept the kinds of cuts we've been seeing over and over and over again to services that they depend on—to child care, to public health, to autism services? What is the list? It goes on and on—to mental health supports. Why would families be forced to accept these cuts while the Premier seems to just want to fuel his obsession with alcohol? My guess is that this is perhaps a way to distract from the pain that this government is causing to people in this province.

Another cut that this government has made that is nothing short of egregious, I would have to say, is the attack that this government has made on our judicial system. We have seen an Attorney General that was prepared to stand by while the Premier threatened to use the “notwithstanding” clause. That didn't give people confidence in this province that the Attorney General was prepared to stand on the part of the people of Ontario.

We watched an Attorney General who stood silent while the Premier tried to appoint his personal friend to the head of the OPP. That's an important thing to note—that the role of the Attorney General is different than any other cabinet member. The role of the Attorney General is the backstop for the people of Ontario to know that they will have access to justice, to know that, above all, our rule of law is sacred. This is an Attorney General who has shown that she does not seem really to understand her role in this.

So now we have seen Bill 100, a budget bill, which actually was very little about a budget. There were so many things in this budget bill that had absolutely nothing to do with the finances of Ontario. But schedule 17 of Bill 100 is a schedule that took a huge axe to the people of Ontario's access to justice. It essentially gutted the Proceedings Against the Crown Act. Essentially, what the government—I'm not a lawyer, but many, many members of the other side are lawyers, and so they should understand this. The Proceedings Against the Crown Act gives an ability for average Ontarians to seek redress from their government for damages. Whether these damages were malfeasance, whether they were bad faith or good faith, people need to be able to seek redress from a government. Walkerton: If this bill had been in place, if these cuts to

our judicial system had been in place then, the people of Walkerton would not have been able to seek the kind of redress that they needed when they suffered the consequences of the government's decision. They deserved compensation. People died. People, to this day, are suffering because of the illnesses, the long-term impact of the E. coli outbreak that risked people's health.

That ability to sue the government, to get compensation to continue on with your life, is something that I would say every Ontarian thinks that they have a right to—but this bill, Bill 100, has done that. So this is a government that is busy ripping up contracts, while at the back door ensuring that people that are damaged by the government will not have the ability to sue.

1730

I think it's really important to note that schedule 17 in Bill 100 was moved retroactively. What that meant is, currently, there are some class action suits before the courts; those are dead in the water. For example, there is a lawsuit for the crown wards. These are the most vulnerable children in the province of Ontario, who were seeking damages from the government, a government that chose to fire the child and youth advocate. That lawsuit is effectively dead in the water.

There are concerns that this will impact lawsuits that are related to survivors of residential schools in Ontario, and in fact, some of the current land claims. There's really a concern that this retroactivity will disallow those lawsuits.

It also puts in there that the government is not necessarily required to provide evidence in their defence, or not necessarily required to testify. What does that sound like? That does not sound like the kind of access to justice that we expect to be there in the province of Ontario.

Instead of protecting our access to justice, our rule of law, we now have a bill before us that rips up contracts and offers beer. It offers “convenience” and “choice” for beer and alcohol. Contrast that with this attack on our rule of law and our justice system. It almost seems like—it's like a farce. It's hard to actually believe that that's what I'm standing here talking about right now.

Not only did this bill make it very difficult, or almost impossible, for average Ontarians to sue the government for redress; they coupled that with cuts to legal aid. We now know that these cuts to legal aid will deny people the access to justice that they expect to be there.

I have a letter here that I'm going to read to you, to showcase the severe impacts this will have to our rule of law, our civil society, our fair society. This is from a constituent who said: “I am writing today to urge you to stop your catastrophic 35% cut to Legal Aid Ontario. This cut will hurt Ontario's most vulnerable people the most, including women fleeing domestic violence, refugees escaping life-threatening persecution, and people accused of a crime who may lose their freedom and deserve a proper defence to guard against the very real possibility of a wrongful conviction. While the Premier claims this measure will save money, it is just going to add costs and delays to an already overburdened court system as more

people show up to court unrepresented. Access to justice is the cornerstone of any democratic society so I urge you to reverse all cuts to Legal Aid Ontario.”

So there is a plea to defend our democratic society, something that should be a prime concern for us to be discussing in this solemn House of debate. But, no, we are here talking about beer in corner stores. We’re talking about this government’s obsession with beer and alcohol.

It’s hard to believe that this is in fact what we’re talking about, because we could also be talking about the climate crisis that we are facing. We put forward a motion to declare a climate crisis in Ontario. The government shut us down. They didn’t seem to think that that was worthy of debate or worthy of consideration. But at the same time, climate change is a critical issue. That’s a critical issue. That threatens the health and well-being of families, but this was not something that was a priority for this government.

I have here also a constituent who was so concerned about the fact that this government is prioritizing beer over education for our kids in our classrooms. I’d like to share that letter with you as well.

The constituent says: “I am writing to express my concern about the government’s senseless cuts to publicly funded education in Ontario.

“We cannot balance the budget at the expense of student learning and well-being. All students need the time and attention of a dedicated teacher. We need to invest in students, teachers, and schools to make it happen.

But instead of investing, we are putting hundreds of millions of dollars at risk, possibly up to a billion dollars, to break up a legally signed contract—to do what? To ensure that we have hospitals that have no wait times? To ensure that parents could afford child care? To ensure that post-secondary education is still the quality education we need in Ontario? To ensure that kids can go to schools that aren’t crowded, that kids have the option to choose the courses that they need to graduate? Instead of doing that, spending that money, up to a billion dollars—it’s not going to do any of those things. It’s going to rip up a contract so that we don’t have to drive to two different places to get our groceries and to get our beer. That seems like the most unreasonable weighing of priorities that I could ever imagine in this House.

The Premier—pardon me; not the Premier but the Minister of Finance. They sit close enough together; they happen to have the same message. The Minister of Finance said, “It’s really great that this way people can grab a cold beer on the way to the cottage.” Well, I think the Minister of Finance might want to address that concept to some of the people in cottage country whose cottages are actually flooding and underwater, or people whose homes are floating away because of the flooding that is happening in Ontario. Flooding and natural hazards are happening all the time. It’s not one-in-100-years storms; these are constantly happening. The Premier said something is happening. That’s a start, right? So let’s work with that. But do you know what? The fact that we are more worried about making sure you have a cold beer to watch your

cottage float away than ensuring that we have funds to protect them from flooding seems just almost unbelievable. It seems like a joke. But it’s not a joke; it’s real. This is what is happening in the province of Ontario.

I want to talk a little bit about this idea of what it’s going to look like for people of Ontario to go to corner stores to access beer and wine, but more specifically I want to talk about the people who will be working in these corner stores. We are looking at breaking a contract with the Beer Store that employs approximately 7,000 people. These are good-paying jobs in the province of Ontario, the kind of good-paying jobs that you would think a government would want to protect. These are jobs where people have benefits, where they have predictable hours. These are what people aspire to in this province when we talk about a good job, a job that you can support a family on. But this is putting those 7,000 jobs at risk.

What I would like to say is that when this government moves forward on legislation without any evidence that what they’re saying, that jobs won’t be at risk—how can that be something that we have confidence in? When this government moves forward with a lawsuit and says it won’t cost any money, saying it ain’t so—you can say it all you want, but at the end of the day there is no evidence put forward that tells us that this is not something that’s going to cost jobs and cost money.

I think we really have to say that there seems to be no evidence, or there is no evidence presented, but there is a particular concern here that the convenience store lobbyists and the Ford government seem to be actually dismissing the concerns of hard-working Ontarians who work at the Beer Store, and so now we’re going to have perhaps more jobs at a convenience store. And who works in convenience stores? Really, who works in convenience stores? We have, often, part-time work for students. We have people for whom perhaps this is a job that they take as a retirement job. But the conditions of their work are important to discuss.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: It’s precarious.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is precarious work. It’s precarious work in all of the forms that precarious work takes. The hours are not predictable. These will be minimum wage jobs. These are jobs that will most likely not come with the kinds of benefits that now are experienced by the 7,000 people who work in the Beer Stores across Ontario.

The other thing is, I think the government likes to present that with these extended hours, you can buy beer 24/7 in a convenience store. These extended hours put the people who work in convenience stores at risk. This is not a government that’s talking about that risk. For example, if you have someone, a young person, working late at night in a convenience store by themselves—which is most likely the scenario we can have—and someone comes in who is inebriated but yet determined to buy more alcohol, can you imagine if that was your son or daughter who was working a part-time job late at night and had to stand up to someone insisting that they are sold more alcohol? Where are the protections for the young people in the province of Ontario when this government is so willing to put them at

risk—put our dollars at risk and put the health and safety of people who work in convenience stores at risk? It really is something that's shocking and shameful.

I urge the government to think twice about the consequences of rushing to serve your lobbyist interests while at the same time serving up the well-being of the people who will be working in these convenience stores.

1740

This government talks about convenience, but I have to say, guess what? You know what? There's a lot of things that are not convenient in the province of Ontario right now. Do you know what's not convenient? It's not convenient for autism parents who do not know when and how they're going to get services for their children. It's not convenient that they have to quit their jobs at certain times to stay home to help those children. That's not particularly convenient for the people of Ontario.

You know what is also not convenient? It's not convenient that this government slashed an ODSF and an OW increase to the most vulnerable in our province, and they are now challenged to be able to pay for food, to be able to pay their rent. Guess what? That is not particularly convenient for the most vulnerable and low-income amongst us.

And for workers, guess what? It's really not that convenient that this government thought that they weren't entitled to at least two paid sick days. So if you happen to have a sick child and you need to stay home, that's not particularly convenient, but you can rest assured, you can be comforted by the fact that you can go get a beer conveniently down the street.

You know what's not convenient? The cuts that this government has made to public health funding that impact, that put at risk child care spaces across this province, that put at risk subsidized child care spaces, that make it very difficult, if not downright impossible, for parents to put their kids into quality, safe child care. That's not convenient at all. But rest assured, you can conveniently stop by and get yourself a six-pack, thanks to the Premier of Ontario.

Interjection: It's all about priorities.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's all about priorities.

Madam Speaker, I think it's probably important that we also talk a little bit about the fact that this is a government that really seems, as we say, to be cutting first and planning second.

We have to say that one of the things that is most disturbing to us is that there is absolutely no scenario that the government is putting forth that describes what will be lost when we cancel this Beer Store contract. They don't talk about the consequences; for example, I've mentioned they don't talk about the consequences of the cuts to mental health and addictions, at the same time as we have an increase in access to alcohol.

I've previously risen in this House and talked about the cruelty of cuts to OW drug and addiction counselling. In the city of Hamilton, we have an addictions counselling program that was required to be cut because of the \$10-million cut to public health funding that this government

announced unilaterally. I think it's good news that the government—the Premier has had to back down from this reckless promise. Maybe it's a start. We are seeing that maybe these in-year cuts that are devastating municipalities across the province are not going to happen in this year, but we know that those are cuts that are coming next year. We know those are coming.

So with a government that's racing to put alcohol at a convenient reach, this is also a government that does not seem to really care about ensuring that the appropriate social responsibility has been put in place. Places like the Beer Store, and also the LCBO, I must say, are places that focus on corporate social responsibility. They are trained to ensure that when they serve people, they are not serving underage people. They track the number of times they deny people based on different things like being underage, and that's the kind of protections that we expect, that we would like to see to make sure that people are not putting their health and their lives at risk. That's something that the government just has no concern about protecting.

The member from Danforth had talked a little bit about the fact that this is a government that seems to have absolutely no climate plan. It's just a sham, I would have to say. It's just window dressing. It's really not a plan. A plan that has no tracking, no goals, no metrics, is not a plan.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order. The member for Brantford—Brant will come to order.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: It's a plan to pay polluters.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. What it is is a plan to pay the polluters. So that's a pretty good plan. There's more money out of the taxpayers' pockets on the part of the government.

Guess what we all know—how often do we know about carting our beer bottles and our wine bottles back to the Beer Store? Really, that is in fact one of the biggest recycling programs; the success of that is undeniable. That was put in place—I don't know the data, but I think it's something about, I'm going to say, 75%. In fact, I think I have it here. Yes, about 74% of everything sold comes back to the retail outlet. That's a huge number. That's a huge success story. You would think the Minister of the Environment might want to have a little look at this so he can add this to his climate change litter plan, but apparently this is not something that they think is significant enough to incorporate into this consideration as to whether or not we move forward with this beer bill, as we like to call it.

We are raising issues here that are of serious concern, not just to us, but to the people of Ontario. The government talks about this as bringing choice and fairness. The names of their bills just invite mockery, don't they? It's so hard not to—"bringing choice and fairness." How is this choice?

Ms. Marit Stiles: You'd think it was about more than beer.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You would think it would be about more than beer. If you were talking about choice and

fairness, you might think the choice would be to be able to access affordable child care. That's a pretty good choice that you might have in the province of Ontario. Wouldn't you think that if you would be talking about fairness, it would be your ability to seek justice in the province of Ontario? That's a bill that would be about choice and fairness. That's a bill that I would like to see come forward from this government. But do you know what? I don't think I'm going to hold my breath, because the names of these bills really are just so ironic; they do not speak in any way to the substance of the bill.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I apologize for interrupting the member. There are a bunch of side conversations happening on the government side. It's making it very difficult for me to hear the member that's speaking. I'm going to ask that you either keep your volume down or take the conversations outside, please. Thank you.

Back to the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. I can understand the opposition side not wanting to hear me talk about beer. I feel their pain, because I don't want to have to talk about beer, but that's where we are today and that's what we will have to be doing for another five and a half minutes here. There's still yet something to say about beer and buck-a-beer in the province of Ontario.

I would like to end by saying that the timing of this bill is really suspect. A lot of people are commenting on it. In fact, in some of the newspapers yesterday, every newspaper had an article on this out-of-the-blue beer bill—pretty good with the B's. I would actually say that one of the things that I'd like to mention is that in the Toronto Star there was a headline that said, "Ontario Needs an Intervention." This is by Heather Mallick of the Toronto Star. The first line says, "The Ontario ... government has an alcohol problem. It wants the alcoholic vote. Call this an intervention."

I know this is a tongue-in-cheek article, and I would like to go along with the lightheartedness of it, but this is not a lighthearted subject at all, Madam Speaker. We're talking about a government that's moving forward to make access to alcohol and beer very convenient and very accessible, but I have heard nothing from the government side about how they are going to ensure that they are not increasing access to alcohol in a way that increases addictions, mental health problems and health problems. There's no discussion about that, no discussion about how there is clear evidence that easy access to alcohol is not something that the government should be seeking. In fact, what they should be doing is ensuring that while people may want to get access to alcohol and people like to be able to pick up a six-pack—no problem there; that is fine, but this is a government that in no way is addressing the serious concerns that we would have about this change.

To continue on with this article, Heather says, "It is very much a problem that any government in power would

believe this of the regular guy vote." But she goes on to say, "Alcohol causes hospitalization, crime and early death. It destroys families and jobs, and eventually its victims drink to block out what they lost by drinking." Now, that's Heather Mallick's description of it. It's a very bleak picture, but there's no evidence on the part of the government that this government has considered the absolute worst possible outcome of this bill at all. Given that they are quite prepared to cut mental health and addiction funding, I'm really quite concerned that this is a government that just does not want to see at all, in any way, the impacts of some of the things that they are doing to this province.

1750

I would just have to end by saying that we would like to urge the government to get back to some serious business here. We're here today until 6 o'clock debating beer. We're coming back, apparently, on Sunday to probably talk about—

Ms. Marit Stiles: No, we're here late.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Oh, are we here tonight? Oh. We're here tonight to discuss beer.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: It's a huge priority.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Clearly this is a huge priority for this government. This government is in a rush to get beer and alcohol into our stores. This government is in a huge rush to tear up duly signed contracts. Why is this government not in a rush to make sure that we have appropriately funded health care in the province of Ontario? Why is this government not in a rush to make sure that we address the deaths that are happening in our province because of opioid addictions? Why is this government not in a rush to address the deaths in our correctional facilities that are piling up every week because of opioids? Why is the government not in a rush to address that?

I have no words to describe why a government would—really, in many ways, it's an abjection of their responsibility to take care of this first, before they rush into this. A government that seems quite prepared to spend our money on their priorities is not a government that's for the people. A government that offers nothing but cuts and austerity for everyone else—with some beer on the side, but they call for cuts and austerity to everyone. We all have to tighten our belts. We all have to face cuts to the things that matter most to us. But at the same time, this is a government that is prepared to risk your money, to spend your money on court challenge after court challenge. This is a government that's prepared to spend big on the things that matter to the Premier, and perhaps his insiders. This is a government that is not in any way in a rush to make sure that they protect our services, that they protect municipal services. The downloading that this government is prepared to do will absolutely result in increased taxes on the municipal tax base.

That's something that I think this government should be more preoccupied and concerned about for the average Ontarian: the costs, what this government is costing this province, and not just in dollars. They're spending big, they're costing us money and dollars, but they are costing

us our reputation on the international stage, and that is something that I will speak out against every time.

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

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Je suis ravie de me lever aujourd'hui et de parler du projet de loi 115, Loi visant à offrir à la population plus de choix et un accès équitable en matière de vente au détail de boissons alcooliques. Je remercie le ministre des Finances, et aussi la députée de Hamilton-Ouest-Ancaster-Dundas, pour leurs discours aujourd'hui.

Mais je me demande pourquoi l'opposition tient à défendre les trois géants multinationaux qui sont plus intéressés par la protection de leurs profits que de donner le choix et la commodité aux consommateurs ontariens. Alors, parlons un peu des faits.

Le fait, c'est que le Beer Store appartient majoritairement à trois multinationales qui en ont le contrôle—Molson a 51 %, Labatt a 45 % et Sleeman a 4 %—et pas au gouvernement de l'Ontario. Les ventes de bière artisanale représentent moins de 2 % des ventes du Beer Store, mais plus de 10% de celles de la LCBO et plus de 15 % de celles des épiceries. L'accord-cadre général donne au Beer Store le droit exclusif de vendre des caisses de 12 et de 24 bières dans la plupart de ses marchés locaux, ce qui force les consommateurs qui désirent acheter une grande quantité de bière à le faire au Beer Store.

Alors, parlons un peu de la santé et de la sécurité. La vente et la consommation sûres et responsables de l'alcool en Ontario sont et resteront une priorité absolue pour notre gouvernement. Nous voulons nous assurer que toutes les améliorations proposées garantiront la sécurité et la santé de nos routes.

Notre conseiller spécial, M. Ken Hughes, a travaillé fort aux changements que notre gouvernement propose d'apporter. Son expérience en tant que président d'Alberta Health Services a éclairé l'approche de notre gouvernement en veillant à ce que nous introduisions le changement de manière responsable.

Madame la Présidente, ce projet de loi garantira le choix, la commodité et l'équité pour les consommateurs de l'Ontario.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas for her presentation.

One of the common themes I heard again and again in the member's presentation is the erosion to democratic processes that is being played out with this bill and many of the other bills that this government has introduced. Reducing and eliminating the right to sue, cancelling contracts that are in place and that are respected, ramming through bills at the last minute, out of the blue, and really reducing public consultation is not the way to build the kind of democratic processes that we need to have in Ontario.

Let's not forget that two thirds of the people in Ontario, of the 10 million people that live in Ontario, aren't represented by Conservative members; they're represented by

other members. The 100,000 people who live in my riding and many others want to have a say in the kind of legislation that is being introduced and debated here, because it has an impact on their everyday lives. That impact goes far beyond whether you can buy a beer for—what—20 cents or 50 cents cheaper—who knows; the numbers are not out there. It goes far beyond that. It speaks to whether we have quality health care, whether we have quality transit and whether we have a very healthy, functioning democracy in this province.

This bill is not the only example of how our democracy is being disrespected. It has happened over the nearly one year that this government has been in power, from using the “notwithstanding” clause to trample on Toronto's elections to introducing the right for cabinet to make huge decisions through regulation and not by going through the Legislature. It's very unfortunate that you're continuing that bad tradition here with this bill.

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

Interjection: Go, Raps!

Miss Kinga Surma: Thank you for letting me wear this, by the way.

Madam Speaker, I'm having a very difficult time understanding the principles of the NDP. They claim that they're anti-corporation, anti-multinationals, yet they don't support this bill. It doesn't even make any sense to me, frankly. We are supporting local products and local convenience stores.

I was canvassing just the other day, and a resident at the door asked me the question of why I support this. I said very simply, “Ma'am, would it make your life easier? Would it make your life easier if you could just go to a grocery store or a convenience store, pick other things up—things that you need for dinner or whatever else—and pick up a case of beer to bring home to your family or to your husband?” And she said, “Yes, it would.” That's it. That is exactly why we are doing this: because we want to make life more affordable and we want to make life easier for the residents of Ontario. I asked her a very simple question, and she agreed with me. That's all I need to support this bill.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: It was an absolute pleasure to listen to the member from Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas's debate. You're a really great debater. It's always a joy to watch. You made some really interesting points about the workers and the type of work and how that work changes, in the process of ripping up this bill.

She was exactly right when she said that we're putting 7,000 good union jobs at risk here as we continue to open up beer sales to corner stores. The point that she made specifically around how that puts workers at risk—it's not just the good jobs that we're losing. I think about the young people that are working in these corner stores, selling alcohol late at night, and the physical safety that it puts those workers in when they're often the only worker in the store and you have someone who may be coming in

too drunk to serve. Not only does that put these workers at risk of a potentially belligerent person coming in as a result of that, but do they also feel empowered to say no to that person who is too drunk to be served?

I sat down last week with the UFCW workers, and they told me about a mentorship program that they have, where they have older workers who get paired with younger workers and coach them through what it's like, especially as young workers, to say no to someone who is too inebriated to be sold alcohol, oftentimes in situations where the folks that they're denying might be older than them, and how that might be awkward. So there are these really strong mentorship programs available to those workers.

1800

Are we going to see those same mentorship programs in convenience stores and corner stores? Where are those workers going to get access to those resources and those supports? We need to be supporting good union jobs across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It was interesting to hear the responses from the other side. Thanks to my colleagues.

The one thing that I want to reiterate is that we haven't had an answer as to why now. Why the rush? Why is this a priority? I've said that I haven't heard, not once, from a constituent of mine who has said that this is a priority for them.

But I might suggest that if it's not about making sure that the people who have the access and the ear of the government, of the Premier—one is that they're trying to make them happy—it's perhaps that the Ford government thinks that this is a convenient way to raise funds. There is a fundraising letter from the Premier that basically says that the Progressive Conservatives are raising political funds because attacking the Beer Store and insisting that it cancel a 10-year deal with the taxpayers' money is not exposing them to risk. I say that that is absolutely not the case.

But I do have a suggestion for the government. This is a government that seems to like to say that they're open and transparent. They're forcing people to put their stickers, in this “sticktatorship” of Ontario, on gasoline tanks. I think what they need to do is put stickers on all of the beer that they're selling in the corner stores to show exactly how much the government is receiving in taxes on this alcohol in the province, and to see exactly how much we are losing in tax revenue—tax revenue that goes to pay for repair to our roads, repair to our schools and repair to our hospitals.

If this is a government that is looking for input, which I doubt, I would say that you become transparent on the cost and the loss that we will be facing, not only to good jobs in this province—7,000 jobs—but you clearly need to articulate how this is not going to be a loss in the revenue to the province—a province that needs all the revenue it can get, based on the kind of bumbling of this government in terms of the economic file.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: We're speaking today on government Bill 115, the Bringing Choice and Fairness to the People Act.

While we're talking, we're hearing the word “beer” a lot. Probably, we've heard the word “beer” for a couple of—I'm reminded that I'm sharing my time with the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

I just want to say that we're hearing the word “beer” more times in the last couple of hours here in the Legislature than I have probably heard here at Queen's Park in five years, and probably in my life up until now.

But it's interesting. What's interesting is to hear how the member from the NDP—she's the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. Basically, her entire hour was saying, “Why aren't we working on this?” or “Why aren't we working on that?” That's often what we hear from our constituents. Often, our constituents say to us, “You're working on something, and I think you should be working on something else. You're working on health care? Well, I think you should be focused on education. You're doing something with education? I think you should be worried about seniors.” It's something that we sympathize with. It's something that I think about a lot: how to respond to people when they come to me and they say that we should be working on something else.

The fact is, this is a priority for a lot of people. I spoke to two women that I've known for over 30 years who both mentioned to me that they absolutely support what we're doing on this bill. I was quite surprised because, I can tell you honestly, Madam Speaker, one of them—maybe I've seen her have a beer once, and the other one, maybe a few times. The first one said that she and her daughter wanted to pick up some beer on the way home. They went into a grocery store, and they realized they couldn't get any. The LCBO was closed. Here they are in Thornhill, where, unlike the rest of the province—and I apologize to people who are watching at home who don't have the convenience that we have in Thornhill. In my riding, we have three or four LCBOs, and I can drive on the highway, in 15 minutes, from one end of the riding to the other. We have multiple Beer Stores in our riding. We have incredible selection, and it's still inconvenient for people. So if people in Thornhill find it inconvenient to buy a few beers, I can just imagine how difficult it is in the rest of the province. We talk about the environment and not wasting fuel. Why should we be encouraging people to drive an extra hour to pick up alcohol in rural or less urban ridings, and they have to use more gas to do that? That's something I would expect the NDP to be concerned about.

We all should know by now that we don't own the Beer Store. It's not like the LCBO. I think that's a surprise to many of our constituents, to find that out. They assume that the Beer Store is somehow the beer version of the LCBO. It is not, Madam Speaker, and we know that very, very well.

What are we trying to do here? We've just trying to align ourselves with some of the other provinces. To hear

the member from the NDP with the very long riding name so I'm not going to keep repeating it—but to hear her, you would think that somehow the sky is going to fall if we go ahead and allow beer and wine to be sold in more locations in the province of Ontario. We are nowhere in line with the other provinces. I come from Montreal, which is Quebec, which probably has the best selection in the country.

Right now, only 440 grocery stores would be allowed to sell alcohol until 2025 in the province of Ontario. That is a drop in the bucket when I probably have 100 grocery stores just in my riding alone. We know that we have the fewest retail locations to buy alcohol per capita in the country, which is quite outrageous when you think about it. We would need to open up 4,000 retail outlets just to be the Canadian average.

We're trying to make things fair. We're trying to give people choice. And I think it really is a Conservative value when we talk about fairness and we talk about having choice and having respect for different people. We're not a homogenous kind of party. We have a lot of different communities that support us, different demographics and different ages and different backgrounds—business backgrounds; employees, and yes, even union members. If we ask many of the union members if they are supporting the PCs on this piece of legislation, I think they would be quite supportive on it.

We've all been in that place where we're doing a barbecue, or we call ahead and we say, "What would you like me to bring?" They say, "Can you bring some beer or can you bring some wine coolers?" We don't have any at home and there's nowhere to purchase it, and we go to a neighbour or a friend and try to borrow.

The second woman that I spoke to about this was also very supportive and also from Thornhill. I've known her for 30 years. She told me there is something I never heard about called the Total Wine store, which she visited in the United States recently. I had never heard about this, so I researched it for all of us. They have approximately 200 stores across the US and almost 10,000 employees, and she described it as the Costco of purchasing alcohol. Basically it's a business that has a large selection of products and advertises them at very competitive prices. Each Total Wine store carries approximately 8,000 different wines from around the world, 3,000 types of spirits and 2,500 different choices of beer, and they also have accessories and gifts and cigars, and you can just imagine what kind of retail outlet it is.

It reminded me of a discussion that we had in the Ontario-Quebec committee with the Quebec delegation, and we discussed wine tourism in Ontario and wine tourism in Quebec. We all know that this is what people are looking for. They're looking for destinations; they're looking to learn about something new and to have a little bit of fun and entertainment. When I went on to read about Total Wine, I found out that they have opportunities for their customers to learn more about wine, beer and spirits. They host weekly tastings, special events and classes where customers can learn from the experts. They can

meet with winemakers, brewmasters and industry professionals. And they pioneered—this is what I thought was so interesting—the live virtual tasting, where well-known winemakers host a tasting from their vineyard, which is streamed live in the classrooms at Total Wine. So it's like they're serving you, but the expert is, I guess, sort of digital. It's a type of online learning.

What's also amazing is that their education centres in their stores are available to the local community, so people could have free meeting space for local businesses, clubs and organizations. In 60 of the stores, the private room is equipped for hosting meetings and also provides complimentary 30-minute wine-tastings for attendees. So you can imagine how much fun that could be if you're trying to do something interesting, say, for a book club or something like that.

1810

I just think that we are here to represent our constituents, yes. We're here to move the province forward in a capacity to be modern. Yes, we want to modernize the province of Ontario, be more digital and be more efficient and be more cost-effective, have less bureaucracy. We recognize that the Beer Stores are a global company. They're not a made-in-Ontario and Ontario-owned or a government-owned enterprise. If people want to have business opportunities and customers want to have retail opportunities, then we should allow that to happen, Madam Speaker.

I think that, on this side of the House, we recognize that a lot of people in Ontario are looking to have this choice. I would hope that we would see the support from across the aisle. Too often we see that, if the government side is putting forward something, automatically the official opposition and the independents feel that they have to oppose it. Perhaps sometimes it can work in the reverse as well.

I would hope that this is something that should be a little bit fun. Tonight it's the Raptors game. I know that a lot of people are going to be watching and drinking some beer. I think that people who are going to be at the game—the lucky people who are at the game—are probably having some beer right now and getting ready for it. I think that too often in life there's a lot of work; there's a lot of challenges. Life isn't always easy. We recognize that. But we're here to make something of our lives—yes, all of us here in the Legislature, and back home as well—but we're also here to enjoy. There's no reason why people shouldn't be able to enjoy the experience of watching the game tonight, and if they didn't have beer already at home, that they would have the experience—maybe they had to stop for gas on the way home; if it was the little convenience store in the gas station, I'm assuming that that is considered a convenience store for this piece of legislation, just like any other convenience store. They would be able to go in there and buy a small case or a six-pack of beer to take home to watch the game. There's absolutely no reason why they shouldn't have that choice. I'm looking forward to having that choice, and I think many of you here are as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'm happy to rise in the chamber tonight to speak to Bill 115, Bringing Choice and Fairness to the People Act, 2019.

The fact that our government is moving forward with this proposal should come as no surprise to any member of the House. We campaigned on this, and it's putting the people at the centre of our policy. We campaigned on a promise to grow our economy and protect good jobs. We campaigned on a promise to expand choice and convenience for consumers. Bill 115 delivers on all of these promises and in a way that is agreeable and beneficial to most Ontarians.

The changes being proposed by this legislation are, quite frankly, long overdue. The people of this province, particularly consumers, have been calling for what this bill is proposing for quite some time, and for good reason. There is no reason why foreign multinational companies should have a disproportionate degree of control over the sale of alcohol in this fine province.

You hear the opposition pander to ignorance when they make comments along the lines of—and I quote from a member across the aisle—that it will be the foreign, not local, companies that will benefit from what our government is proposing. That, Madam Speaker—and to all of the members in this House—could not be further from the truth. Let's be clear: The current agreement, the one which this bill will revoke, is purely for the benefit of global giants. The Beer Store is owned and controlled primarily by three multinational corporations: Molson Coors, which is based out of Golden, Colorado; InBev, which is a Belgian-Brazilian conglomerate; and Sapporo, which is a Japanese company. These companies were handed a sweetheart deal by the previous government. The Master Framework Agreement gives the Beer Store the exclusive right to sell 12-packs and 24-packs to most local markets. This forces consumers to buy from the Beer Store if they want to purchase in bulk. Of course, these big companies will want this agreement to stay in place. Sure, it's a sweet deal for them, but—Madam Speaker, it's nice to see you in the chair—it's not fair.

The opposition have made it plenty clear: They're bent on aiding these global companies—all of which, let me stress, are not headquartered in Canada, let alone Ontario—protecting their sweetheart deal. And to think, Speaker, the opposition calls itself the party of the working class. If they were the party of the working class, they'd want to help working Ontarians be able to grab a cold one at the corner store after a long day at work.

Mr. Roman Baber: I'd like a cold one.

Mr. Mike Harris: You know what? That's not a bad idea.

They have been standing in this chamber and have been serving as the voice for foreign multinationals.

Luckily, we have sensible minds steering the ship. We have a team that can see, dare I say, the common sense behind this proposal. We don't abide by the same rules as

our predecessors. Our government does not go into negotiations with the intent of serving a select few. Policies are not crafted in the name of political gain.

It is our intention to pass legislation that positively impacts the greatest number of Ontarians. The truth about the bill we are debating today is that it benefits local consumers, businesses and producers alike. If we want to talk about how to keep our local businesses local, let's talk about expanding consumer choice, because that will be its direct impact in multiple ways.

Bill 115, if passed, will benefit our local businesses across the province who now get to engage in the sale of alcohol. Convenience store owners have been very vocal in their support for what we are proposing here. You know what? We're a government that listens. We have listened to consumers; they want choice. We have listened to shopkeepers; they want to be able to provide that choice.

If you go to a Beer Store after rush hour, you often, if not always, have to wait in a long, long line and waste precious time. This time that we waste in lines is time that could be better spent with friends and family. It is even worse if you're holding an event and need to go and grab snacks in addition to, say, a beer.

Once we have expanded alcohol sales, convenience stores and grocery stores will become one-stop shops. You'll be able to pick up beer, chips, burgers and soft drinks all in one go. No more waiting in excessively long lines at the Beer Store. No more making multiple trips across the city. You see, Madam Speaker, what we are doing here is making things quick and easy for the average Ontarian.

Let's say it's a long weekend. Don't even go there, Madam Speaker. It's lights out under the current system. The lines are absolutely endless. All I can say is, now, not for long.

Not only will our changes make it easier to acquire your products more quickly on a Friday of a long weekend, but it will now be possible to purchase a bottle of wine at your convenience store on a holiday. That's very convenient.

But wait. "That's not fair," says the opposition. It's not fair that we want to give Ontarians more choice and a better way to enjoy their time away from the workplace.

Ontario has fewer alcohol retailers per capita than any other province in Canada, and we are the most populous province. There are over 8,000 retail stores in Quebec selling alcohol, but fewer than 3,000 in Ontario.

It's not fair that we want to provide local distillers and craft brewers more opportunity to deliver to their marketplace; it's what the opposition will say. But what's fair, then? Ignoring the people and handing out sweetheart deals to multinational corporations?

Consider this: Craft beer sales account for less than 2% of sales at the Beer Store, but they make up over 10% of sales at the LCBO and—get this, Madam Speaker—over 15% of beer sales at grocery stores. It's clear: Expanded sales benefit local producers.

If passed, Bill 115 will expand alcohol sales to corner stores, big box stores and more grocery stores, while protecting taxpayers. What could be more fair than to

actually allow competition in the marketplace? This is Economics 101, and I know sometimes that's hard for the opposition to understand. What we are doing here is bold, but it is completely within the line of our record to date.

1820

Did I mention that our government announced with its first budget that we are extending the hours of alcohol sales? Licensed establishments can now begin serving alcohol at 9 a.m., seven days a week. Just when you thought we couldn't make things more convenient—it doesn't end there—we're creating a tailgating permit for sporting events. We're changing advertising rules to allow happy hour in Ontario. Need I say more, Madam Speaker?

It is clear we have the interests of the average Ontarian at heart. Our policies reflect that, and you know what? These policy changes—where did they come from? They came from the average Ontarian. Our decisions come after hearing from over 33,000 people in this province. I've said it before, and I'm saying it again: This team, this government, take consultations seriously. We want to hear what people have to say, because the people know what rules and regulations inconvenience them each day, and the people know what policies need to be changed. News flash, Madam Speaker: Our policies are the reflection of the voice of the people. We will accept an idea, no matter what its origin, if it benefits the province. When the people of the province bring a good idea forward, it is our job to execute it, and in a manner that is beneficial to the greatest number. This means executing our policies in a responsible fashion. We're expanding access to alcohol while protecting the interests of health and safety.

Let's finish off with a few more facts, shall we? A recent report by the Retail Council of Canada suggests that simply by increasing the number of alcohol retailers to the national average, Ontario will create more than 9,000 new jobs. It is likely that the price of alcohol sold in Ontario will also decrease. The prices of the popular 24-packs in Ontario are over 8% higher than those sold right next door in Quebec. Is this a coincidence? I think not.

Every Ontarian stands to benefit from this policy; it is quite clear. That is why I stand fully in favour of this legislation on the floor today. For the good of this province, I would suggest that all of my colleagues get on board and support the passing of Bill 115.

You know what? I see a lot of members on the other side of the House, and I know a few of them like to enjoy an ice-cold beer. It would be such a great experience for the average Ontarian, after a long day at the office, after a long day at the steel mill or after a long day at the auto plant, to be able to go on their way home, stop and pick up a six-pack of beer and go and enjoy it on their back deck.

Again, I wholly support this bill. I'm looking forward to seeing it passed in this House.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the remarks made by the members.

First of all, I just want to note: It's interesting, a lot of talk about the Liberal sweetheart deal with Brewers Retail.

It's a fair enough characterization. But I also want to note that this bill addresses the termination agreement related to the June 2000 framework, the Conservative Party's sweetheart deal with Brewers Retail that was signed under former Premier Mike Harris.

You know, multinationals have corporate friends: the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party—their kind of folks. They understand millionaires; they understand the necessity of protecting the world for investors to make sure that the rich can get an awful lot richer. A party that blocked an increase in the minimum wage and fought it when they were in opposition is not a party of the working people. It's a party of profit; it's a party of millionaires; it's a party of multinational corporations.

You might say that you're in favour of providing beer to people who have had a hard day's work; fair enough. But to say you're in favour of working people? Give me a break. That is not your culture. That is not your direction. That's not your project. That's not your politics, and you show it day after day after day.

In the end, Speaker, there is a problem here. People in Ontario are seeing cuts to the quality of education and they're seeing increased wait times in hospitals and more hallway health care, and yet this government is willing to risk hundreds of millions, maybe \$1 billion, on cancelling a contract that, if they really wanted to change things, they could allow to run out and then renegotiate. But that's not the case. For whatever reason, like the Liberals before them with the gas plants, they have a political problem and they want to solve it. They want to look good, even though their polling numbers are diving into the basement. They have to grab onto something that looks like they're standing up for working people. Well, you're not. You're not. Forget it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments? I recognize the member from Peterborough Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm actually going to try to stay on topic with what my colleagues were speaking about, not go off on a tangent onto a whole bunch of other things.

The Beer Store, as it's currently called, isn't owned by the government. It really shouldn't be called the Beer Store. It should be called the Sapporo-InBev-Coors store, because that's who really owns it. Money is not coming to anyone locally. There has been a thought—an accusation, really—that none of this is going to help our local brewers. I've got two local brewers in my riding that I know are going to benefit from it because they came and spoke to me about it beforehand: Smithavens and Publican House: Both of them are looking for the market to be opened up a little bit more for them because, at the Beer Store, only 2% of craft beer is being sold. They condense it. They stop it. They don't allow it. They push their own product instead.

We're also going to be helping the wine industry with this. I've got a local winery, Kawartha Country Wines. Imagine how it will work for that small winery. They'll be able to sell their product outside of their own location.

My friend from Kitchener-Conestoga mentioned tailgating, so I'd like to touch on that one just for a

moment because tonight I know that most people in this House, most people in Toronto, are celebrating the Raptors game. I'm celebrating opening night for the Peterborough Lakers, and we get to have a tailgate event this year at opening night for it. What a great opportunity that is for Peterborough.

I'd like to finish with a little bit from Hank Williams for my friend from Hamilton and a whole bunch of other places:

There's a tear in my beer
'cause I'm cryin' for you, dear
you are on my lonely mind—

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

Further questions and comments? I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you from saving us from whatever that was.

The member talked about the NDP being the party for the working class. That hasn't changed, my friend, because do you know why we're standing up talking about this bill tonight?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Conestoga will come to order.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It would be nice if that member would just listen for a change.

We're standing up here protecting good-paying union jobs—jobs that have been together for years and years. There's nothing wrong with good-paying union jobs. That's the one thing you guys have forgotten.

You talk about convenience, and some members have mentioned the fact that local—well, let's talk about what your party did the last time you were in power. You might know the guy: some guy named Mike Harris. He was the Premier. Do you remember—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order. Stop the clock.

A reminder to all members to direct their remarks to and through the Chair. The back-and-forth is not going to be tolerated. If you would like to stay, I would like to see the behaviour that would allow you to do so.

I give the floor back to the member, who will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Let's talk about Highway 407, which is owned by an international company. They sold it, by the way, for convenience purposes because they wanted to fake like they balanced the budget under Mike Harris, for \$3.4 billion. Do you know what it's worth today, my friends? Some \$34 billion. So if you want to take a look at ripping up contracts and wasting \$1 billion on this particular issue, why aren't you addressing something that I think is even more important, particularly for the MPPs from Toronto? Take over the 407. Get rid of the congestion that we have on the QEW without charging—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Etobicoke Centre will come to order.

Mr. Wayne Gates:—without charging an arm and a leg just to drive from one end of it to the other. Wouldn't that make sense? I'm asking tonight, in my last 12 seconds, for you to stand up and explain to me why you're more than willing to tear up the contract for the Beer Store but you won't touch the contract with the 407.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Brantford–Brant doesn't need to do a count-down; thank you.

Further questions and comments?

1830

Ms. Donna Skelly: Madam Speaker, I would like to just reference some of the comments that were made by the member from Toronto–Danforth about all the millionaires in this party. I'd like to remind the member, and perhaps he's unaware of it, that most of my colleagues, and certainly myself—I'm from northern Ontario, a blue-collar family. My father was a railroad engineer. My mother was a secretary in the mine up north. And I'm a single mom. A lot of the people in my riding are the people we are standing up for, who are not millionaires. They are farmers, they're steelworkers, they're teachers, they're nurses and they're small business people. These are the people who simply want a break. They don't believe that we, as a government, should be allowing three large multinationals to have a monopoly over something like beer in Ontario.

I remember, growing up years ago—this will tell you how old I am—back when my parents would go to the liquor store. First of all, we weren't even allowed in the store. They would sign out a little piece of paper and slide it across a counter, and then walk out with this brown paper bag with a bottle of liquor in it.

Fast-forward a number of years, and it seems like Ontario really has not progressed. What we're simply trying to do is to update a very archaic, outdated system, to bring some rational fairness to purchasing something as simple as a case of beer. What we have today is unacceptable. The last deal signed by the previous Liberal government is unacceptable. This is updating an archaic system and providing choice. The sky will not fall. The people in Ontario will simply be able to go to the store on the way home from work and pick up a case of beer.

It's overdue, and it's something I would hope people who say they represent common—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. I return to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for his reply.

Mr. Mike Harris: Listen, I'm always happy to have a little back-and-forth debate with the opposition. It makes for a lively evening. But it's almost like sometimes they're not listening. They talk about how they are for the people, how they are out there advocating for the everyday worker, yet every single everyday worker I talk to wants to be able to go and grab a beer from a convenience store. It just boggles my mind.

It's fine that they want to talk about keeping good union jobs. That's okay; I understand that. But maybe they weren't listening, again, to what I was talking about. Expanding alcohol sales, beer and wine sales, into convenience stores and big-box stores is going to create roughly 9,000 jobs, Madam Speaker—9,000 jobs, whether this be from distribution, whether it be from increased sales, adding new people into the breweries, which, mind you, are good union jobs. So what's wrong with adding some good union jobs into the breweries and having increased sales in convenience stores, big-box stores, grocery stores etc.?

Do you know what? We've had LCBO agency stores in Ontario for years and years and years. I'm not exactly sure how far back it goes, but it goes as far back as I can—

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Mike Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: It does go back to Mike Harris. Everybody likes to point out Mike Harris, so let's do that. The Mike Harris government created LCBO agency stores. I'm from North Bay originally. I've been blessed now living in southern Ontario for six years; I love it. But we've had agency stores in northern Ontario for years. Guess what? As my colleague from Flamborough–Glanbrook put it, the sky isn't falling. We've had beer and wine sales in grocery stores going on two and a half years-ish now, which the Liberals instituted. I'm not exactly sure how you guys voted on that, but your track record pretty much speaks for itself, 98% of the time; I'm sure you voted for it. The sky hasn't fallen.

I'm looking forward to voting yes on this bill, and I encourage—

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

Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to stand here doing a night sitting to talk about Bill 115, bringing choice and fairness—which is really a misnomer. It should really just be called “beer.”

Here I stand this evening for basically what the Conservative side are considering an emergency debate on beer. That's what we're here debating tonight. That's what is so important. I'd like to point out that they had Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday night that they could have had night sittings to talk about this, but they decided to wait till Thursday night when everybody is busy watching the Raptors and not paying attention to what the government is trying to do, except for the members of the opposition, because they don't really want the people of this province to know what it is that they're trying to sneak by them.

They don't want the people to understand that although they're talking about convenience, what they're talking about is a giant legal bill that the people of this province are going to have to pay—not just the people in this province, actually; it's going to be the people in this country, because under the current Beer Store agreement that they're looking to rip up, that's going to cost Ontario taxpayers about \$1 billion. They don't seem to think that's a big deal.

There are also trade agreements in place, so people are now going to be paying for that through the federal government. So they really are getting hit twice, while this government wants to pretend like, somehow—talking about beer and opening up to put it in convenience stores, to rip up this contract—this is actually about convenience to the people of this province. They're not talking about how inconvenient it is to the people of this province to pay the bill for ripping up that contract, both at the provincial and the federal level. Frankly, that's exactly why they're doing this tonight: because the majority of the people in this province and in this country are gearing up to watch the Raptors. That's why they're doing it.

Madam Speaker, as I said, the bill will break a legally binding contract and put taxpayers on the hook for up to \$1 billion. That's just the start; that's not talking about what it's going to cost at the federal level. Experts have called it a “public policy gaffe of epic proportions”—and that's not epic. Sometimes kids will say, “That's epic,” in a good way. These experts don't mean “epic” in a good way.

This government's obsession with alcohol really goes to show their priorities. They're talking about tailgating, buck-a-beer, drinking in the morning, and beer in the corner stores.

How does this government possibly think that spending \$1 billion to rip up a contract is a better use of taxpayers' dollars than putting that towards our health care system, into our schools or to affordable housing? How does this government think that this is a responsible use of taxpayers' dollars? And when we're talking about this contract—because it's a contract; it has an expiry date. Rather than this government waiting for the expiry date and trying to either negotiate a better deal or not coming up with another deal at all with the Beer Store, what they've decided is, “We want to do this now.” It's very impulsive, frankly. “We want to do it now. Taxpayers be damned. We're going to do it, and you're going to pay for it.”

Has this government even thought about talking? Rather than attacking the Beer Store, have they even thought about possibly entering into talks and saying, “Look, this isn't working out the way we'd like it. Is there an agreement we can come to where you win a little, we win a little, and the taxpayers win a little?” They haven't done that. They instantly went on the attack.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to spend my time today highlighting some of the many services and programs that could use \$1 billion in investment in this province.

I also want to share some comments from the Conservative friends across the aisle who, not long ago—they, too, thought that wasting \$1 billion was a big deal. So I'm going to remind them of how they used to feel about wasting \$1 billion when the Liberals did it. The Conservatives want to talk about how much like the Liberals we are. Well, Madam Speaker, I think you're going to see and everybody in this province is going to see that it's really the Liberals and the Conservatives—the Liberals, Tories, same old story.

Madam Speaker, here are some of the ministries hit with cuts, ministries where they are actually clawing back money—that the people of this province could really use them investing in these services rather than clawing them back. They're clawing back this money, and they're going to spend it on breaking a legally binding contract when it comes to beer.

In the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services—oddly enough, this government is going to spend at least \$1 billion breaking a beer contract, and the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services—

Interjection.

1840

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Solicitor General, come to order.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: —has cut \$1 billion from the one ministry that helps probably the largest number of vulnerable people in this province. That's from social assistance, a cut to developmental services and a cut to children in care.

There is \$222 million that the Conservatives recently cut to the Ontario Disability Support Program; \$300 million that they cut from Ontario Works; \$84 million that they cut from child welfare, and by that, I mean child well-being, like the children's aid society; and \$3.3 million from the Family Responsibility Office, which is the office that ensures that when two parents are no longer together, there is an agreement in place for support for any children who have come out of that relationship. They enforce the legal agreements and the exchange of those payments. But this government doesn't think that's important. They cut \$3.3 million from that.

And \$7.5 million from the Poverty Reduction Strategy. That is half the budget for the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

They cut \$17 million from domestic violence services. Instead of supporting women and children fleeing domestic violence and, in some cases, men fleeing domestic violence, this government has cut \$17 million and said, "We're going to put that towards a bill to open up the sales of beer."

They will cut \$164 million annually by 2021-22, which is a 30% cut. It will hurt people like single parents seeking child support from an absent parent. It will hurt tenants who are being taken advantage of by corrupt landlords. It will affect refugees who are simply seeking asylum.

In health care, they have cut health care in real terms. Although they announced modest increases, it does not keep pace with inflation, much less—

Ms. Donna Skelly: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook on a point of order.

Ms. Donna Skelly: This has nothing to do with our bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I thank you for your point of order. I think that the member has been making the point clearly. If she will continue to make the point for the House. Thank you.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you. For the government side, who clearly aren't listening to what I'm saying, I'm

talking about them spending \$1 billion in this specific bill about beer, how they're going to spend at least \$1 billion trying to break the contract while they're cutting from other services, and where you could actually spend that billion dollars that will benefit the people of this province. Try and keep up here.

Again, the money that this government has announced for health care does not keep up with inflation, let alone the needs of people in this province. The budget allocates a 1.6% annual increase for health, but inflation is 1.9%. Hospitals have already warned that this level of funding will mean cuts to services and layoffs to front-line staff.

Do you think that the people in this province want the opportunity to go to the corner store and buy beer after paying \$1 billion to break a contract? Do you think it's more important to the people of this province to go to the corner store and get beer, and to the workers in our health care sector to be able to go to the corner store and get beer, or do you think it's more important that we have enough front-line staff in our hospitals to be able to support those people when they go to the hospital?

It's not the people of this province whose priorities are messed up; it's this government.

Education is being cut in real terms: a 1.2% increase for education, yet inflation is 1.9%. School boards are serving up surplus notices, and it is not business as usual, like this government would like to say. Post-secondary will decrease by \$400 million and will have a devastating impact on student affordability.

This government loves to waste money on ripping up contracts. For a government that's open for business, they really love creating chaos for businesses when it comes to government contracts. Why would anybody want to come here and sign a contract with this government if this government can rip it up whenever they feel like it? They ripped up Alykhan Velshi's contract at OPG, costing taxpayers half a million dollars; ripped up contracts at Hydro One, which cost Ontario ratepayers \$103 million; and scrapped 758 renewable energy contracts, resulting in job losses for small businesses and hurting environmental efforts.

This government likes to say that we are responsible for those contracts. I'd like to be clear: While we do support green energy, as Conservatives know, it is the government that writes those contracts and signs them, not the opposition.

All of these broken contracts mean lawsuits, Madam Speaker, and court battles, and that costs money too. If the government really wanted to do something productive, why don't they look at taking back Highway 407? Why don't they stop selling public assets to private shareholders like they did under the former Conservative Harris government, where they sold off the 407? They could do everyone a favour in this province. If they're looking to spend money, they could purchase back the 407 and open up that road up for the public to use.

Madam Speaker, I did say I wanted to remind people how the Conservatives used to feel about ripping up contracts and wasting taxpayers' money. I have some

quotes here, pulled right from Hansard; I'll even give you the dates.

This is the current Minister of Finance. On April 12, 2017, this is what he said:

"I appreciate the opportunity to weigh in. I had some notes prepared but I just have to answer some of the comments made by the finance minister—the then-finance minister—"because he did reference Nipissing. He talked about a \$551-million investment that he says we wouldn't have made. That's just absolute nonsense...."

"He's talking about a \$551-million investment, but it's all about priorities. They chose to spend \$1.1 billion to cancel two gas plants. That would have paid for two hospitals—two more hospitals in Ontario. They chose to waste \$2 billion. First of all, they told us it was \$1 billion; it turned out, the auditor told us, that it was \$2 billion. There was a secret, billion-dollar spend"—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government will come to order, please.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The now Minister of Finance—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize to the member. Stop the clock. I'm having a difficult time following the member and hearing the member due to all of the side chatter. So I'm going to ask the government members to please listen respectfully while she has the floor. Thank you.

I return to the member.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, that was a quote from the member from Nipissing, who is now the finance minister, who thought that it was just outrageous that the previous Liberal government would spend over \$1 billion to cancel gas plants, to rip up contracts and cancel gas plants. He points out that we could add two more hospitals. Now that he's a government member, he thinks it's perfectly fine to waste \$1 billion ripping up contracts. When did that change?

I would still like to quote the now Minister of Government and Consumer Services. There are a few doozies here, Madam Speaker. I've highlighted them. Let's start with this one, on March 25, 2014:

"Mr. Speaker"—and again, this is now the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, the current minister—"I question the minister's commitment to the children and youth she's tasked with advocating for. I respectfully remind her that the agencies she's responsible for have had their budgets decrease steadily in relation to the inflation rate. Since 1992, this sector has seen a meagre 8% overall increase. As such, many could close doors and send kids to the hospital emergency department as a last resort, the most costly form of care.

"Having wasted \$1 billion on gas plants and sent millions overseas in debt interest charges, will the minister identify where she will find the money to fund community-based children's mental health programs and services?"

Again, that is the now Minister of Government and Consumer Services. And, Madam Speaker, not only did he oppose ripping up contracts that cost the people of this

province \$1 billion, which he clearly doesn't now because he's willing to do it for beer, but he pointed out that under the Liberals they were underfunding children's community and social services. While he pointed it out, as soon as they became government, what did they do? They cut \$1 billion from that very ministry.

So again I ask: What happened between when they were in opposition and when they became government? When did their feelings change about how the money should be invested in this province?

1850

I have several from that particular minister. I'm going to quote another one, though: the government House leader. On September 23, 2015, he was quoted in Hansard, and this was towards the then Liberal government, as saying, "That's what it was going to cost the people of Ontario. We all know it cost well in excess of \$1 billion to cancel those gas plants. But to him it was just a cup of coffee at Tim Hortons," or maybe—I'm going to ad-lib a bit, if I can, adding to a Hansard quote—they really just flipped it from a cup of coffee to a buck-a-beer. "It's the arrogance of this Liberal government"—oh, Madam Speaker, I love that he's saying that about the Liberals. He said, "It's the arrogance of this Liberal government that drives us bananas over here on this side of the House—the arrogance of this government."

So I would ask the now PC government: Why is it arrogant of the Liberals to rip up contracts and throw away \$1 billion—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Brant, come to order.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: —but it doesn't apply to the government side? I would ask them that.

Clearly, I struck a nerve when I read that quote. It's their own member. It's their own member that said it. It was right out of the Hansard. You're welcome to go look.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Government members will come to order.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have quite a few here from the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Maybe I'll read another one from the now Minister of Finance. Let me see; March 20, 2018, just a little more than a year ago, when the Conservatives were in opposition. This is what the now Minister of Finance said about the Liberals wasting \$1 billion tearing up a contract and throwing away \$1 billion that could have gone back into support and services, like children, community and social services—the billion dollars they just cut from that ministry. This is money they could have put in. This is what the Minister of Finance said at that time—

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's nice to see the Premier having such a great time.

So March 20, 2018—

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Maybe you should listen, because these are his members.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The House will come to order.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The now Minister of Finance then was quoted in Hansard saying, “Again, we were referring to the \$1.1-billion cancelling of the gas plants. This is an example of why all of the health care cuts are made, when I continue down the long litany—as I called it, my ‘highlight reel’ of Liberal waste, mismanagement and, in this case, scandals.”

So I ask the government side, why is it that the Minister of Finance, when he was in opposition, just a little more—again, March 20, 2018. When he’s talking about the Liberals ripping up contracts and misspending, misusing, the money that could benefit people of the province, why is it that then it was waste, mismanagement and a scandal, but when they now do it as a government it’s no big deal? Just crack open a beer and get over it.

I think I have time for one more. I’m going to go back to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services because he’s got a lot in here. On October 2, 2012, when he’s talking about the Liberals and the \$1 billion they spent on cancelling gas plants, ripping up a contract, he said, “Just think of the things we’re not going to be able to get. I have the Markdale hospital in my riding. They came to the table after raising \$13 million locally for their new hospital. The current hospital is crumbling around them. They come to the Minister of Health, and she says, ‘I’m sorry, but we have no money.’” Does that sound familiar? I think that comes from the other side of the House now. “Over \$1 billion—and that figure’s probably going to be low—was wasted on the mothballed Mississauga and Oakville gas plants.”

Again, I ask, what has changed? What has changed?

Mr. Robert Bailey: We’re the government.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: “We’re the government.” One of the members on the government side said what has changed is the government. “We’re the government now.” Thank you for highlighting that for the people of the province. That speaks volumes—

Mr. Mike Harris: And you’re still the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Kitchener–Conestoga is warned.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:—volumes to the character of the people on the government side when, in opposition, they rail against a government ripping up a contract and throwing away \$1 billion, but now that they’re government, it’s okay because, “We’re in charge in now.” Come on, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments? I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you, Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

Hon. Doug Ford: Oh, you guys are the greatest—the best.

This government was elected on a promise to make life more affordable—a promise we are keeping each and every single day, from cutting taxes to freezing user fees to making sure that we lower energy rates.

Our plan is about putting the people of this province first. In contrast, the previous Liberal government put

multinational profits ahead of Ontario consumers: global corporations profiting while Ontario’s citizens paid the price. Let me be clear: not on our watch. The party is over with the taxpayers’ money.

We will break this monopoly and increase competition to the market across Ontario. Greater competition will lead to lower prices, and it will finally deliver choice and convenience for responsible and law-abiding citizens of this province. The time has come to free the beer.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to comment about how eloquently my colleague from Windsor West talked about the lack of government priorities.

Breaking a legally binding contract will leave us hundreds of millions of dollars of fees and penalties. The termination of the Beer Store contract would also jeopardize 7,000 decent, well-paying jobs.

The Ford Conservatives’ meddling with legally binding contracts has already cost us millions of dollars. Ford fired Wynne’s six-million-dollar man, Mayo Schmidt, and cost us already \$9 million in severance for that.

He meddled again in Ontario’s electricity sector. His chief of staff demanded again, and this interference cost us half a million dollars.

The government’s priority is the agenda of privatization and cutting services.

If you want to legally cancel contracts, why don’t you deal with Highway 407, which is worth \$30 billion? That would have been something that would have been better.

Investing \$100,000 in hats for hunters? That is what the government has done. Eliminating 50 million trees? Cutting funding to various ministerial programs: That is now about—

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

Interjections.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: A lot of fun—a great way to spend my Thursday night, talking about this fabulous bill, as I respond to the member from Windsor West.

In the middle of her 20 minutes, she talked about comparing the Liberals to the Progressive Conservatives. That’s what really got my attention, because there’s no comparison. You look at the voting record, and 98% of the time, the NDP voted with the Liberals. They are so far left, they’re falling off the spectrum. It’s ridiculous.

The other thing I want to talk about is the comparison. You’ve got the Liberals, who would spend money that we just didn’t have and don’t have. What we’re doing is balancing. We’re bringing sanity back to the books.

I want to talk now about my riding of Cambridge, which includes North Dumfries—I want to make sure I say that every time. North Dumfries is a great township; check it out.

1900

In Cambridge, we have a lot of Beer Stores. I’ve spoken to constituents and they said, “You know, Belinda, what’s great about this is when it’s a long weekend”—like my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga mentioned—“I’ve

got friends over and I'm entertaining, and I want to get some more beers because the party's going really well"—but the Beer Store's closed. What are they going to do? Now we've offered convenience—consumer choice and convenience. This is what we're offering. Why not?

The NDP talk about Europe and how progressive Europe is, and why don't we do things like Europe? Europe offers alcohol everywhere—every single store. If they agree with what's going on in Europe—to me, this is a natural transition. We are again offering consumer choice and convenience. We are allowing those people to support their local craft brewers. This is a natural progression.

We are listening to the people. That's what we've always done and what we will always continue to do.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege and—
Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry, to the member. Stop the clock, please. We're not going to start like that. I'm standing.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: It's because we like him.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm standing. No, we're not going to start like that. We're going to give each member the opportunity to speak.

Incidentally, it is challenging to hear across a room with many side conversations. So for those of us who are here, let's enjoy the debate.

I return to the member and apologize.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. It's always a privilege and an honour to stand here, on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin, where I can help the sitting government correct their record by providing factual numbers and percentages in regard to how certain votes were done in this House during the previous government.

In fact, we did, as an opposition, support the government, as this government did support the previous government that was there. The factual numbers—and for the media that is maybe listening to this, and for everybody, here are the actual numbers: 53% of the time, the NDP did support the government, and 47% of the time, the PC government supported the Liberal government. Those are factual numbers that are there. They're not in dispute. Anybody who wants to do the numbers—they are actually there.

The member from Windsor West gave a fantastic comparison in regard to how dollars can be spent, and how \$1 billion could be wisely spent. She made the comparison to what this government is doing in all their cuts. I won't go through her list; she went extensively through it. I'll be touching on it when I do my 20-minute speech later on.

But what I do want to say is, when I was knocking on doors—and again, we're here on a Thursday night, and I'm really happy being here on a Thursday night. Heck, I'd be here on a Friday night, a Saturday night, a Sunday, and I could go on and on—seven days a week. Bring it on.

But let's talk about the priorities of Ontarians. Really, is this what the priority of Ontarians is—having a beer? It

is not. The priorities of Ontarians are health care and education. Quite frankly, in Algoma-Manitoulin—I just finished my constituency week—it's the matter of infrastructure and the condition of our roads. Those are the priorities, and those are the real issues—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. I return to the member from Windsor West for her—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government members will come to order. The member from Mississauga East-Cooksville will come to order. I'm standing. You can see that.

The member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Premier gave a response to my remarks, and he talked about “the party is over with the taxpayers' money” and “free the beer.” I don't know if we're at a frat party or in the Ontario Legislature. But based on the fact that this Premier and this government are so focused on alcohol and access to alcohol, the fact that he was going to spend \$100,000 on a personal pleasure wagon where he could kick back his feet in reclining seats, maybe crack open a buck-a-beer—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Come to order.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It seems as though this Premier is just getting the party started on the taxpayers' dime.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about priorities—I'm going to share a story, and I really hope the people on the government side will listen to this, because this is very serious. These are the priorities of people across the province and in my riding.

On Monday this week, a 16-year-old with mental health issues who could not access the supports that he needed because this government has clawed back \$330 million from the system and has not invested—

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Now they're calling me a liar. A 16-year-old boy who could not access the supports and the services he needed in my community because of the lack of investment died of an overdose—16 years old.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Really?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yes, really, and shame on you for heckling.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Terrible.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm terrible? You're the one heckling, sir.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: You heckle too.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member and I'm sorry to interrupt the back and forth—the member from Carleton will come to order.

The member has the floor. We're going to do our best to direct our remarks to and through the Chair and to keep the level of debate where it is parliamentary.

I apologize; I should have asked to stop the clock. Can we—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm not going to have a discussion with the members.

I apologize to the table. I would like to give her—was it 15, 20 seconds? I'll give the member 20 seconds, if you can, please.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker.

To the family of a young man who died on Monday, to the 28 other people who have died of an overdose in my area, to the people who are struggling to access mental health supports, to the families of children with developmental disabilities—their priority is spending at least that \$1 billion on the supports and services they might need, not on, as the Premier says, “freeing the beer.”

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

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: It's a pleasure to rise tonight and to begin by saying there are very few people who really are against the liberalization of access to alcohol. I think people are concerned about the priority of putting this bill forward now and the timing and the effect of ripping contracts at this time in our history.

I'll talk a little bit about the fact that liberalization of access to alcohol has been under way for quite some time and has been accelerated under this government. Now, there continues to be expansion of hours; there's extension of drinking in casinos; there's extension of hours—there's now the ability to have happy hours and so on. People may be a bit concerned about the message that we're hearing here in light of the cuts to public health, the limits on addiction services and, for example, the elimination of safe injection sites. I will talk a little bit about how a responsible government may want to facilitate access to alcohol, but may also want to invest in prevention, because alcohol may have some detrimental impacts on the health of citizens.

I will also concentrate on two remaining questions that are not clear in the bill. One is what will be the impact on the jobs that will be lost at the Beer Stores, and the bottle-return program which was one of the key aspects of the made-in-Ontario conservation plan of the Minister of the Environment. I think we have to ask where it is in this bill.

Thirdly, I will speak a little bit about the impact of doing what amounts to an expropriation of private property and the reputational risk that may exist for Ontario.

I have to say, in preparing for this speech, I did read the Ken Hughes report and saw that Mr. Hughes does not recommend ripping up the contract right away. Indeed, Mr. Hughes recommended to work within the system and try to liberalize within the system, recognizing that ripping up the contract will incur the significant costs that we've been talking about—probably over a billion dollars to rip up this contract. So I think people are legitimately concerned about the priority of doing this now, whether it can wait and whether it could be done differently.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member. I'm having a difficult time hearing you due to the side chatter, so I would ask the House that is choosing to stay for the rest of the debate to please tone it down. I would like to be able to hear the member. I think that's a fair ask.

Please continue.

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M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Merci, madame la Présidente.

First of all, I think it's important to recognize that liberalization of access to alcohol has occurred in Ontario. It started way before the last election. We know that there were over 350 grocery stores that could sell alcohol and it was going to expand to 450 stores. And certainly since last June, we've had the ability to expand the hours and increase access.

In my community of Ottawa–Vanier, people were not concerned about access to alcohol. It's a community that suffers, where we see a lot of addiction on our streets. I think it's normal that people would ask more questions on what will be the public health investment and public education message to ensure that, indeed, people do not consume more than they should. What will be the public education message that will go to ensure that people don't drive drunk and that we continue to invest a little bit in the responsible way in which people should drink?

I want to talk a little bit about some of the issues that we've been doing for a long time. I think it's important to recognize the good investments that were done in the craft beer industry in Ontario and how important it has been to create over 2,200 jobs and to also create probably 9,000 indirect jobs in the craft beer industry. These jobs did not require an expansion of the beer industry to be created. People want to drink local, and I think this was happening. Even in Ottawa–Vanier, we have a great local craft beer that is acting very responsibly by sponsoring all sorts of events that militate for responsible drinking.

We know that the union representing the Beer Store employees has mentioned that probably this move will cost 7,000 employees their jobs. The government says, “Well, we will create 9,000 jobs in respect.” We'll see where that goes.

My fear here is this—and I want to tell this little story of what happened last weekend. Last weekend, the Beer Store was organizing, for leukemia, “bring back your bottles.” I'm there with the employees of the Beer Store. It's pouring rain and we are rushing to the cars to try to elicit people to give their empties so that we can actually get some money out of the empties to support the fight against leukemia. On Montreal Road, there are many people who are homeless and who are carrying shopping carts full of empties arriving at the store at that time, and we are there saying, “It's a good cause”—and every so often that are well known by the Beer Store employees. This is a Beer Store that knows its neighbourhood and that has been there for a long time, understands the neighbourhood. We would get one or two of the homeless men, mostly, to give us one or two cans for leukemia, then go

inside and get the money that they wanted and they needed to have.

Part of the conversation that I had with the employee here—and I hope that after all these changes, if they do pass, he will keep his job, because this guy had the ability to understand exactly what this neighbourhood needed. He was offering services; he was offering help. He knew the men by their names and was able to refer them to the appropriate services. This is someone who has been in the industry for a long time, who is well trained.

Will a convenience store do the same thing? I don't know. But that will be an issue we'll have to confront.

After this little story I continued to read the bill—because that's what I do during the weekend, is read the bill and read the language of the bill. Let me say I also read Ken Hughes's report. Let's talk about Ken Hughes's report, which is an interesting report. It's quite clear that when the government was ready to put the bill—because Ken Hughes's report was tabled on Friday and the legislation was released on Monday, so maybe they had a preview of the report. Ken Hughes does not recommend to rip up the contract of the Beer Store right away. He does say that in the long run, a new contract should be reached. So he does not advocate at all paying \$1 billion in compensation to the owners of the Beer Store. Indeed, he called for change within the current system. His first recommendation is that, as an interim step, the government should “do everything possible under the Master Framework Agreement”—that's the agreement between the government and the Beer Store—“to authorize additional alcohol retail outlets.”

To me—and that's the way in which I would approach and counsel the government—there are ways in which you can avoid this big legal cost by working within the system and continuing the liberalization that you are committed to doing. I think there was a lesson in there, which was: Going too fast here may cost a lot of money and may not be necessary. So I would encourage everyone to refer to recommendation 1 of Ken Hughes's report.

The second part that was particularly interesting to me is the way in which we should ask a couple of questions of this government as we move forward. What is the impact that this will have on access? The Beer Store provides access throughout Ontario to the same number of choices, and so on. Will that be the same when it's the free market of the convenience store? Will you have the same choices in North Bay and Thunder Bay that you have in Ottawa or in southwestern Ontario? It's a question mark that is not addressed here, but it might be interesting to have this resolved before we move forward.

The second one is: What will happen with the bottle return program? This is one of the programs that has been very effective at collecting, washing and recycling bottles. I did a little research on this, and it's considered one of the world's best recovery systems: 94% of all beer containers sold are collected for reuse or high-value recycling. I do believe that this is indeed an integral part of the plan that the Minister of the Environment has to invest more in recycling. So how does that work? How do you reconcile

ripping up this plan in the context of the push that we shall all have for recycling?

The last point that I want to talk about—and this is obviously closer to my heart and it's closer to the business that I've done for most of my career: cancelling contracts. I was here during the debate when the member from Kitchener–Conestoga said, “Well, they're foreign-owned. What's the loss? Why don't we rip up their contract? We don't like them. They're foreign-owned.” There is a danger in this rhetoric because when you are in a jurisdiction that does require and does want and is part of a free trade agreement and must have international and foreign investment, you cannot just say, “We will treat foreign-owned entities differently than locally owned.” That's wrong, and that leads you in the wrong way.

At the minimum, I think the government side should tone down their rhetoric on that side. That's dangerous for their reputation of Ontario as a jurisdiction that does welcome and has always welcomed—it was one of the jurisdictions that had the highest foreign investment. In Ontario, we do continue to need it, and it's important.

Indeed, often the minister for trade suggests that this is a great thing for Ontario. They want to create an environment that welcomes businesses in Ontario. Unilaterally ripping up contracts does not lead to business confidence. That's a problem and that's a danger. This is not the first time that the government has done that. I caution them in continuing this when, as now, it is not necessary to do so and it's not what Ken Hughes had suggested.

The language by which the government is cancelling this contract is a little bit worrisome. This is the wording in the bill. Not only does it say that the contracts are hereby terminated, but then it goes on to say that no cause of action arising directly or indirectly will be compensated. I want you to listen to that: “No proceeding ... for a remedy in contract, restitution ... tort, or for misfeasance, bad faith, breach of trust or fiduciary obligation ... for any past, present or future losses” will ever be compensated. They say that and after that add, “This section does not apply to a proceeding commenced by the crown.”

1920

Essentially, this is a piece of legislation that says that the other party to the contract will lose all its rights—its right to compensation, its right to legitimate expectation under the contract—but the government does not lose any of its rights to sue.

That's dangerous. You cannot have this unilateral legislation over and over without eventually people charging more to do business with the government of Ontario, for fear that they may have their contract ripped out from under them. I counsel the government not to go there. It's not necessary.

There is another provision that we've talked about several times in this House where it again retroactively dismisses without cost any proceeding that would have been brought before the enactment of this statute—again, a retroactive disposition. That's dangerous. That's dangerous as a *modus operandi*, for a government to enact systematically retroactive legislation. It's just not good

governance. People need to know the state of the law, and you should not change it backward to change their legitimate expectations of what's going on and what the state of the law is in Ontario.

Let me conclude with free advice that I have for the government. I believe that when you're in the opposition, you should try to help the government achieve its goal, but reasonably and paying attention to some of the consequences.

Number one, Ken Hughes did not say it was an emergency to rip up the contract. Ken Hughes did not say it was an emergency to actually dismantle the Beer Store. He proposed to work within the system.

No public health, no police officer that I've ever met has suggested that it was an emergency to allow beer in corner stores, that it needed to be done right now, right this very minute, or otherwise the sky would fall, in the context of having to pay significant legal costs. No beer drinker I know thinks there's an emergency to have access to beer in corner stores, and that is a priority of this government.

I want to end on the message that this has sent to Ontarians in Ottawa–Vanier and elsewhere who come to our offices with so much anxiety and so many issues that they want to bring when they need access to services, when they need access to housing. Here they are seeing us debate tonight, on an emergency basis, a bill to “free the beer,” a bill that is designed to allow them to have access to beer in a corner store and that will cost probably a billion dollars. I would counsel the government to tone down its rhetoric; that may be heard tonight as encouraging consumption without due regard to public safety or due regard to public health. I would counsel the government to tone down the rhetoric about breaking contracts with businesses around the country, whether they are foreign-owned or not.

I would just conclude by saying it's not an emergency, it's not necessary. It is important that we continue to have respect for contracts in Ontario, respect for the rule of law. Please don't go there. It's not the right time. You can do it within your due time. You can work within the situation, work within the contract to avoid all of us having to pay in terms of reputation, but also having to pay big dollars for litigation. *Merci beaucoup.*

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

Mr. Dave Smith: There are a couple of points I'd like to make on what my friend from one of the Ottawa ridings—I apologize for not knowing which one it is.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ottawa–Vanier.

Mr. Dave Smith: Ottawa–Vanier, yes. Sorry.

She talked about it being a good investment—that Ontario has many good investments in craft breweries. I'm going to have to completely agree with her on that. Our craft brewery industry in Ontario is locally owned. It is all about those local companies. They're purchasing their products locally, they're producing them locally and they're trying to sell them locally. We're giving them an opportunity, then, to sell their local products locally in our convenience stores, our general stores and so on, giving

convenience and choice to the consumer—a choice to buy local product.

We're not against foreign investment, as she suggested. We think it's a great idea. We just don't think that the Ontario government should create and support monopolies with foreign companies. That, effectively, is what this would have done. It was essentially a Beer Store monopoly with foreign companies—not companies from Ontario, but companies from Belgium, companies from the United States and companies from Japan. We don't support that. We disagree with it. It doesn't matter whether it's the White Pines wind farm from Germany, a company that the Liberals gave a sweetheart deal to just before the election. We've shown we disagree with that. The money should be in Ontario. We didn't think that it was a good idea to try to do a sole source with Samsung, a company out of South Korea. The Liberals did.

We believe that we should be supporting Ontario's industries, that we should be working for the people of Ontario, and that's what this bill does. It supports local Ontario industries, like companies in my riding.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Vanier for bringing a legal perspective into this debate. We're talking about breaking a contract that was signed by the Ontario government.

We often talk about the Ford government, the Wynne government and the McGuinty government, but it's actually all one Ontario government. It began in 1867 when this province was created, it's continuing today and it will continue into the future.

When a government breaks a contract unilaterally and passes legislation that says that they're not only going to break the contract, but that the companies that they signed the contract with are going to have to give up all of their legal rights to compensation, then that's damaging the reputation of this province. So when this government is making these kinds of decisions, they've got to be cognizant of the fact that this is not just the Ford government; this is the Ontario government. When the Ontario government signs a contract, they should honour the contract. If you want to get out of the contract, then you sit down with the other signees and you negotiate a deal. You negotiate an exit clause for the contract.

Anybody who has run any sort of business: Would you ever sign a contract with somebody who would say, “Look, we're going to sign this contract, but if I want to get out of it, I'm just going to do that unilaterally and you don't get any compensation, because I'm actually making the laws in this province”? Well, what the government is going to find out is that they don't have the power, because these are international corporations and there are trade agreements, and we will pay; all of the taxpayers in Ontario will pay. And the estimate is somewhere around \$1 billion to get out of this contract.

The real question is—let's do a cost-benefit analysis. I agree that the deal with the Beer Store was not a good deal, but we've got six more years in that deal. Should we deal

with it for six more years, or should we pay \$1 billion of taxpayers' dollars to get out of it now?

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

Mr. Mike Harris: It's always a pleasure to rise in the House to take part in questions and comments. I appreciate the comments from the member from Ottawa–Vanier, but we certainly will not be taking any lessons from the Liberals. If you take a quick gander over at their area of the House, you'll notice they only have seven seats. I think that's a pretty serious reflection of people being very, very tired of all of the things that have happened over the last 15 years. It's a really good reflection of that.

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They can talk all they want about ripping up contracts and this and that, but they were the ones who entered into these contracts in the first place. They were the ones who brought these deals to the province of Ontario, they were the ones who bankrupted this province and they were the ones who put us in the position now where we have to come in and we have to clean up the mess.

Again, this is a hallmark of the PC government: We come into a province that has been broken by the previous government, whether it be the former Liberals quite a while ago, whether it was the Liberal-NDP coalition, then the NDP coalition, or the NDP government—we had to come in and clean up that mess. Now we're coming in to clean up the mess of the Liberals over the last 15 years.

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Harris: The other side can heckle all they want. I welcome it, and I love it.

But when it comes down to it, we are providing choice for Ontarians. We are making sure that the average Ontarian gets to be able to go to the corner store, and gets to be able to pick up a six-pack of beer, just like in almost every other jurisdiction in North America.

I've had the chance to travel all across Canada. I've had the chance to cross most of the United States. There are very, very few places where you can't go into the *depanneur* or the corner store or the gas station and—

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Ottawa–Vanier for your presentation.

Three points rose up for me when I was listening to your presentation that I think are worthy of highlighting. One is the government's argument that 9,000 jobs will be gained. That also needs to factor in the 7,000 jobs that will be lost. The challenge is that the 9,000 jobs that could be gained will more than likely be jobs that are considered precarious—part-time jobs, casual jobs, minimum wage, \$14-an-hour jobs, jobs that you cannot build a life on, jobs that exacerbate the tension between the haves and the have-nots in Ontario. That's very concerning, and I encourage this government to factor that in as they move forward.

The second piece that the member for Ottawa–Vanier mentioned that spoke to me was the element of corporate social responsibility, and the work that the Beer Store in

her riding was doing to mitigate the often very negative consequences of addiction and alcohol addiction, by directing people who were suffering from alcohol addiction to appropriate services. I've had the privilege of living in Oakland, California, which has very liberal alcohol sale regulations, where every corner store in that city sells alcohol. It has huge addiction problems, and the liquor stores, unfortunately, preyed on that addiction, would prey on low-income communities, because they knew that they could get a lot of sales. I worry about the consequences of this here.

Finally, thank you for drawing attention to what Ken Hughes was actually recommending, which was not exactly moving forward as fast as you can, ripping up a contract and costing taxpayers a billion dollars.

They're three very concerning things that were raised by this Ottawa–Vanier—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. I return to the member from Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Merci beaucoup. I want to thank the members from Peterborough, Spadina–Fort York, Kitchener–Conestoga and University–Rosedale.

I agree that it is a question of cost-benefit analysis, looking at all the consequences. When we are in the opposition, what we're trying to tell you is to pay attention to some of the consequences: the consequences to the legal reputation of Ontario, the consequences maybe in public health, and the ways in which this bill does not fully respond to some of the questions that were being asked about whether it is necessary to do it now, at the cost at which you are doing it. So I invite the government to consider this, and hopefully to invite additional people to be heard on this issue, if the bill goes forward.

It might be worth taking a pause. There's no emergency here. I know it's Thursday night, but there's no emergency in passing this bill. We could take a pause to really evaluate what all the consequences are, what the real cost is of ripping up these contracts, what the impact will be on jobs at the Beer Store, what the impact of ensuring good training will be and what the cost will be of good training of all the employees in convenient stores who will now have a serious responsibility in moderating access to alcohol in such a way.

I urge the government to take a pause and maybe consult a little bit more before they move forward on this piece of legislation.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this bill, the Bringing Choice and Fairness to the People Act. Speaker, this bill, in all its essence, illustrates what this government is about. We were elected to make life in this province more affordable, more convenient and fair for everyone.

With this bill, we're proposing to take another step in fulfilling our promise to put the people first, by helping create more jobs and by expanding choice and convenience for Ontario consumers. For far too long, Ontarians have had to pick and choose between a limited set of

options that essentially restricted their overall choice. Almost every consumer option in this province is limited to what the previous government decided was a good option.

The previous government believed that it was their duty to pre-select the options that were going to be available to the average Ontario consumer. They believed in giving out monopolies to their insider friends and putting the average consumer in a position where they had to choose between one of a handful of pre-selected options.

If this isn't making any sense, Madam Speaker, let me take a moment to clarify. In the case of beer, the province's current beer distribution system is owned by three global giants. The majority of beer you see on the shelves and in the venues are products of those three giants. These three corporations and their various subsidiaries were essentially given a near-monopoly in Ontario. They didn't have to worry about competition or declining profits because the previous government cut a deal with them that basically protected them from any type of competition.

Speaker, I don't like monopolies, and I don't think very many of my colleagues here do either. Because of the previous government's style of governance, consumers were limited in choice and forced to pay a higher price, 8.3% higher than Quebec, without any alternative options. The whole idea sounds ridiculous because it actually is ridiculous, and this isn't just our point of view or stance on the matter. The majority of Ontarians feel the same way.

Let me just read you a few quotes to let you know how Ontarians feel. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says, "The idea that only government or corporate monopolies can be trusted to sell alcohol in this province is ridiculous. We are thrilled the Ontario government is acting on a long-standing ... recommendation to include independent, family-run stores in the beer market, finally bringing Ontario alcohol retail into the 21st century."

Chris Selley, from the National Post, further articulated this sentiment by saying, "That is to say, beer retail would resemble most every other kind of retail, instead of some bizarrely long-lived post-Prohibition mutation controlled by foreign-owned corporations. That is to say, you'll be able to buy a 12-pack with your groceries like a normal human being living in a normal country. There are no good reasons that's not already the way it is, and no good reasons not to make it so other than a contract that never should have been signed in the first place. However the status quo meets its demise, no one should mourn it."

Speaker, simply hearing and reading quotes such as these makes me wonder why a "bizarrely long-lived post-prohibition mutation controlled by foreign-owned corporations" was kept in place for so long?

As government, we decided to remedy that by appointing a special adviser, Ken Hughes, to review our beverage and alcohol system. In his newly published report, Mr. Hughes lays out clearly how unfair the current system is for everyday consumers and businesses in our province. He clearly finds and states that the current deal

is a bad deal that restricts competition, limits choice, keeps prices high for no good reason and prevents craft beer entrepreneurs from penetrating the market.

1940

With this bill, we're looking to change all that by scrapping the previous government's 10-year deal with the Beer Store and the three large multinational brewers. The 10-year deal that Mr. Hughes is referring to gave a near monopoly to the Beer Store for the selling of 12- and 24-packs. It has also restricted the number of grocery stores that could sell beer to 450, whilst also keeping corner stores and convenience stores completely out of the beer-selling market.

Let's just think for a second on how this makes any sense. How does prohibiting people's choice and convenience benefit Ontario and our economy? The answer is, it doesn't; it simply places unnecessary restrictions on people for the benefit of a few large corporations, and that, Speaker, is very unfair.

I apologize, Madam Speaker, I would just like to point out to you that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Currently, Ontario has the fewest number of outlets selling alcohol per capita of any province in Canada. Over in Quebec, you can walk down the street to any corner store, convenience store or grocery store and purchase your pick of what you want. Here in Ontario, consumers are limited to the LCBO, Beer Stores and some eligible grocery stores that are often kilometres away. People who don't live in large cities, who don't have access to vehicles or don't have the time to travel long distances are at a huge disadvantage. This does not only disadvantage people, but it also disadvantages our economy.

Speaker, nowhere else in the world is a group of large global brewers given a near monopoly over 70% of the beer retail market. The Master Framework Agreement that the previous government signed with the Beer Store and the three global brewers is an anti-competitive and anti-consumer system that is designed to only benefit them. Our government strongly opposes this type of unfair and uncompetitive framework. Instead, we are seeking to open up Ontario not just to more choice and convenience, but to open up Ontario to more jobs and more economic growth.

Speaker, a report from the independent and non-partisan Retail Council of Canada illustrates that if Ontario were to increase the number of retail stores selling beverage alcohol to match the national average, the move would create over 9,000 new jobs and add \$3.5 billion a year to our province's GDP. By expanding sales, the move would directly benefit consumers, local store owners, brewers and our economy.

Speaker, the benefits of what this bill proposes to do are immense; however, I'd also like to take the time to address some of the opposing arguments that the opposition has been making. For the most part, from what I've gathered, the opposition members are making the argument that by giving Ontarians the ability to purchase beer and alcohol from their local convenience stores, we would somehow

be facilitating the erosion of society. Speaker, this argument is inaccurate and completely false.

Other jurisdictions within Canada, such as Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta, all give resident consumers the option of purchasing beer from private stores and corner shops. These provinces all believe that their residents should have the right to choose, and that they're mature enough to make decisions that are best for them. Speaker, like the provinces of British Columbia, Quebec and Alberta, we believe that Ontario consumers should be given the choice and option to make decisions that are best for them. Our job as government should be to remove barriers from consumers to make a choice for themselves, not restrict and prohibit their options to those we deem acceptable.

Over the past 92 years, successive governments have slowly but surely let rules, loopholes, institutions and special interests develop a near-monopoly beer distribution system that primarily benefits a few large brewers. This is not fair to Ontarians, not fair to local convenience stores, not fair to local retailers and not fair to all of the other brewers in Ontario and around the world.

Speaker, I'd like to further add that in my capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, specifically in charge of small business, I have met with organizations like the Ontario Convenience Stores Association and their members. Every single member was absolutely over the moon about the positive impact that this would have on their business and our economy. Every single one of the members of OCSA that I met with said pretty much the same thing: They just want less government interference and barriers impeding their ability to succeed. Some of them even clearly stated that they want to strongly support other Ontario businesses and Ontario craft brewers by stocking and selling their products in their stores. Wouldn't this be better than continuing to support a system where big global brewers have an unfair advantage over the little guys? If you ask me, I'd pick the little guys every time, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to add, just for the record, that these local convenience stores are subject to mystery shops by inspectors throughout the year. Inspectors conduct these mystery shops as part of the enforcement regime to make sure owners and their employees are checking for ID when individuals attempt to purchase products that require them to be 18 and over. All over, these convenience stores are continuously scoring higher than the LCBO. These local convenience store owners make sure that they strictly follow the rules because there's a lot more at stake for them than for the big government-owned LCBO.

Speaker, it's because of reasons such as this and other ones that I've previously mentioned that I'm supporting this bill. I urge all of the members in this House to do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for sharing your time with me tonight.

I'm pleased to speak on Bill 115, Bringing Choice and Fairness to the People Act. This bill, if passed, will help end Ontario's decades-long near monopoly on beer sales. I want to start by thanking the Minister of Finance for his leadership in pushing for a modern, reasonable alcohol retail system. He has been a champion on this issue.

During the election campaign, our party promised that we would treat Ontarians as adults when it comes to alcohol. This promise was, of course, in addition to many other commitments, including ending hallway health care, restoring trust and accountability in government, fixing the hydro mess and restoring Ontario's fiscal health. Speaker, I'm sure you know that this government has acted decisively to address all of those commitments. As we say on the government benches, promises made, promises kept.

This Legislature has passed our government's first budget, which starts our province back on the path towards fiscal health and balance while protecting services that matter most to Ontarians, like health care and education.

Our Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines also introduced the aptly named Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, which represents a big step towards making hydro more affordable for Ontarians.

And of course, earlier this season, the Legislature passed The People's Health Care Act, which will transform our health care system into an integrated, connected system that puts the patient first.

The Bringing Choice and Fairness to the People Act represents yet another piece of legislation intended to make good on a campaign commitment. This bill, if passed and proclaimed, would terminate the previous government's unfair agreement with the Beer Store. Doing so would allow the government to expand alcohol sales to corner stores, big box stores and more grocery stores while protecting our taxpayers.

Over the past 92 years, successive governments have let rules, loopholes and special interests develop a near-monopoly beer distribution system that primarily benefits only a few large breweries. It's a system that would hold back consumer convenience, fair competition and small business growth for another six years.

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The province's current beer distribution system is owned by three global giants who were handed a sweetheart deal by the previous Liberal government. It's a near-monopoly that's a bad deal for consumers and a bad deal for businesses. It is deeply unfair to the people of Ontario, and we are committed to fixing it.

Of course, this bill is not the first step to modernize Ontario's outdated alcohol laws. Last August, the Premier and the Minister of Finance joined me at Cool brewery in Etobicoke–Lakeshore to announce our buck-a-beer challenge. I was pleased to learn that seven companies joined the challenge during the May 24 long weekend, and over 76,000 cases of buck-a-beer have been purchased by consumers since August. Despite all the rumours that nobody is interested in the buck-a-beer challenge, I actually think there's a different opinion: People love it.

Additionally, as part of our budget, we brought common sense back to Ontario's alcohol consumption laws. This includes letting municipalities make rules where alcohol can be consumed in public areas, such as parks. Just to note: This was actually a request by Mayor John Tory. It was suggested during his election campaign. Our government is listening to municipalities, and we're going to give them the choice to decide for themselves if it's something they want to do.

We've heard from members of the opposition and the media that our government shouldn't be focusing on alcohol so much and that there are other priorities that we should be focusing on. Let me be clear: Our government is moving incredibly quickly to accomplish all the goals we set out to do. On the same day that the Minister of Finance introduced this bill, the Minister of Health introduced the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act, and the Solicitor General introduced the OSPCA Amendment Act. These are both incredibly important topics, and I look forward to debating those bills here as well.

I would like to quote from a TVOntario article about this legislation that highlights why this legislation is necessary. The author had this to say: "The Liberals did not have the right to make provincial policy intended to endure more than two elections into the future, no matter what the voters wanted."

He went on to say, "Beer may not be a life-and-death matter, but that doesn't make the 2015 agreement any less odious: It's designed to allow a political party to continue to make public policy for seven years after an election defeat." This is yet another area where we are cleaning up a mess left over by the previous Liberal government.

I know that the people in Etobicoke-Lakeshore want to be treated like adults when it comes to alcohol sales. They also care about health and safety and our environment. Let me be clear for anyone following this debate: The safe, responsible sale and consumption of alcohol in Ontario is and will continue to be a top priority for our government. Ontario has and will continue to have strong laws related to driving under the influence, whether it's related to alcohol, cannabis or other drugs. I know that everyone who sells alcohol—whether that's LCBO employees, Beer Store employees, restaurateurs and other retailers—is incredibly dedicated to ensuring that no alcohol is sold to anyone under the age of 19.

We want to ensure that any proposed improvements would uphold the safety and the health of our communities and our roads. That's one of the reasons why we appointed Ken Hughes. His experience as chair of Alberta Health Services is informing our government's approach in ensuring that we introduce change responsibly. We are encouraged that this sense of social responsibility is shared by the convenience store owners, brewers and other retailers.

In addition, I know that many people have had questions about the deposit and recycling program. The Bringing Choice and Fairness to the People Act provides a continuation of the Ontario deposit return program, even with the end of the Master Framework Agreement.

Finally, I want to highlight how this bill ensures that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs. Yesterday, I met with Mr. Yoon at his convenience store. I said, "How is business, Mr. Yoon?" He said to me, "Since Doug Ford has been in government, business is great." Mr. Yoon deserves to have the choice to sell beer or wine in his stores, if he chooses. That's what this bill is about.

In Etobicoke-Lakeshore, we have half-a-dozen craft brewers, working hard to create and sell high-quality, great-tasting products to consumers. The Beer Store master agreement signed by the last government is bad for those many small, independently owned brewers, including those in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, that don't benefit from owning a single share in the Beer Store.

Craft beer sales make up less than 2% of sales in the Beer Store, but they make up more than 10% of sales at the LCBO and more than 15% of sales in grocery stores. Clearly, there's a significant and growing demand for craft beers and the opportunity for more growth for these breweries.

The agreement keeps in place an anti-competitive, anti-consumer beer distribution system controlled by some of the largest beer companies in the world, and it only exists in Ontario. Nowhere else in the world is a group of the largest global brewers given a near-monopoly and effective control over 70% of the beer retail market.

I look forward to hearing the questions and comments from my colleagues while this debate—

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I don't know where to start on this bill. I truly don't. I'm listening and I'm trying to figure out what the motivation is and what the government is thinking, and I'm almost at a loss for words with the fact that this bill is just so bizarre, in the sense that it is a solution looking for a problem and it is Doug Ford and his government going from a buck for beer to a billion dollars for beer. That's maybe what I'm focused on mostly, is that number, that billion-dollar figure that has yet to be disputed by any member of the government during any of their speeches.

We heard from the member from Ottawa-Vanier, who is a legal scholar, who understands constitutional obligations and rights, and who counselled this government quite clearly on the fact that they are entering into a zone where they are putting a massive amount of liability on the taxpayers of the province.

The member from Kitchener-Conestoga—I like the guy; good guy; we could probably have a beer together at some point. That's the measure of somebody who can get along in a partisan arena like this. The member stood and he said he hasn't had the opportunity of time in this House, and had he been here while the previous government was going through the gas plant scandal, he may have benefited; he should benefit from that. He said he wasn't going to take any lessons from the government, and I would say if there was any lesson that you were going to take from the Liberals, take that lesson, because what you're doing today with this bill is exactly that, but in slow motion. It's

like a slow-motion train wreck is happening. This will be one of those “I told you so” moments where that massive legal bill that we know is already starting to ramp up is going to be borne by the taxpayers of the province.

So what I can't believe is that a Conservative government, self-proclaimed champions of the free market, have conceded \$1 billion of taxpayers' money to ram through such a minuscule aspect of our society.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'd like to say that I'm pleased to stand here in support of this bill, but the reality is that it's incredible that we are standing here in 2019, fighting for the ability to actually buy beer in a corner store. This is 2019. It is so draconian the way that the system currently exists in Ontario. This is simply an opportunity for Ontarians and for this government to modernize an archaic bill. My esteemed colleague from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill used the word “ridiculous,” and it is ridiculous that we have given three giant multinationals a near-monopoly over the distribution of beer in Ontario.

The bill that is before us will simply modernize it. It will allow responsible local convenience store owners to sell beer, to be part of a distribution system, to be able to be part of a system to profit from. But, instead, the existing system really restricts that and gives the advantage to, as I said, three multinationals.

I want to quote—and this gentleman has been quoted earlier this evening—Ken Hughes, the special adviser for the beverage alcohol review. He said, “Many of the current challenges with alcohol retail in Ontario stem from the 2015 Master Framework Agreement signed by the previous government.... Because of it ... small businesses are shut out of alcohol retail, and the economic benefits that could come from an expanded market.”

This bill simply updates, as I said, and modernizes an archaic system; it provides fairness and allows competition—fairness not only to consumers, but to small business owners. That's what this government stands for and that's what this bill will do.

2000

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to thank the members for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill and Etobicoke–Lakeshore for their comments. But specifically in response to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill when he said that we're over here, as the opposition, crying that the sky is falling and we're saying you're facilitating the erosion of society, I just want to clarify that, because we're not over here saying that you're facilitating the erosion of society. We're standing over here saying that you have your priorities so backwards, I don't know how any of you can see the light of day. Honestly. We're talking about what is the priority for Ontarians right now. Is it spending \$1 billion ripping up a contract that only has six years left on it? Maybe it's a good contract, maybe it's not, but we can revisit it in six years when it expires, and get a new, better deal in six

years. If the sky is not falling, come back at this in six years. It's not the highest order of business on the list.

I think what's really interesting is that, quite frankly, maybe you all don't think you're going to be here in six years, because if you thought you had a second term in you, you wouldn't be in such a rush to be getting this done. If you think you've got the support of the public, if you think you really are the party for the people, then come back here in the middle of your next term and negotiate your better deal. Go ahead. Do it.

But I think that what's really happening is that your Premier has the lowest approval ratings that we've seen in a very, very long time—that are lower, in fact, than the former Premier and the Liberal Party. And what did that approval rating get her? Well, it took her from a majority government to a minivan, and I don't think you guys are headed for a much different fate. Let's be clear on that.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order, please. Additionally, I will remind all members to address their remarks through the Chair and not directly across the room in future, please.

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Norman Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to make comments on the speeches by the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill and the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I'd like to start by commenting on the fact that the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore talked about all of the other legislation, other than beer, that the government has been involved with in the past year. It's been a really busy, active year. But, Madam Speaker, we campaigned on a promise to put people first, including by growing jobs and expanding choice and convenience for Ontario consumers, and that's what this Bill 115 does.

I remember back in 1987 when Liberal Premier David Peterson ran a very successful campaign on bringing beer to corner stores. The only problem is, he got elected and he didn't actually follow through on his promise. Well, we're keeping our promises. Madam Speaker, this is good for the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. I have eight craft breweries in Parry Sound–Muskoka, the biggest being Muskoka Brewery, located in Bracebridge–Gravenhurst, with Lake of Bays brewery in Baysville, the Highlander brewing company in South River, Sawdust City in Gravenhurst, the Trestle brewery doing a great job in Parry Sound, the Norse Brewery just north of Parry Sound in Carling township in the industrial mall there, Clear Lake brewery in Torrance, and Canvas brewery in Huntsville.

They employ a lot of people in my riding, and I'm sure they're going to look forward to having more opportunity to be able to sell their product in more places. They may have other ideas about boutique operations, as well, that only sell craft beer. Perhaps that will be something that can happen in the future, Madam Speaker. But these businesses employ a lot of people in Parry Sound–Muskoka, and they so right across this great province. I look forward to seeing more people employed and doing well and enjoying the great craft beer that is produced in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the member from Essex, the member from Toronto Centre, the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, the fabulous member from Flamborough–Glanbrook and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for your comments tonight. It's great to be part of this debate.

This is all about choice, and this is about keeping a campaign promise. As a legislator, I am proud to support small and medium-sized businesses that are creating great jobs across Ontario, including in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. We, as I mentioned earlier, have half-a-dozen craft brewers in my community that sell a fabulous product. They create jobs locally right in my riding so people don't have to commute—they can walk to work, they can take transit to work and they can even bike to work. We need to continue to enhance and encourage these craft brewers to keep opening in these smaller communities and larger communities to create good local jobs.

This is not just about beer and wine, this discussion. This is not just about choice and convenience. This is about fairness. It is about fairness to the people of Ontario who want to choose what they want to drink and where they want to go and get their product. It's about ending a monopoly on the Beer Store. It's about having convenience. If I'm in the corner store and I want to grab a lottery ticket or a bag of milk and I want to buy a beer, well, why not? If I was in Quebec or I was in Montreal, I could do that. As my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga said, you can walk into a dépanneur and buy a beer and there's no problem with that. This is not new. It's something that happens in Europe. It happens all around; it's all around North America. Why can't it happen here?

I think it's time. I think it's time that we treat adults like adults. I know that our government is doing the right thing. We campaigned on this. We have respect for those convenience store owners. Why not allow them—

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

Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Spadina–Fort York this evening.

I'm here today to talk about Bill 115—at 8 p.m. on a Thursday night. It says a lot about the government's priorities that we are talking about beer at 8 p.m. on Thursday night.

In a press release about this bill, the government claimed that they're putting people first with this legislation. I understand that people like to drink cold alcoholic beverages—I get it—but I also know that we, as a government, need to take responsibility to prioritize what is most important and really focus on those things.

As someone who, like many of you, regularly canvasses the riding of University–Rosedale and talks to residents one by one, I have found that the issue of beer and access to beer is not something that, quite frankly, has ever come up in any conversation I've had with a resident. I often like

to start a conversation with a resident by simply asking them what are their priorities right now, or, "What are you concerned about?" What comes up is frequently good schools with safe classrooms and reasonable class sizes so that people's children in my riding can get the best kind of education that Ontario can deliver and their child can have a real shot in life.

I hear that residents are very concerned about the cuts to public health, because the beauty of public health is that it does its job when no one has to think about it. But now that we're cutting public health, that is something that's coming up at the door. People don't want measles and SARS or the new infectious disease outbreak to be something that affects the health of people within Toronto and my riding. They just don't want that.

What I also hear at the door are concerns about the cuts to legal aid. In this budget, we have had the legal aid budget cut by a third. Many of the legal clinics that service my riding, including the U of T legal clinic that services students as well as the Kensington-Bellwoods legal clinic—they deal with people who are really on the margins, people who are fighting an illegal eviction, who need access to WSIB and are being denied, people who are really struggling to get by. The concept of having places where you can purchase beer, that it's priority number 99—and I'd have to prompt them for it. It's not a top priority. So it's concerning to me that at 8 p.m. on a Thursday night, we're debating access to beer.

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What also concerns me is that this move, as we've heard from the member for Ottawa–Vanier, who is a legal scholar, and many people who have spoken tonight—including Ken Hughes's report—they've indicated that moving forward and slashing a contract that is scheduled to be renegotiated in six years could unnecessarily cost us \$1 billion. That works out to about \$160 million a year. That is money that we could access in this budget and every year moving forward. That's not a small amount of money. So I find that very frightening: that this government is making those kinds of decisions with taxpayer dollars.

But it's not the first time this government has made decisions to cancel contracts in order to move forward with their agenda, and cancelling contracts that could result in taxpayers having to spend a lot of money that, quite frankly, doesn't need to be spent on lawyers.

The most recent example that is in the news a lot is the issue of the Premier's decision to cancel Ontario's cap-and-trade program, which they are now spending \$30 million of taxpayers' money on to essentially help Andrew Scheer in his fight to take control of the Parliament in Ottawa. That's very concerning, that taxpayer money is being used for that purpose.

As some of you are probably aware, particularly if you go and meet with constituents in your ridings, support for these kinds of draconian moves, which are creating a lot of chaos in Ontario, is not very popular. As you look at the polls, you'll see that Premier Ford's popularity is lower than the former Premier's, Premier Wynne. That's very

concerning for a government that has been in power for less than a year, because once you lose the trust of someone, of Ontarians, it's really hard to get it back. I guess that is one of the reasons why this government has decided to introduce a bill on beer: to change the channel and to stem the growing concern around what is in this budget and some of the cuts that have happened. That's my concern.

When I think about that \$1 billion—that we could be spending—to cancel a contract unnecessarily early, I also think about what that money could also be used for. A lot of things come to mind. One would be to stop the devastating cuts to social assistance and children's aid.

I grew up in a safe home, but there are many children who don't. Some of them need to be removed from their home. They're very vulnerable, they're very young and they need to have services available to them and people who are looking out for them so that they are not subject to abuse, so that they are put in a loving environment and so that they get access to school and they get a shot in life.

But this government, instead of investing in children's aid, and the children's advocate as well, are choosing to have us here at 8:14 on a Thursday night talking about a bill that could cost us \$1 billion in legal fees. I think that that's an indication of priorities gone wrong.

As I mentioned earlier, I'm also very concerned about the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario, particularly since there are so many people who use Legal Aid Ontario services and legal clinic services. Overwhelmingly, these are people who are the most vulnerable in our society, people who are single parents who are not getting access to the services that they need. I think our responsibility, as a government, and the measure of a society, is how we treat our most vulnerable. Cutting legal aid is a mean decision. For people who are already living difficult lives, it means their lives are going to be a little bit harder, and that's not right.

I also think about the cuts that are facing our education system and how that money, that billion dollars, could be spent on investing in Ontario's public education system.

One of my jobs as an MPP is to go around and meet with all the parent councils at the public schools in my riding, to hear about what their priorities are and also to learn about what the impacts of this government's decisions are on the kind of education that their kids are receiving.

Most recently, I met with the parents and the principal at Central Tech. Central Tech is very close to here; it's one of the closest high schools. It's at Bathurst and Harbord Street. It's one of those very unique schools—it's one of the very few left in Toronto that specializes in the trades. It teaches kids about carpentry, about robotics, IT, plumbing, electrical, auto mechanics and more—the kinds of trades and skills that this government professes to want to support and to encourage, because we know that there are many jobs available in some of those sectors.

But what I found when I met with the principal and the parents is that the principal has had to lay off or issue surplus notices to 25% of the teachers in that school. What that means is that the classes that get cut are the classes

that are more specialized, like the IT and the electrical and the carpentry and the plumbing, so that they can consolidate students and put them in the more generalist classes like English and math. So parents who have put their kids in that school because maybe their kid is—at least one I've met, the kid was struggling in a more academic environment, so they moved him over to this school so that he could have a shot at becoming a carpenter. It means those kids are going to be struggling.

When I think about this bill, I think about how it's not helping those kinds of kids. It's not helping the most vulnerable. It's not helping people who are in children's aid. It's helping this government try and prop up its plummeting ratings and popularity by trying to switch the channel.

I urge this government to try another approach and start listening to the 10 million Ontarians who live here instead.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've got to say that I'm a bit angry. I'm angry that, at 8:15 on Thursday night, we're voting for a bill that Doug Ford, or the Premier, just described as the “free the beer” bill, and this afternoon, the Conservative government just voted down a motion—a private member's motion from the member from Ottawa Centre—to make Ontario accessible by 2025.

I've heard the members opposite talk about—the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook said that it's 2019 and it's draconian that we can't go to the corner store and buy beer. That's draconian? The member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill said about the convenience store owners that they need less barriers, which are impeding their ability to succeed. And yet, this afternoon, the Speaker's gallery was full of people who use wheelchairs, and they have been waiting their entire lives for this province to be accessible.

In 2005, all three parties—the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the NDP—made a commitment. They passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. They made a commitment that by 2025 this province would be entirely accessible. Just a few weeks ago, David Onley, the former Lieutenant Governor, sent in a report, a three-year report, on whether we're actually heading for that target. He said that we are nowhere near making that target.

The government—the Liberal government before this and the Conservative government now—has not made the investments to make Ontario accessible. So those people who were in wheelchairs up there in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon are not going to be able to access workplaces. In some of the debate this afternoon, we talked about how only 55% of people in Ontario with disabilities actually have paid employment, which is shameful. Part of the barrier to them getting access to work is that our buildings and our transit systems TTC are not accessible. Out of the 75 subway stations in the TTC, only 43—just a little over half—are actually accessible. So when a person with a disability is looking for work, they can't actually get to work to get the job.

You think about access and fairness and what's draconian: What's draconian is that it's 2019 and this government has got us debating at 8:20 in the evening about whether we should be freeing the beer, whether we should have beer in corner stores and whether we should spend \$1 billion getting beer in corner stores, instead of how we are going to make this province an equal-opportunity province for people with disabilities. How are we going to make sure that all of our schools, our transit systems and our workplaces are accessible?

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Do you know why the people in wheelchairs were up in the Speaker's gallery? Because this room, the Legislature, the Parliament of Ontario, is not accessible. That, to me, is just repugnant. I just can't believe that the seat of democracy in this province—and this building was built in 1892. We've had 125 years to make this room accessible, but we haven't done it. When you come into the members' gallery, you have to climb up those stairs over there. If you can't climb stairs, then you have to sit off in the Speaker's gallery on the next floor up. You can't actually access this room.

Now, at 8:22 p.m., we're debating about "free the beer," and we're going to spend \$1 billion getting beer into corner stores. The budget for making this province more accessible this year is \$1.6 million. It's \$1.6 million. That's the same as the salary of Doug Ford's—of the Premier's—lawyer: \$1.6 million. We're spending \$1 billion to get beer in corner stores, but we're spending \$1.6 million to make this province more accessible and make sure that people actually have access to jobs and full participation in our society.

If we're going to talk about this bill—and the member from Windsor-Essex was talking about how this is just bizarre. Why are we talking about beer at this time? People have been talking about, "It's a change-the-channel bill," that it's a distraction. But really, it's about priorities. I think the people of Ontario are just wondering what the priorities are of this government, because they seem really bizarre.

We're having this emergency debate on beer when they are decimating our public education system. They're increasing our secondary class sizes by six. At the TDSB—and I can speak to the TDSB because I was a trustee there for eight years—the shortfall this year from this government's budget is \$67 million. The TDSB has about 10% of the students in the province. So if you average that out—and I don't know if it's exact—but somewhere there's a ballpark of a \$600-million shortfall in our public and Catholic schools across this province.

What it means is that we're losing hundreds and hundreds of teachers. We're going to be losing—actually, it's going to be thousands. The estimate is 3,500 from the government side, but actually it's going to be much higher than that.

In Etobicoke, where I served as a trustee, they're talking about cutting the itinerant music instructor program. That program is actually the foundation of music instruction in Etobicoke schools. Etobicoke schools had a

wonderful tradition of music instruction, and some wonderful orchestras and some wonderful bands that came out of it. They actually feed the local community, the Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra and the Etobicoke Community Concert Band. They actually—

Interjection.

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes. Well, a lot of those people learned their—

Interjection.

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, actually, you're one of the students. I forgot. The member from Toronto Centre was actually a student at Etobicoke School of the Arts. The Etobicoke School of the Arts and the other music programs in those schools actually feed and prepare musicians for the local music.

Anyway, the government is making all these drastic cuts to our education system, impeding the future of our children, but they're spending \$1 billion on getting beer into corner stores. Post-secondary education: Where could we spend \$1 billion? The government is cutting \$700 million from post-secondary education—\$300 million from operating grants and another \$400 million from OSAP. So that means that this government is downloading about \$400 million in debt onto students this coming year and each year after that, but they can find \$1 billion to get beer into corner stores.

Look at all the priorities: education, access for people with disabilities, and the environment. They cancelled the program to plant 50 million trees. Trees help with flood mitigation. We've got floods this spring across the province. In my riding, it's down on the Toronto Islands, and people are worried about their homes. Once again, just two years ago, we had a once-in-a-century flood at the Toronto Islands, and now we've got another once-in-a-century flood—but they're coming every two years. It's happening across the province. We had a tornado go through Ottawa last year. We had a record number of forest fires; I think it was 1,325 forest fires.

The government cancelled the cap-and-trade system. They cancelled it because they said that four cents a litre is too much; it's going to cost each person \$250 on their gas bill. Well, the environment commissioner last year said that in the first six months of 2018, damage to the environment from global warming was \$350 per Ontarian—\$1.2 billion that we paid for global warming last year, and that's going to increase. By 2050, the damage from global warming and the erratic weather that we're getting is going to cost \$90 billion a year across this country.

So when we look at what the priorities should be, should the priority be access for people with disabilities? Should the priority be education and keeping our class sizes at a reasonable level at the secondary level? Should the priority be helping students to reduce student debt? Should the priority be protecting our environment for the next generation? No. The priority here is, as Doug Ford so lightly said, "Free the beer"—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock.

Mr. Chris Glover: Sorry. I apologize—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm standing. That's three times; the member has corrected himself twice. Please don't let it happen again. We refer to all members by their ridings or their titles. Thank you.

Mr. Chris Glover: I stand corrected, Madam Speaker. I should have said "the Premier."

The other thing about this bill is that it's breaking a contract. We've learned so much in this province. In this province, this government keeps criticizing the Liberals. They criticized the Liberals for cancelling the gas plant contract because that cost us \$1.2 billion, and here they're walking into the same quagmire. They're cancelling a contract that the estimate is that it's going to cost us \$1 billion to cancel this contract. The Conservatives keep saying, "Oh, the Liberals were so terrible," and yet they're doing the same thing.

So I would ask the government: Don't even bother. Don't even continue with this bill. Get on to other priorities. Get on to the real priorities of the people of Ontario, which are education—post-secondary education, as well as elementary and secondary education—the environment and access for people with disabilities.

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

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I was just thinking. I could only imagine that if there were no contracts, we would imagine the howls that would come from the opposition across the floor if we were to set up a beer or beverage monopoly with just three distributors. Could you imagine the howls? Right from Moosonee to Madoc, literally from Kenora to Kingston, they would be just rolling over in their graves saying, "How could you ever do that?" The only people, of course, who are not taking that stance right now are the Liberal Party, who made that disgusting, disgusting deal. But the fact is that you don't just go ahead and continue to do something absolutely, outlandishly wrong.

So we have to deal with this. We have to recognize that the deal was wrong, wrong, wrong. But now, when we have the courage to change the narrative on this, to bring some proper service back to the Ontario people, to bring significant dollars through to our small businesses, to expand the treasury with the income from that, they howl again.

It's starting to disturb me. I've heard this "a billion dollars, a billion dollars" from the opposition incessantly. That's a disgusting naïveté. Quite frankly, in the art of business and negotiations and deals, there are always—these are international companies that are making billions and billions of dollars. Of course they're going to wail if we're going to change it: "We're going to sue you for this, this, this." We all recognize that the reality is, that is a pipe dream that is not about to happen. These companies still want to do business in Ontario. Quite frankly, that is a reality that you should face across the floor.

Regardless of whether you're a Liberal, a Conservative or an NDP, the reality is, folks, that business works in a particular way, and if we think the political appetite is going to change that—dead wrong.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The member from Hastings—Lennox and Addington—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Pardon me?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: A little snag, but you got it.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks. But sir, I beg to differ. I have a really different impression on the free market, and one that is based on contractual obligations. If what you're saying to us is that this bill that we're debating today and the effort that you're putting forward and the money that you're willing to spend, that you don't have to spend today—let's remember, this contract today costs the taxpayers zero, but you know that the contract has penalty clauses, either through arbitration or through legal proceedings. What you're saying to us and to the public of Ontario is that you're using this bill as a negotiating tactic, as leverage.

2030

But, Speaker, I digress back to my understanding of the free market. It's a long-standing understanding of the basic premise of the law, the rule of law and contractual obligations. If the government believes today that they can exit this contract, which has a 10-year time frame, without any penalty to the taxpayer, I humbly request that they submit that information to us on how they're going to do that. We have yet to hear one example of how they understand they're going to exit this without penalizing the taxpayers of Ontario.

I heard earlier, too, as well, that one of the criticisms is that no government should handcuff another government with any type of clauses or any type of policies or contracts. This government bases their budget on five-, six-, 10-year time frames. They are doing it in and of their own budget. They're not even paying off the debt. They say they're getting rid of the debt, but that's way into the future.

There's no rationale for this bill at this moment, and the \$1 billion the taxpayers are going to pay is a massive penalty.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm from a small city called Hong Kong, with a population of seven million. Not long after I arrived in Canada 19 years ago, on a hot summer evening, I wanted to enjoy a can of beer. I searched through all of the community near to which I live. Nowhere could I find a can of beer. Later, I found out that I need to go to the Beer Store to buy a can of beer. To me, it is hard to believe that in a free country like Canada, a great province like Ontario, it is so challenging to buy a can of beer. In Hong Kong, I can buy a beer from a small roadside grocery store with an opening this wide—six feet, I think, or five. I can buy a beer from a convenience store, any grocery store or any roadside store. Buying a beer nearby is just common sense to me.

This government for the people campaigned on the promise to put people first, including by growing jobs and

expanding choice and convenience for Ontario consumers. While the opposition keeps bringing freedom of choice against people who are in need or in school or some other things in the same basket, I find that, myself, I can sponsor six children in the Third World and at the same time I can feel free to buy myself a drink. I can see the government is increasing funding for health, education and Ontarians who are in need. At the same time, we can grow jobs and expand choices. Therefore, I fully support bringing choice and fairness with Bill 115.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Just to the previous speaker who just spoke in his two-minute rebuttal to the debate: Could I explain to you some of the things that people are looking for in Algoma–Manitoulin? They’re looking for a doctor. They’re looking for the opportunity to get coverage for individuals who are diabetic getting access to needles. They’re looking for proper daycare. They’re looking for access to proper infrastructure so that they can benefit from the opportunities that are provided to many other communities across this province. They’re looking for safe and reliable highways for getting to and from schools, for getting to and from work, for getting to and from their recreational facilities, for getting to and from their health care providers and their hospitals. People are not looking for a beer. Sure, everybody wants a beer, but their priorities are so vastly different. It really is—I’ve got to watch my words.

I want to thank the members from Spadina–Fort York and also University–Rosedale. It’s nights like this, or in debates like tonight, where we’re talking about these issues that are really not priorities for Ontarians, that I am so proud to have individuals like yourselves in my caucus, who bring reasonable, objective, concrete ideas as to where the priorities are for Ontarians, where they should be and where our focus should be. And I’m sorry, it shouldn’t be on trying to find a beer at 9 o’clock in the morning.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from University–Rosedale for her two minutes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you also to the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington, the member for Essex, the member for Markham–Unionville and the member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

What the member for Essex said about there being no real rationale for this bill: I do agree with him. I do see a lot of priorities that we need to address in this province, and increasing access to beer is not necessarily one of them.

Hearing the members speak in their two-minute debate, it made me think that we were talking about Prohibition. This isn’t a debate about ending Prohibition. We can all easily access beer, and there is a way to further liberalize the beer market in a fashion that would not result in us spending a billion dollars unnecessarily. That means moving in a more cautious negotiating framework and not rushing ahead.

The members’ comments that I heard around the need for choice and fairness—we can look at choice and fairness as, “I need to be able to very quickly get a beer at the end of the day,” and that’s fair enough; but another way of looking at choice and fairness is to think about the real priorities that people in our ridings are facing. Those issues include making sure that our children get to go to the kind of school where they know they’re going to get a wonderful education, there are enough supports there so they’re not going to be bullied and the parents trust that that school is going to look after them and give them a great shot in life.

When I think about choice and fairness, I think about the need, as a parent, to have access to affordable daycare. People can still have the choice to work full time and have the choice to put their child in a daycare that they know will be safe.

These are the kinds of choices that I think Ontarians really care about, not necessarily beer.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Before I begin my contribution to the debate on Bill 115, I just want to give a quick shout-out to the Raptors. I know the NBA finals’ tipoff is in less than an hour. Madam Speaker, if I was at the game tonight, I might even enjoy a beer while I was there. I like to occasionally have one now and then. As a matter of fact, I ran a campaign to liberate local beer back in 2014. While doing that, Brewer’s Retail actually sent me a multi-page letter to cease and desist because I was pushing them so hard to open up the Ontario market for craft brewers.

My concerns with Bill 115 have nothing to do with beer sales. My concern is with the irresponsible way in which this government is approaching this issue. We all know the buck-a-beer challenge fizzled. It was a distraction from the pressing issues facing the people of Ontario then, as this bill is now. But at least that challenge did not cost people their hard-earned tax dollars, unlike Bill 115, which exposes the province to significant financial, legal and reputational risk. Once again this government is sending investors and job creators the wrong message: that a contract in this province is not worth the paper it is signed on.

Madam Speaker, I’m a small business owner. I understand the importance of keeping your word, of honouring your contract. That is key to building successful business relationships, to building trust for investment in your business, as it is for building trust for investment in your province.

2040

That’s why this emerging pattern of ripping up contracts, of interfering with the boards of publicly traded companies, or requiring private companies to display government propaganda is so concerning.

This government has a strange way of saying that Ontario is open for business. Let’s just say these are the kinds of actions you might expect in places like Venezuela, but not in Ontario.

I want to end with a question that a university law professor, Amir Attaran, asked on Twitter: “Why are the Conservatives attacking the rule of law for beer?” It’s a great question, because the rule of law is essential to having a successful economy and a civilized society. The government has yet to explain how Bill 115 doesn’t undermine those principles.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I heard the speech from my honourable colleague across. All night, I’ve heard from various colleagues of mine talking about the emphasis of why we are putting forward a bill about, and talking about, beer etc.

I just wanted to talk about a few things that we’ve done just since Christmas, a few bills that we’ve put forward: Bill 48, education reform; Bill 66, red tape reduction; Bill 68, policing reform; Bill 74, health care reform; Bill 100, the budget; Bill 87, energy reform; Bill 107, transit reform—now we’re on track for that; I can see that the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation is here, and they’ve done such a great job with that—and Bill 108, the housing plan.

This bill is being introduced at the tail end of this session, before we rise, so it’s the last thing that we’re putting in.

However, one thing that should be noted is, when we campaigned in the last election, we continuously said this to the people of Ontario: We’re not going to continue on what happened with the previous government. For 15 years, people were neglected. For 15 years, people stopped receiving services from their government. That stopped when we got elected. We went to the people and said, “When we get elected, we’re going to serve you. We’re going to make life easier for you. It’s going to be about convenience. It’s going to be about affordability.” That’s what this bill does, Madam Speaker.

I mentioned earlier—you weren’t in the seat when I talked about this. I said that half of my family comes from Quebec, Madam Speaker. When I go to Quebec, as I often do, to visit my family—you wouldn’t believe the convenience of having to go only to one place to get everything you need, and then you go spend that quality time with the rest of your family, whereas here, you have to go to various locations, and then, whatever time you have left you spend with your family.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This Conservative government, this Ford government, is trying to justify the late night that we’re here on a Thursday evening, and why it’s so important to debate this beer bill.

They’re telling us that we’re saying the sky is falling, but the sky isn’t going to fall and it’s not the end of the world. Then what is the hurry? What is the hurry? What is the hurry on a Thursday evening, debating access to beer? I don’t get it.

They talk about good business practice and what that looks like. What that looks like is, when you enter into

contracts, you enter into contracts in good faith. When you rip up contracts, that is not in good faith. Then, when you create legislation in the bill today, the beer bill, and you tell people that you can sue them but they can’t sue you, that is not in good faith. That is not good policy.

Then, when you have a bill, your budget bill, Bill 100, cutting what matters most to Ontarians, you’re telling people that again:

“Regulatory decisions:

“(2) No cause of action arises against the crown or an officer, employee or agent of the crown in respect of a regulatory decision made in good faith, where,

“(a) a person suffers any form of harm or loss as a result of an act or omission of a person who is the subject of the regulatory decision”.

You’re telling people, “Too bad.” It says here—I’ll paraphrase—that even if you make these decisions that are in good faith respecting a matter of policy, or any negligence or purported failure to make a decision respecting a policy matter, you can’t hold yourselves accountable. Yet today you’re telling us that this is the priority of Ontarians, that we must have access to beer and we need to be here Thursday night.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: It’s an honour to rise in response to the member from Guelph’s statement. He mentioned, why would you undermine the rule of law? Why break contracts? And he spoke about the importance of honouring contracts, of being a reliable business partner.

The province of Ontario should be a reliable business partner. When the government of Ontario signs a contract with someone, they should honour that contract. If we need to get out of that contract, we should sit down and negotiate an end to the contract or an exit from that contract. Instead, this government is actually passing legislation that will break the contract and then say that the companies that we signed the contract with will have no legal recourse for compensation.

The member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, in response, said, “Hey, look at all of our accomplishments. What about Bill 107?”, the subway confiscation bill. This is something that this government is actually proud of, but it’s the same thing. The subway in Toronto belongs to the TTC, which is owned by the city of Toronto. This government is confiscating, it’s taking the subway from the city of Toronto, and Bill 107 says they can do it “with or without compensation.” And again, just like this bill, the beer bill, it says that the city of Toronto has no legal recourse to claim for any compensation for the property that it’s seizing.

John Sewell, the former mayor of Toronto, was in speaking about Bill 107. He said this is a breach; this is an infringement on the property rights of the city of Toronto. It calls into question whether this government can be a trusted business partner, not only for the city of Toronto—but this beer bill says this government can’t be trusted as a business partner for other contracts that it signs or for respecting property rights.

Madam Speaker, this bill, as the member from Guelph says, is a black mark on the reputation of this province. Thank you.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: It's a great honour for me to rise today.

Madam Speaker, during the last election, we promised to put people first, including by creating jobs and expanding convenience for Ontario consumers. That's why we introduced legislation to terminate the previous government's terrible deal with the Beer Store putting multinational profits ahead of consumers.

Madam Speaker, I remember the time when I came as an international student. We didn't have any car at that time, and I remember travelling by bus to one store to do groceries and then taking another bus to go to the Beer Store to buy beer. I know how difficult it was. Now our government is putting people first, because convenience means not having to wait in a huge line, taking one bus to go to the grocery store and then taking another bus to go to the Beer Store. People can spend that time with their families and with their friends. Convenience means making one trip to the store, saving your time and your money.

That's why our government is introducing this legislation—to put people first. I have a lot of business owners and people coming to me in my riding and telling me that this is the best step the government is taking, by putting people first and not the big multinational companies.

Madam Speaker, choice means having more access to local products to support craft brewers and distillers in your area. Convenience is being able to pick up a bottle of wine for dinner with friends, even if it's a holiday weekend.

The previous government, as I said, put multinational profits ahead of consumers, but our government is making a plan to make good on our promise to put people first. This is not just about choice and convenience; this is about creating fairness for Ontario consumers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Guelph for his response.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate all the members contributing to the debate: the members for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, London–Fanshawe, Spadina–Fort York and Brampton West.

2050

What I find deeply disturbing about this debate is that the government would risk undermining the rule of law, placing Ontario with significant risk—financial, legal and reputational risk—in order to address a slogan: “Free the Beer.” Really? We want to put the credibility of our province at risk to, I guess, satisfy a slogan?

As I said, I would like to see expanded beer sales. As a matter of fact, I ran a campaign to liberate local beer. But you have to do it in a responsible way. You have to do it in a way that doesn't break and rip up contracts. You have to do it in a way that respects the rule of law.

The member from Spadina–Fort York talked about the importance of honouring a contract. I know when I ran my business, I did most of my business with a handshake. We didn't even need a contract, I'd built so much trust up with my business partners and suppliers. The province of Ontario says they'll just rip up contracts—and even if it's a bad contract, does a bad contract mean that you provide this kind of reputational risk for the province of Ontario?

Let's honour our word. Let's build trust in this province. Let's let investors around the world know that Ontario is a trusted place to do business by upholding the rule of law and withdrawing Bill 115.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I assume it's the member from Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Let's take a step back here. What we're talking about is the Master Framework Agreement. That's what the core of all of this debate is really about, the terrible contract that has been put in place. It allows for this global, multinational corporation to have exclusive rights to sell 12-packs and 24-packs of beer. Everyone else can sell six-packs, but they have the exclusive right to sell 12s and 24s. If you go into a liquor store and you want to buy 24 beer, you have to buy four six-packs. You're paying significantly more for it.

Let's stop and think about this in terms of other industries. Now, we're talking about beer. What goes well with beer? Pizza. Let's think about this, then, for a moment. Essentially, what the previous Liberal government did was, they said all pizzerias in Ontario can sell individual slices and only individual slices. “Pizza Hut, you're allowed to sell a medium, a large or an extra large,” but everybody else in the province who sells pizza, “You can only sell slices.” How is that conducive to competition? How is that conducive to business? You can go get 12 slices, but you're paying significantly more for it.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Use a better example. Pizza? Come on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Dave Smith: The member from Manitoulin–Algoma is talking about this because he's saying, “Come on, you can't compare beer to pizza.” You're right. You can't compare beer to pizza, because the pizza industry right now doesn't have that type of regulation put on it. We regulate the sale of beer in Ontario, and we've made a contract that is a terrible contract for consumers.

If we want to get away from that—okay, pizza was a bad example. I'll say that to you. What else goes well with beer?

Mr. Mike Harris: Pretzels.

Mr. Dave Smith: Or chicken wings. Everybody likes chicken wings, especially when they're having a beer.

Let's say we came out and we said, “Every restaurant in Ontario can sell chicken wings, but they can only sell them one at a time.” The only way you can get more than one chicken wing at a time is if you buy it from Pinty's, and Pinty's has the market on it. You can go out and you

can buy those frozen boxes of chicken wings, and they're the only ones in Ontario that are allowed to sell it that way.

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Smith: One chicken wing is all you're allowed to buy if you're not buying Pinty's. How does that make sense? It doesn't.

We're having a discussion in here, we're having a conversation, and we're having some opposition come up about it because they're talking about the morality, really. That's what they're doing. They're talking about the morality of the sale of alcohol. Alcohol is nothing more than any other consumer item. We're talking about beer. Beer is regulated in Ontario right now. If we follow this agreement, Anheuser-Busch, Coors and Sapporo can sell 12s and 24s or anything larger than that, but nobody else can. That's really what this has come down to. We simplify it all the way down to that.

There has been some concern that the product that comes out from the Beer Store—the recycling of that is very effective. We agree with that. The bottle return is a very effective system. We're not changing that; in fact, we'll probably open up some other opportunities for it. There will be things that other organizations—perhaps we'll partner with Legions, and Legions will be able to do that. Wouldn't that be just a great thing for us to have?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Parsa): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin will please come to order.

Mr. Dave Smith: Let's look back, then, historically. This agreement, although it was signed recently by the Liberals—really grew out of Prohibition. We have basically had the same system in place in Ontario since Prohibition.

The member from Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte talked about some spirits, Corby's in particular, in Corbyville just outside of Belleville, and how they sold Wisner's products and so on. My family actually has a history with that. I'm going to talk a little bit about what the world was like during Prohibition.

Here's what the world was like during Prohibition for Corby's, for Corbyville, for Belleville. I'm not comparing myself to the Kennedy family, but if you want to make a minor comparison to it, sure, go ahead afterwards, after I tell the story. My great-grandfather Frederick Smith started a company in 1896 called Smith & Son Transport. In 1904, they were awarded the contract for Corby's. They had exclusive rights to deliver the product for Corby's out of Corbyville from 1904 until 1966. It was Smith & Son Transport for most of the time. Keep this in mind: I'm talking about this to frame what the world was like when we decided on this structure for how alcohol was going to be sold in Ontario.

During Prohibition, my grandfather's transports would go to Corbyville. They would pull into the plant at Corbyville and they would load up the Wisner's product and the Corby's product. Corby's Special Select was one of them; I remember that one well. They don't make it anymore. Imperial rye was another one that they loaded

up; they don't make that one anymore either. Out of Corbyville, three days a week, my grandfather would load up a few truckloads, and they would take it down to Belleville harbour, where his brother, my great-uncle, owned a fleet of fishing boats of between 28 and 42 feet. Three times a week, my grandfather would load up my great-uncle's fishing boats with product from Corbyville. The waybill said that it was destined for Cuba. It would go from Belleville to Cuba three times a week. Their other brother, my other great-uncle, was the customs officer who would sign off on the waybill to say that, yes, the product was going to Cuba, and that when the boats came back the next day, they had come back from Cuba. That was what the world was like during Prohibition.

Our Beer Store monopoly began out of that. When Prohibition was repealed, we created that Beer Store entity that was basically just a couple of companies selling their product. It was no different really than what was happening during Prohibition, other than that now it was legal to do it that way. We have maintained that for 92 years. We have essentially had a Prohibition-era retail for 92 years.

2100

When I was a kid growing up—I grew up in Prince Edward county; I didn't move to Peterborough until 1989. I lived in Wellington. If anyone is familiar with Prince Edward county, we have a lot of small towns there. Wellington and Picton are the two largest. At the time I lived in Wellington, it was about 750 people and Picton was around 2,000. Wellington had a liquor store that sold beer, wine, spirits and so on. Picton had both a liquor store and a beer store.

Prince Edward county is a wonderful place to grow up as a kid. Some of my friends lived in Consecon. Consecon is about 25 to 30 kilometres from Wellington. Now, it's changed significantly, because there weren't any vineyards—there were no wineries in Prince Edward county when I grew up there. If you lived in Consecon—a small town, about 500 people—and you wanted to buy beer, wine or spirits, you drove from Consecon through Hillier, through Rosehall, through Stewartville to Wellington. You had to drive through three communities to get to the nearest outlet to purchase product. That hasn't changed.

If you didn't live in Consecon—let's say that you lived in, oh, I don't know, Cherry Valley, or you lived up in Athol township. You would have to drive through three or four communities to get to Picton. Let's say you were camping at the Sandbanks. You'd go into West Lake and you'd stop at the Tambo, because it was an institution, and you would buy your Pogo and you'd get all of the other things that you'd have there, but you couldn't get beer, wine or spirits. You'd have to drive two more communities into Picton to do it.

When you drive across Prince Edward county from one side to the other, it's almost a two-hour drive, from one end of Prince Edward county to the other. It's not that it's really a great distance; it's that the roads all meander. They don't drive very quickly, and it takes a long time to get anywhere because you can't drive the way the crow flies;

you have to go all over the place to get to someplace. My point is, in Prince Edward county, as a kid growing up, there were two locations. It wasn't that it was a big population, but it wasn't uncommon for someone to have to drive more than an hour to get an adult beverage. Are we treating adults as adults? No, we weren't. What we were doing is we were setting up a retail marketplace that was designed during Prohibition, that was designed because of a moral issue or a moral approach. It was not about choice. It was not about freedom. It was not about convenience. It was not about service. It was about limitations. It was about putting constraints on it. We're in 2019; we're not in 1927. The world has changed. Why are we not looking at ways that we can treat adults as adults?

I'm going to touch on something that Ken Hughes said. I'm actually going to read directly from it: "Many of the current challenges with alcohol retail in Ontario stem from the 2015 Master Framework Agreement ... signed by the previous Ontario government, TBS and the three large global brewers ... who own TBS," or the Beer Store. The Master Framework Agreement gives the Beer Store "exclusivity on beer sales in 12 and 24 packs in its local markets until 2025 and limits the number of new retail stores that can be authorized. This is a bad deal for Ontarians because it gives control over the beer market to three dominant beer companies. This stifles competition, keeps prices artificially high, and prevents new craft beer entrepreneurs from getting a strong foothold in the market. It also limits real choice."

What we know definitively is that beer in Ontario right now costs about 10% higher than it does in neighbouring Quebec. Quebec doesn't have a master framework agreement like this. Quebec allows for choice.

We have a number of craft brewers who have tried to get a foothold in this market in Ontario, and they're not able to. They're not able to because, essentially, the Beer Store is that monopoly that does the promotion of beer and the sale of beer. If Labatt, Molson and Sleeman want to sell beer, do they want to sell Kawartha Lakes Brewery? Do they want to sell Muskoka Brewery? Do they want to sell Cool Beer? Do they want to sell any of the other craft beers? No. They want to sell their own product, because they're able to mark it up higher, almost 10% higher, than anywhere else in Canada.

The way that contract was written, we've given a competitive advantage to foreign companies, to foreign global national companies. Ontario signed an agreement that said, "We don't care about our local industry. We care more about Belgium. We care more about the industry in Japan. We care more about the industry in the United States. We don't care about our local entrepreneurs. We don't care to promote our own local industry, our own local industry that uses local product."

Our local craft brewers source their product from Ontario. They brew it in Ontario. They hire people from Ontario to do all of the work. They try to distribute it in Ontario. We should be standing up and promoting this. The Ontario government should not be putting a barrier in that prevents Ontario industry from succeeding, and that's

exactly what this type of agreement does. What we need to do instead is, we need to produce the product locally. We need to promote the product locally. We need to open it up so that our convenience stores, our general stores, our local companies have the opportunity to sell the beer, to sell the wine.

In my riding, I have a couple of areas that are significantly underserved. Woodview, for example, is on the way up to cottage country. They're about 20 kilometres away from the local liquor store or Beer Store, but everybody going to cottage country drives past it. They're not able to sell it. You can stop in there and you can get gas. You can get firewood. You can get fireworks. You can buy your groceries. You can get your bug repellent. You can fix your tent. You can get your car fixed. You can get your outboard motor fixed. You can have your boat winterized there, even. All of that stuff is available in Woodview, but you can't buy beer or wine because of the way the system is set up.

The opposition has asked this question a few times tonight—and I'm going to finish with this: They want to know why we keep talking about beer. Well, a great country singer named Tom Hall had this to say:

In some of my songs I have casually mentioned
The fact that I like to drink beer
This little song is more to the point
Roll out the barrel and lend me your ears

I like beer, it makes me a jolly good fellow
I like beer, it helps me unwind
And sometimes it makes me feel mellow
(Makes him feel mellow)

Whiskey's too rough, champagne costs too much
Vodka puts my mouth in gear
This little refrain should help me explain
As a matter of fact I like beer ...

My wife often frowns when we're out on the town
And I'm wearing a suit and a tie
She's sipping vermouth and she thinks I'm uncouth
When I yell as the waiter goes by

I like beer, it makes me a jolly good fellow
I like beer, it helps me unwind
And sometimes it makes me feel mellow
(Makes him feel mellow)

Whiskey's too rough, champagne costs too much
Vodka puts my mouth in gear
This little refrain should help me explain
As a matter of fact I like beer ...

2110

Last night I dreamed that I passed from the scene
And I went to a place so sublime
Oh, the water was clear and tasted like beer
Then they turned it all into wine

I like beer, it makes me a jolly good fellow
 I like beer, it helps me unwind
 And sometimes it makes me feel mellow
 (Makes him feel mellow)

Whisky's too rough, champagne costs too much
 Vodka puts my mouth in gear
 This little refrain should help me explain
 As a matter of fact I like beer....

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Madam Speaker, I have to make a point of coming here more often at nighttime. It's very entertaining.

The priority of this government right from day one was jobs, full stop—better jobs for workers, for families and for young people. Pro-growth planning right now is working. It is working in this province. In fact, there are 170,000 examples and people out there, and that's my point. For Conservatives, our mission is to see more people working, giving hope to job-seekers north, south, east or west. Our plan to deliver convenience and choice to law-abiding consumers will create good jobs.

The Retail Council of Canada said that we're going to create 9,000 new jobs. This is about when I go into the convenience store and I speak to the people in there who work 18 hours a day—Madam Speaker, there's no one who works harder than people who own a convenience store, who get there at 6 and work until midnight. It might get them through the year. It might give them an additional \$10,000 or \$20,000 to put back into their little company. That's what matters. There's over 9,000 convenience stores that can't wait to put this in their stores. That's what it's all about: creating jobs, supporting the little guy, and making sure the province and the people here have a choice.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I listened to the member from Peterborough—Kawartha. I don't know which one of you told him to do that, but please stop telling him to do that. He gave us a rendition of Hank Williams Jr. earlier. It was equally terrible. But he's making his point. Whether he does it through song or prose, it is a point. Whether it is valid or not is another issue, and that's why we're in this House today.

I'm happy to see that the Premier is coming in and giving us his point of view. They talked about the consultation and how he's doing this for the little guy and all that stuff. I went to the Premier's Twitter to check it out. He's got a beautiful banner there; beer here, beer there, beer everywhere. If you look at it, there are 505 comments on there from real people.

I wanted to read a couple of them. From @Mark47028744: "Everyone knows that this ... should be better spent. Get your priorities right!" Speaker, here's

another one. @UnfilteredSage: "Actually @fordnation and the @OntarioPCParty should pay the costs of breaking these contracts personally for a system that was working fine and limits abuse."

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):
 Mississauga East—Cooksville is warned.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, there are 500. Here's another one. Listen. Actually, I—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock, please. I'm sorry to interrupt the member. Stop the clock. The government will come to order. There are 30 seconds on the clock, and they do indeed belong to the member who has the floor. We have another go-round of questions and comments. Feel free, anyone who is inclined, to stand up and make a question or comment.

I return to the member.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Here's one from @MarloStimpson: "I want well educated children, healthcare coverage, and an actual plan for people on the autism spectrum. I don't want or need beer at corner stores, and I'm a beer drinker. #GetWithIt #NotWhatThePeopleWant. #HorribleIdea."

Speaker, the people are speaking. They're speaking directly to the Premier's Twitter handle. If he could give that a look for once, and understand that this is not a priority that the people of Ontario want, maybe he can reverse his fortunes in the polls.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The House will come to order. The across-the-floor talk is not appropriate or appreciated.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I haven't recognized you.

Further questions and comments?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's a really tough act to follow, the Premier of Ontario, in doing a hit, but I just wanted to say that it's so great to see the Premier here. It's actually his second time showing up tonight. When we're a team and we're all here having a late night, seeing our leader with us here to support us and grind it out with us through this night is just so energizing and so motivating.

Thank you so much. Thank you for being here with us. Thank you, Mr. Premier, for being here with us lowly backbenchers to spend the night.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to comment on this bill. It's really interesting: My colleagues on the opposite side of the House like to talk about priorities. The fact of the matter is, if they just agreed to support this bill, then we could focus on other matters. The reason we're debating this is because they want to debate it and they want to oppose it. However, the reality is, if we just agreed, we could move forward. We could be efficient. We could focus on health care and education and everything else. However, we're here debating this bill because they oppose it on principle.

The fact of the matter is, we've had an independent person, Ken Hughes. The Special Advisor for the Beverage Alcohol Review has said this himself: "Many of the current challenges with alcohol retail in Ontario stem from the 2015 Master Framework Agreement (MFA), signed by the previous ... government," the Beer Store and the three large foreign global brewers who own it. Because of that, many small businesses are shut out of alcohol retail and the economic benefits that could come from an expanded market.

That reminds me of the Ashton Brew Pub, which is literally located in a far end corner of my riding of Carleton. They're a microbrewery of craft beer, and they have difficulty selling their beer because of the monopoly by the Beer Store.

I'm happy to support this bill.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A reminder to members that we're not allowed to make comment about who is or is not here.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I didn't say anything.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): That was not in reference to you, nor will I debate my point.

Further questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It has been an interesting series of statements and debates gone before us. A number of Conservative members have made the argument that beer is just like pizza, and I just want to point out—

Mr. Dave Smith: And chicken wings.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: And chicken wings.

I just want to point out that we actually have rules around this substance that we don't have around chicken wings or pizza. There's a reason. Talk to Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Talk to Alcoholics Anonymous. There actually are things that you have to think about when you deal with a substance that, although incredibly pleasurable, has to be used in a way that's thoughtful, because you can do damage to people and their lives.

There's a reason that you, as the government, are not proposing that we sell cannabis in corner stores. Maybe I'm wrong; maybe I misunderstand the government. If you say that beer should be sold in corner stores, why not cannabis? Why are you making a distinction between these substances? If you consume enough of them, they have very similar impacts on the ability of people to judge and think. But you're not suggesting that. You're not suggesting for a moment that the adults in this province should be able to buy cannabis at corner stores. Your argument is inconsistent.

Another factor I want to touch on is the destruction of the large-scale recycling and bottle reuse program that goes with the Beer Store. I've heard nothing from this government about how that slack is going to be picked up. I want to tell you right now that I've talked to convenience store owners. They don't want to be recycling depots. I think they should be. If you're going to move the beer into the stores, they should take the bottles. But that issue alone could cost municipalities up to \$40 million a year across

Ontario. That is a big expense. You haven't spoken to that at all.

2120

The basis of your argument, saying that it should be everywhere, is undermined by your approach to cannabis. You're not consistent on those things. I think that's a fundamental error in your logic. This is a problematic bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for his final response.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke North, our Premier; the member from Essex; the member from Carleton; and the member from Toronto Danforth for their comments. And I promise the member from Essex that I won't sing anything else tonight.

He did make a point, though. He pulled out some tweets and said that people don't want this. Actually, there was a study done by the Convenience Industry Council of Canada. It reported that seven in 10 Ontarians who regularly consume beverage alcohol support the expansion of alcohol sales into convenience stores.

The second report, done by the Retail Council of Canada, reports that 73% of Ontarians support the sale of 12- and 24-packs in grocery stores. The problem is that the Master Framework Agreement prevents that from happening, and that's not right. Seventy-three per cent of the people surveyed by the Retail Council of Canada have said that this is really what they would like to have.

What we're doing is we're changing an archaic system. We're changing something that was set up in 1927. We're changing something that came out of Prohibition, and we're bringing it into 2019. We're opening up choice. We're making it available for people. We're allowing adults to be adults.

The member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas earlier tonight said, "How will we prevent kids from getting it?" Convenience stores right now card kids for the purchase of cigarettes 97% of the time. That's significantly higher than the Beer Store does for carding people for buying alcohol. Convenience store operators know it is their livelihood. They're not going to do something to lose their ability to feed their family. Safeguards are in place.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Me?

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I apologize, Speaker; I didn't hear you. Thank you for recognizing me. I appreciate it.

I'm pleased to join the debate tonight. It has been really interesting, one that I've never seen the likes of in this House and never seen a government so intent on woefully wasting taxpayers' dollars, fully aware that they are about to put a billion-dollar burden on top of taxpayers and have conceded as such and so much during tonight's debate. Time after time after time, we've stood and the leader of the Green Party has stood and asked—and the member from Ottawa–Vanier has asked: How do you believe you're going to exit your contractual obligation with this

entity without penalty? We have not heard one whisper of how that will take effect. Tell us how you believe you are going to go from paying nothing with this contract, absolutely no monetary exchange between the government and this private entity, that you've enforced that narrative so much—and it's funny that this government is meddling in the business of a private enterprise. But tell us how you're going to exit this contract without any liability to the taxpayer.

Speaker, I'm not a lawyer, of course, and I defer to those who are to provide us with some legal opinion on this. During questions in the House to the Premier, I quoted some of those legal entities that have quite clearly lambasted this plan. One of them said that this is a "policy gaffe of epic proportions." Speaker, that's some strong language from anyone in the legal community. You can imagine that it should give any government cause for concern when you hear the outcry from the legal community as to how this will be a massive violation of common law, of contractual obligations and of the nature of economics and the free market in Ontario, in Canada. It could be precedent-setting.

I think, despite what the government says in terms of their penalty, the legal costs alone to figure this out, at the end of the day, are going to be massive. I've asked the Premier, I've asked the finance minister: Have they budgeted for this? This sounds like it was always their plan, so have they actually allocated some money? We know that they allocated \$30 million to exit the cap-and-trade system and to fight the carbon tax that the federal government has imposed on Ontario. If they can give us that—and the finance minister is really good at spewing out numbers. He's got the numbers right on the tip of his tongue all the time. He's on his file; I'll give him that. But every time I ask him what he has allocated in terms of spending the taxpayers' dollars to fight this sole contract here, he's been unable or reluctant or unwilling to tell us, and that's my contention with this bill.

I can't really tell you whether this is a good deal or bad deal and whether the market could operate in a better way and offer more growth to our small microbreweries and to the craft brewing industry. I know they have grown, since 2005, an incredible amount. Their profits are up about \$68 million a year. I would submit respectfully that that marketplace—and it is the fastest-growing marketplace within the LCBO. I would say that's a pretty healthy rate of return, a 35% growth rate on an annualized basis. Holy moly; we'll take that. Put your money in a 35% growth vehicle: You'll take that, in any business. That's a wonderful margin. That has been a cautious approach by the government and a focus on domestic production and agriculture production, because a lot of that support comes from OMAFRA. We realize that alcohol comes from, primarily—especially with those small craft brewers—inputs from Ontario, and it makes sense for us to bolster that industry.

But what the government has been, again, reluctant to say—and they have quoted some figures, not from the Conference Board of Canada but the Retail Council of

Canada, which I would say would be a little bit biased in their opinion on whether this was good or bad for their industry. I would say that they would see a market share that they would love to penetrate, as any company would like to do, as those multinationals that you have so heavily criticized have done. They're the big players in the industry; we know that. But you have criticized the fact that they have increased their sales. They have increased their quantity, their volume. They have increased their labour supply. They have grown according to the rules. What you're saying as a government is, "We don't like how big they are. We don't like the contracts that they have entered into previously in good faith. We don't like any of that, because the Retail Council of Canada is saying, 'Well, we could put this in corner stores.'"

That's fair enough. You can say that; absolutely. But also add the caveat there: "Oh, by the way, it's going to potentially cost us \$1 billion in legal fees and penalties." Be up front with the taxpayers. If this is a legitimate exercise and a public policy measure you truly believe, make sure you're giving everyone the facts on the matter. That's one of my major contentions, that throughout this debate, I don't believe the government is really painting a full picture.

The other side is that I truly believe, given the evidence—and I have not been given any evidence otherwise—that you will pay, and the taxpayers will pay. We have to revert back to what the priorities of this government are. When we know that this is a government that is purported to be a government of austerity and we're in a time of constraint and restraint and fiscal calamity—well, how is it that you can justify putting the taxpayers in such jeopardy of up to \$1 billion?

Again, the only other type of qualifier, the only other policy piece that I've ever seen have this type of effect, is the gas plant scandal and the cancellation of those gas plants. Here's the difference, though: That was happening in backrooms and we, through a lot of digging, found out a whole lot of information.

2130

Credit has to go to the then-official opposition, the PCs; they did a lot of heavy lifting and digging into that, and you would think that those members who now make up some of the cabinet of the government would have learned their lesson. I know that my colleague from Toronto—Danforth referenced the now-finance minister's work on the committee to dig into that. That guy really held the government to account in terms of their contractual obligations, and how this was really punitive and didn't need to happen in the first place—although, if I remember correctly, I don't think the PCs had suggested that they would have done anything differently.

Nevertheless, what we know is that in a time of austerity, as this government has delivered to us, we would want to know why they feel it's right to vaporize \$1 billion. When teachers are being fired, when classrooms are being jammed with kids, when kids with autism can't get support, when people are still being treated in hospital hallways, when flood management funds are being cut for

communities that are dealing with devastating floods, when an opioid crisis is ravaging our communities in every quadrant of the province, we wonder why they feel that this matter, this beer thing, is of such high importance that they're willing to put \$1 billion into it just to get some beer into the corner stores.

I'm not so sure that model will even work, because if you take just a picture of your corner store, their shelves are already full. If they're thinking that they're going to wipe out Lay's potato chips and the Coca-Colas and all the stuff in the convenience store for all the craft beer that's ever made in Ontario plus some of the big industry players, that's just not functional.

And, to be honest, if you take a really accurate portrait of access to alcohol and beer in this province, it's pretty good. It's relatively easy. I would submit that some of the members should go down to Raptors Square—is it called Raptors Square?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Jurassic Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Jurassic Park; pardon me. I'm from southwestern Ontario, and I play hockey, not basketball. There are lots of folks there who are enjoying some libations, and I'm sure they're not having a problem getting it. It just speaks to a government that has got a solution for a problem that does not exist, and they're willing to bet the bank on it and to vaporize \$1 billion.

I caught the finance minister today—I was watching in my office, and he referenced the fact there are not enough retail outlets for alcohol in Ontario. I will correct my record if I'm wrong, but I think I remember him saying that there were 2,400 point-of-sale access to alcohol, whether that be beer, alcohol, or wine, in the province of Ontario—2,400 in the province of Ontario. So the finance minister obviously believes that that number needs to be higher than we need to increase that number.

Speaker, I did a quick search, and guess what? There are 1,400 McDonald's in the province of Ontario. So it's easier to get a beer in Ontario than it is to get a Big Mac. There are twice as many outlets for you to acquire alcohol in Ontario than a Big Mac. You would think, "That's a multinational"—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Outrageous.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's unbelievable. So they want more. They believe that there's more market share to be had; there's more consumption to be had.

There are a whole host of socioeconomic issues that we have a responsibility to address here. I haven't heard that from any member of the government as a point of concern. It's as if they don't really care. They're not talking about prevention and alcohol abuse and drug addiction. They're oblivious to it, and it's really concerning because we know the effects that increased access and consumption has on our communities. It's something that we are duty-bound to deal with and to acknowledge in this House, and we would hope that they would do that. We would hope that some common sense would prevail.

The other thing that I would to hear, especially from some of my colleagues whom I sat with who went through the gas plant scandal—one of the things that I think

happened there, one of the reasons why the government was allowed to get away with that in a roundabout way, or was even able to pursue that as a policy plank is because no one had the courage to stand up and say, "Don't do this. Stop. You're making a huge mistake." Again, I would think that, in hindsight, given the opportunity, a lot of those ministers and those who were in cabinet at the time, given the chance today, would have made a different choice, because a lot of them aren't here today. We know why. Because they wasted the government's money. We told them exactly what was going to happen, and they vaporized it.

We are telling this government that you're about to make an enormous mistake. Believe me, I don't want to give you any tips. I don't want you to portray yourself as making the right decisions. I don't want to help you, but I have to because the taxpayers demand it. You're making a huge mistake here. You have the opportunity to stand up and say, "Wait a second. We can let this contract expire. It won't cost us a dime, and we can review this contract at the end of its term." That would be a normal process. That would be reasonable. I think the majority of the people in the province of Ontario would agree that would be a reasonable course of action.

Pursue your policy endeavours down the road when it's not going to cost us any money, when you're not going to be blatantly wasting taxpayers' dollars. It boggles the mind to think that you're willing to do that. I don't know whether you think it's early on in your mandate and, three years down the road, folks won't remember. Well, we're going to make sure that they remember. This is an "I told you so" moment, and I feel very confident that, given the evidence so far and given your rush to this policy, you're making a huge mistake.

My colleagues have given you ample evidence of how you're making this mistake, why, and what other priorities the people are asking us for. You have to remember: We're in our communities too. We're on the ground and we're listening and we're gathering information. We're not caught in this bubble. We're not caught in a policy bubble that I think many of the members across the way have succumbed to. Not only are they telling us that this is the wrong approach, but they have a whole set of other priorities that they would like this government to not only invest in, but focus on and use the legislative time that we have in this House wisely.

I have not, in my eight years of elected office and my multiple conversations with folks in my area, heard a massive outcry for beer in the corner stores. That is not their priority—not only not their priority, but definitely not worth risking \$1 billion of taxpayers' money to put us into.

I don't know if you're going to change your mind, or if it gives you an out, but if you follow the polls at all, this one is not a winner. I'm sorry to tell you. As much as you might think it is, and as much as you might think that saying the word "beer" as many times as you can might be popular, it is not. It's really hurting your fortunes.

Again, I don't want to tell you that; you should know that. You should know how bad this policy is. Nevertheless, you are the government. You have full rein to do what

you want in this House. It is our obligation and our responsibility to help you along that way and give you some advice. I've tried to do that as much as I can; my colleagues have as well.

This debate has been really interesting, the way the government has dug in. I think I know now what the end game is. I believe this legislation was brought not so much as a functional piece of legislation, but what I think it is is a bargaining chip, so that when you enter into either that court of justice or any legal arena or through arbitration, which the master agreement sets out quite clearly, you'll hold this up and say, "Look, we can do whatever we want."

That's sending shockwaves throughout the business community as well. If you're not hearing that, if you're not hearing the concern from your BIAs and your chambers of commerce about the precedent you're setting in terms of dealing with the government of Ontario, which is a massive business enterprise, then you're not listening again. Again, I can't believe I'm giving you this advice, but you should really pay attention because, in this era of commerce, we deal in contractual obligations. We deal in that type of law. That's how big people do it. They make contracts, and they are legally binding. So we would hope that you would understand that fundamental of commerce. If you don't, we might be in more trouble than I suspect.

2140

I shudder to think of what could come next. But this really is something bizarre that I have never seen out of a government. I think it's precedent-setting throughout Confederation that a government would blatantly rip up a contract—at least the Liberals knew they were ripping it up, and fully admitted that they were, for partisan political purposes. We got that out of them. This one here: It's like you're oblivious to the rule of law, and it's shocking to us, as legislators, because we know that that's the context in which we work here: the law. But the fact that you're plowing ahead with this thing without regard for the taxpayers which you so openly claim to protect is a huge mark against your brand.

Again, we're going to remind them every day, every chance we have, that this is something that we warned you about, that we counselled you about, that we debated about, and that you could have changed course; you could have done something differently. Our residents, our communities, are asking for support. Our municipalities are asking for support. In a time when you can so blatantly vaporize \$1 billion when those communities need that support, it will be a shameful day in Ontario. You will wear that shame, and it will be reflected in the next election.

You've got a chance to turn the corner on this thing. I know it's a challenge. I know the heat that you're under. But debate is not done. Take this thing back to your House leader, take it back to your ministers, and tell them, "Look, let's wait. Put a pause on it." You've got six years left on the contract. People are getting access to beer. They'll get it then, they could get it afterwards, but it will not cost the taxpayers \$1 billion. If you plow ahead with it, it's going to hurt our communities, and I can guarantee you it's going to hurt your electoral fortunes.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Before the election, after my nomination, to get to know better my constituents, neighbours, business owners—and in my riding, the overwhelming majority, 99%, are small business owners—I started knocking on the doors and met many convenience store owners. These are small businesses run by families: aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters etc.

The first thing they brought to my attention—they pleaded with me. They told me, "We are on the verge of bankruptcy. The big box stores are eating our profits. They are eating our own businesses, and we cannot survive." They told me, "The only way to do it is if the new government, the Conservative government, your government, if you are elected, can bring the beer and wine sales to the small business owners, to the convenience stores." Through our commitment to them, as the government of the people, we stood by those small business owners. We stood by the people, because we want them to survive. We want them to continue to do their businesses.

That's why this bill is important. It is a matter of fairness. It's not an issue of the multinationals to gather more money, to accumulate more money. The multinationals should stand up in front of the mirror, look at themselves and think to become good corporate citizens and contribute to our society, to how business is run.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm going to try to be an effective opposition member and give an out to this government. Right now, I'm feeling like an Austin Powers Dr. Evil person, and I'm going to give you a billion reasons what you should be doing with this billion dollars.

Listen, I have many friends within the craft brewery industry. I actually have Split Rail brewery in Gore Bay and Manitoulin brewery in Little Current. I believe that there are many other breweries across this province that would be open to this idea.

You want to talk about fairness? Here's one for you—and again, this is an out for the government, so take it under consideration: Let's start treating human beings like human beings. Let's start treating beer as important as water. Sounds radical? There are many communities in this province that don't have water, never mind beer. People are dying from taking their baths and drinking water, not beer. That should be your priority. That's what you should be focusing on. If you want an out, there's an out; all right? Tell the craft brewers and tell Molson, "You know what? We're going to grab this billion dollars and instead of blowing it away, we're going to use that billion dollars to start providing clean, reliable fresh water to all of our First Nations communities in this province."

There's a priority. There's an out for you. Use that. Think this through. You will wear this decision, and you will wear it for a very long time. This is an out for you.

We've provided good opportunities and a lot of good, logical debate for all of you on the other side today. Take it back. Use the powers, use your seat, use your powers

that you have as MPPs and speak on behalf of your constituents.

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

Miss Kinga Surma: I'm just going to take this time to highlight some of the things that we've done. The members opposite keep reiterating that we're not focusing on our priorities, but we've worked damned hard this past year. Excuse me, Madam Speaker; I apologize. I withdraw.

But we've worked very hard. We've been here 12 months. We've sat basically every single week, minus January. We're having a late night session tonight, and do you know what? I would not be surprised if we got called back in the summer for additional business.

We've worked very hard. We've presented a budget. We're fixing health care. We're fixing education. We've presented the best transit plan that I think I'll ever see in my lifetime. So for them to attack us and the members here who have just dedicated so much of their time and sacrificed time with their families to be here to fight for the taxpayer is just, frankly, disappointing.

To the member opposite: It's one thing to say to take our ideas back, but I have not seen your members wanting to collaborate with us. You have not supported a single thing that we've done all year. Do you know what? That would go a long way, if you actually supported at least one thing that we've accomplished.

I'm just going to read through this list of things we've done that perhaps everyone needs a reminder of:

We've saved 7,500 jobs at the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station.

We've canceled wasteful energy contracts.

We've invested \$25 million to fight guns and gangs, which I've spoken to previously, which is incredibly important to the ridings in Toronto specifically.

We've frozen driver fees.

We've committed to upholding free speech on publicly funded university and college campuses.

We've expanded access to natural gas, particularly in northern Ontario.

We've increased GO train services in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

We've scrapped the Drive Clean program.

Thank you, Speaker. I could go on and on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Not tonight.

Further questions and comments?

Ms. Suze Morrison: Before I start, I just want to recognize that the time is now 10 minutes to 10. We're here late at night on a Thursday evening.

I also want to recognize, at least as fast as my phone can refresh, that the Raptors are currently leading the Warriors 31 to 26, as we speak—something to celebrate.

Applause.

Ms. Suze Morrison: But back to the member from Etobicoke Centre: Working hard and working smart are two very, very different things. I don't think anyone on either side of this Legislature would say that a single

person in this House has not worked hard for the last 12 months. We are all out there, every single week, talking to our constituents, knocking on doors. When I go out into my community—and I'm going back to the comments that the member for Essex made during his remarks. He talked about what matters most to his communities in Essex. Quite frankly, it's not increasing the supply or availability of beer.

2150

When I go out and knock on doors, the first thing I hear at most of the doors I knock on is, "How do we stop this government? How do we fight?" The people of downtown Toronto are terrified of the backwards priorities of this government and the damage that you are leaving in your wake for generations to come. When I knock on doors—my constituents care about housing. They care that rent control has gone from new buildings. They care about the fact that our social housing infrastructure is crumbling.

Do you know what a billion dollars would do for social housing? It would fill half of the backlog of capital repairs across the entire province, and it would certainly bring every single social housing building in Toronto Centre up to code. It would build a lot of community housing units. So get your priorities straight. This is not what our communities want.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for Essex and return to him for his comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you to the members from Scarborough—Agincourt, Algoma—Manitoulin, Etobicoke Centre and Toronto Centre.

The member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill: You're the PA to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. You should know that, under the USMCA, we still have investor-state provisions that we're going to be liable for, and I haven't heard this government reference that at all; we have. We've told you that you're vulnerable here, you're liable under trade regulations. It's going to be costly. I would hope you would have a discussion with the minister and figure out what that number is, because it might not make it worthwhile. I don't think it will.

The member from Algoma—Manitoulin: Water; indeed, water. If we are to put any effort on anything in this chamber, it should be the safe access to clean drinking water across this province, and in this province, at this moment, there are multiple communities that do not have access to safe drinking water. It's a shame, it's a travesty and it is deplorable we're here in that time and in that era.

To the member from Etobicoke Centre: You listed off some of the things you believe the government has done that were positive. I would almost believe you if the Premier had followed through on his promise to my community to pave and finish the third phase of Highway 3. He came to the community during the election and said it was a priority; it would be done day one. Guess what? Lots of days have followed, and now we're debating a beer bill instead of finishing that critical link in my community and that of Chatham-Kent—Essex. He also said he was going to issue an immediate health hazard assessment for

those folks who are relying on drinking water from well water in Chatham-Kent–Essex. He hasn't done any of that; not a squeak. That's two massive fails.

We don't trust this government to do the right thing, and this bill is proof positive of that.

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

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank all the members across party lines for their comments today.

Madam Speaker, I want to debunk a pervasive narrative that has manifested in the Legislature by the opposition: a misnomer put out to the public that the singular preoccupation of this government is anything other than the economy. I want to be clear and want our record and the sequencing of events to demonstrate my point to you, Madam Speaker.

The singular priority of this Premier, as noted in this House not just an hour ago, is the creation of jobs, creating dignity for workers in the province of Ontario, and the proof is in the pudding. Let the economic indicators of our province demonstrate in word and deed what we are doing and the efficacy of our plan.

Madam Speaker, it is not a coincidence that now, nearly 12 months into our mandate, we lead the nation in jobs growth in this country. Not only do we lead the nation in jobs growth, we represent over 50% of jobs growth in the country in the province of Ontario. We have attracted more skilled immigrants to this province than ever before. We lead the nation in GDP growth: Economic growth is at 2.2%, whereas the country is at 1.8%.

When it comes to the focus of this government, it is on jobs, it is on income mobility, it is on creating the dignity of work, and it is on giving young people the tools to afford a home. That is the focus of this government.

Yes, competition in the market, job creation for our young people and a renaissance of our small craft breweries also tie in very brilliantly with that economic focus. In the absence of a strong economy, we will not have, as the members opposite have urged us to do, a sustainable and accessible public health care system in the province of Ontario; we will not have a quality education system that leads young people on the journey of learning and gets them into a good-paying job.

Madam Speaker, allow me to remind this House what we have done since day one.

It was this government, against the will of members opposite—Madam Speaker, allow me to remind them that they did not want to come into this Legislature last summer, soon after the mandate we received from the people of Ontario, yes, to create fairness and convenience when it comes to beer distribution but, moreover, to change the trajectory of Ontario after 15 years of darkness, waste and economic incompetence under the former Liberal government.

What I think is important is to remind all of us—allow this to be an exercise of literal historical notation for the Hansard. The first bill we introduced in the Legislature of Ontario was to scrap the punitive cap-and-trade carbon tax. That was the first thing we did. The first thing that this

Conservative government did was cut taxes for working families, for moms and dads and for small businesses in the province of Ontario. That is the first thing we did.

If we had allowed the opposition to dictate the schedule of this House, we wouldn't even have been here until the fall. We got to work, as the member from Etobicoke Centre said so brilliantly. I know that all of us work hard, across party lines; I accept that premise. I know you work very hard. Madam Speaker, we returned in the summer, in an unprecedented recall, because we believed that the return of monies in the pockets of workers and families was of urgency.

The second thing we did, opposed by the New Democrats and opposed by the Liberals, was ensure that 50,000 young people in the province of Ontario could return to school after the longest post-secondary strike in the history in the nation. That is the priority: education, getting kids in the classroom, creating jobs and lowering taxes. That is the priority of this government, and it is absolutely congruent with the economic plan of this Premier and the cabinet to have an initiative that increases competition and that ensures fairness for consumers, who deserve it.

In virtually every jurisdiction that we have travelled to—for those who have had the benefit of leaving Ontario—be it Quebec, Alberta, New Democratic British Columbia or the socialist republic of California, all of these things exist. Competition exists, Madam Speaker.

I know it's not in vogue to encourage competition, from those on the left, but for common-sense Ontarians, we sort of think that competition inherently drives jobs. Competition encourages prices to go down. It is actually in the consumers' interests that we take the bold leadership required to get this policy passed.

Another narrative that I want to debunk, in the final commentary of this House, is that members opposite have suggested that the liberalization of beer and creating more competition, more fairness and more access for responsible, law-abiding adults—as they are, the citizens and adults in the province of Ontario; as they are treated in every other province of this country, virtually—we believe that that competition is healthy for the economy and for the consumer.

But as I mentioned, I want to debunk the narrative that this is the singular priority. For me as a legislator, and representing a suburban, growing, diverse, pluralistic riding, King–Vaughan, just north of Toronto, a community in Vaughan where I literally, for 31 of my 32 long years on this earth, have proudly hailed from, I'll tell you what my priorities are. My priorities are jobs, and 170,000 people, as the Premier said, are proof positive that our plan is working.

To the members opposite, for whom I have great respect and affection, the question fundamentally is: Why would you oppose the creation of 9,000 net new private sector jobs? The question asked by a member opposite in this House was: Why is the government so obsessed with this bill? Madam Speaker, why I'm here right now, especially knowing what is competing on television at this very moment, is because 9,000 jobs mean something to me,

because giving people the dignity of work actually is worth fighting for. It is worth being here tonight and tomorrow and every night we require to demonstrate to people that jobs are worth fighting for. In a competitive global marketplace, this is the responsibility of legislators: to show up to work to fight for the economic advantage of our industry. We have small businesses in this province, small craft breweries in Ontario, who have said that, for too long, the monopoly has strangled them. They seek to be unshackled so that they can compete, so they can get their product on the shelf.

2200

Madam Speaker, this is in the public interest, this is in the consumers' interest and this is in the economic interest of Ontario. For anyone to suggest that this bill trumps, for example, a \$30-billion investment in infrastructure—the members opposite spoke passionately about getting people moving and gridlock and transit issues in Toronto, among other municipalities. Remember the sequence: The first bill we introduced was to lower your taxes; the second was to get students back in the classroom; and thereafter, over successive weeks and months, we passed legislation and enacted through our budget a \$30-billion federal-provincial investment, the largest investment in infrastructure in my time, to build subways. In fact, it's the biggest investment in subways in the history of this country, happening right here in the city of Toronto and across the GTA. It's a 50% increase in our subway expansion. That is our priority.

The \$780 million: Some would suggest—they use pejorative language to describe the savings to the taxpayer by eliminating bad energy contracts we didn't need and that municipalities, including some represented by members opposite, did not want. Madam Speaker, that is our priority.

Let me remind you of my personal priority: mental health. We've heard many examples in this House—passionate examples, real examples—of people in dark spaces who need government support, who need their communities to be there for them. That is not a partisan matter; it's not a joking matter, Madam Speaker. When the federal government matched the provincial government, I'm prepared to express my gratitude to the federal government for doing the right thing when it comes to mental health. This is about people's lives. This is about quality of life and compassion. When we are investing the single-largest amount ever in the nation's history in mental health, that is something that should bring us together, because that is a priority for this Progressive Conservative government.

When we removed, after a net increase of over 200% to hydro rates under the failed Liberal hydro plan, the CEO and board of governors of hydro without a single dollar of severance pay, that was our priority; that was what we made a commitment to.

Madam Speaker, I reject the premise of those who suggest that health care, mental health, education, the dignity of employment, creating an opportunity in society so that those who want to work and those who have the

ability, both physically and mentally, to work have the opportunity to work—because what I find perplexing is that in this province we have a youth unemployment that is twice the national average. How is it that the creation of 9,000 jobs absent a dollar of investment is not something we should work toward in any sector? It could be in the craft beer sector or in the food processing sector. It could be in the agricultural sector, advanced manufacturing, cyber. The sector is irrelevant; the bottom line, the end result, the outcome that we seek, is employment. This bill, under the leadership of the Minister of Finance, will do that. It will create 9,000 jobs.

The member from Essex spoke about notional penalties. I want to quote John Michael McGrath from TVO, who had an interesting comment. I'm quoting him, Madam Speaker. I don't opine on the comments other than to quote them and let you all reflect on them—an expert in this field.

“Also, the ‘billion dollar’ penalty is a figment of the Beer Store's imagination, something the corporation is using to negotiate in the court of public opinion. A shocking number of people are taking it seriously.”

Madam Speaker, let me continue. It was noted that small craft brewers in one of the opposition members' ridings do not particularly like this bill. Allow me to quote the association, Ontario Craft Brewers, who represent craft brewers in the province of Ontario. Let me quote them. Again, my opinion is perhaps irrelevant, but Scott Simmons, the president of the OCB, isn't. This is what he said: “This is a great day for Ontario consumers and locally-owned craft breweries. Ontario has some of the best craft beer in the world, but the MFA makes them too hard to find. Moving to end that sweetheart deal will finally put the interest of consumers and craft beer lovers ahead of a few foreign-owned multinationals.”

Those are their words, Madam Speaker.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, a non-partisan organization that fights for small business and jobs in the province of Ontario—one that has been quoted by members opposite, after all—said:

“The idea that only government or corporate monopolies can be trusted to sell alcohol in this province is ridiculous. We are thrilled the Ontario government is acting on a long-standing Canadian Federation of Independent Business recommendation to include independent, family-run stores in the beer market, finally bringing Ontario alcohol ... into the 21st century.”

Madam Speaker, I wanted to cite those quotes because there have been a variety of concerns cited on the substance of the bill, and I wanted to allow those subject experts to get their voice on to the public record, to allow the public to debate between politicians and public policy experts, those front-line job creators and full-time politicians. I don't cite myself as evidence in this debate; I cite authorities who know what they're talking about, people who have long-standing recommendations to liberalize access to competition, to create fairness for consumers.

We do not live in a socialist republic where only one entity, government—or, in this case, literally a handful of

global multinationals—owns the vast majority of Ontario's beer stores. That is not fair. That is not in the public interest. The profits, the margins, are not in the public interest. Who owns the product and the distribution of product is not in the public interest. So I feel strongly, and so does every member of this caucus, that to be here this evening is a demonstration of and is totally congruent with our long-standing economic vision for Ontario. It is about unshackling the province from the regulatory burden, the red tape burden, the high taxes and the lack of access to skilled labour in the province that has hindered employment and ultimately undermined young people's opportunity.

As a generational person in government and in this Parliament, while I have no monopoly on that vantage point, I often challenge myself to think how would government—which I believe has had a lack of younger voices in it so that, often, because of that, those concerns and that view is not being considered in public policy development—I often challenge myself: What can we do, not using a lot of money, to create those value-added jobs, those good-paying jobs? Initiatives like this legislation, which creates 9,000 jobs, according to the Retail Council of Canada—again, not an MPP Lecce study, not a finance study, but the Retail Council of Canada, a credible, non-partisan organization that has existed for decades. Their position is clear: Jobs will result—not to mention that the competition, notionally and historically, has led to reduced prices; whereas we have about a 10%—I believe it's just 8.9%—differential of cost of increase over Quebec costs for alcohol.

Again, why would we not want to enable consumers to buy products at a more competitive price? Why would we not want small businesses in our ridings to be able to flourish economically and to grow and to compete by liberalizing access and by taking action through this bill? Why would we not want that? Why would we not want to be here, Madam Speaker, to demonstrate to the people of this province that 9,000 jobs are worth fighting for?

I recall when we had one of the largest job gains. If I recall correctly, earlier this year, in a singular month, more jobs were created in Ontario than in the United States. That doesn't happen coincidentally in the province of Ontario, and I say this with great reverence and respect to the province that I love, the only province I have lived in. That is not a coincidence. The causation between low taxes and a pro-growth plan and jobs is, I think, an example to those around us that by lowering taxes, by increasing competition, by leveraging the talent and ingenuity of the private sector, we can actually create an opportune society that young people—the one to two young people watching at this very moment, at most, I want them to know, and those who may watch thereafter, that people who have lost the spirit of opportunity and hope in the province because they can't get a decent job—certainly not related to their skills or education, Madam Speaker. They can't afford a home, certainly not in the community they were raised in.

How is that an acceptable proposition for this House? If we can, incrementally, perhaps even modestly, move the

yardstick forward, yes, it's worth our time. It's worth every darn minute to fight for jobs in the private sector, to fight for fairness, to fight for competition.

2210

We do that without reservation, Madam Speaker, and I'm proud to stand with the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Finance, who have spoken in this House, who have taken leadership on this bill and who have demonstrated that this is part and parcel of our plan to enhance choice, ensure fairness, deliver results, and ultimately create good-paying jobs for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Peterborough–Kawartha on a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to announce that the Peterborough Lakers won the opening game tonight for a major series in lacrosse, 13-6 over Brampton.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): That is not a point of order, but congratulations.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to participate in the Bringing Choice and Fairness to the People Act debate and to comment about the member from King–Vaughan. He talked about jobs. I would like to tell him that in my riding of York South–Weston, the unemployment is above the national average and the provincial average.

He talked about transit. The people of York South–Weston are mainly relying on buses on Keele Street, Jane Street and Weston Road, and they are waiting more than two hours to wait for a bus to go from one location to another.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize to the member. Stop the clock, please. I believe that the member would like the House to be quiet so that he can hear himself? Yes. I'll encourage all members to stop the side conversations. We're in the home stretch, so let's get there together.

I apologize to the member. Please continue.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to participate with this comment with regard to the debate we are debating tonight about bringing choice and fairness. The member from King–Vaughan talked about creating jobs, but the fact is that in my riding of York South–Weston, the unemployment is above the provincial average and the national average.

Also, he talked about transit, creating transit, but the people of York South–Weston are relying on buses on Keele Street, Weston Road and Jane Street. From one place to another, it takes them more than two hours. They wait longer times for buses.

Tonight we're talking about beer instead of talking about these issues that matter to the people of Ontario and particularly to York South–Weston, and that is to make life more affordable. People can't even afford auto

insurance in my riding. They pay more, on average, than in any other communities in this country.

Now, talking about slashing \$84.5 million in funding for children and young people and youth at risk, including children's aid societies, and breaking a legally binding contract that can leave Ontarians on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars in fees and penalties—that is not a good plan.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's interesting to hear, on the other side, the party opposite talk about how bad it is to create these 9,000 jobs. When I go back to when I first got here in 2011, there was a report—of course, the Liberal government at the time claimed that there was no money in selling in retail stores, and then somehow a report that they had commissioned got leaked, showing that there was \$200 million a year in extra revenue in taxes if we were to do this. That's a lot of money in extra taxes, and that's not counting the jobs and the income tax. That's just the retail sales.

So I think that this bill is very, very timely. I think that we're in a time when these small stores, convenience stores, are having a hard time. I grew up in rural Ontario, where we used to have small stores in every little town and village. They're all gone because there's no market. The only thing that would save them would be to allow them to sell beer and wine.

Coming home through Quebec on a long weekend, I was stopping into a party, and we wanted to stop and get something. We stopped into a little *depanneur* just across in Quebec. The beer was piled to the ceiling. You had to walk through the aisles, because people from Ontario were stopping because it was convenient. Almost all their market was serving Ontario. All that revenue goes into the Quebec coffers. It just goes to show you what the demand is. Now, I know the beer is cheaper in Quebec because of the situation they have where the competition is there, but to look there and walking through, it would be a fire hazard. But that's how much of their business was selling alcohol. I think it's time for us to jump on board.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, it's a pleasure to be here on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin. I too have great respect for the member from King-Vaughan. I know where he stands. We're not always going to agree, but at least we know that we're going to share a beer or a friendship over the course of our time we're both here.

He used a lot of words like "competition" and "common sense." I don't know why he didn't throw "deregulation" in there, because it really sounded like the Harris years, because this is what it's actually doing. He mentioned something in regard to "Why would the opposition party be opposed to creating 9,000 jobs?" Why would you be opposed to protecting 7,000 good union jobs? Why wouldn't you fight for those as hard as you would fight for those 9,000, which will probably be precarious, part-time, without pensions or benefits?

The other thing is: Why would you blow away \$1 billion? Why would you just blow it away, sign it off and just let it go? There are a lot of things that you could do with that same \$1 billion. That monopoly is going to be over six years from now. You could use that money towards a lot of other things that are really the priorities of Ontarians, that we have right now.

Just to correct the record—I'm sure the member will correct his own record—he mentioned the first bill that had been introduced from this government. Actually, the first bill that they introduced was to interfere with Hydro One and it was to introduce the Urgent Priorities Act in regard to the interference that they did with Hydro One. Again, the priorities of this government are not the priorities of Ontarians.

What Ontarians are asking for is good education, good health care, access to dollars, proper roads to get to and from our destinations, and again—on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin and across northern Ontario—good, safe, clean, reliable water in our communities, not beer.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Madam Speaker, the opposition keeps talking about the 7,000 jobs, assuming that the competition would put the Beer Store out of business totally. If that were true, that means that he cannot stand competition with the local production, and that actually proves that we are right. We need to open the market for our products, for our made-in-Ontario products, which keep all the money in Ontario. Why do we give the opportunity to three foreign companies to control our market and take that money totally out?

Again, I think the opposition here is obsessed with the word "unionized." Well, the 9,000 jobs, again, those are people who are going to get paid, they're going to use this money and they'll grow their families. I don't think that the problem here is if it's unionized or not unionized. This is jobs here and jobs there, and we need to keep trying to create more jobs. I assume that opening a business for the local production will add more jobs in the brewery, the distribution and the middlemen, not only in the corner stores or the convenience stores, which actually can be a lucrative business, keep the standard businesses now and, maybe, open more businesses in that, if it's profitable and can sustain their businesses.

Of course, the convenience of having beer close to the house where people, at any time, can go and just walk a small distance and buy their own groceries or own beer or own milk and eggs and stuff—I think that's very convenient, and we should look into this as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from King-Vaughan for his response.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all the members for their comments in the final closure of this debate.

Allow me to reiterate why we are here. We are here to create 9,000 net new private sector jobs—private sector,

contrary to the alternative: private sector, full-time jobs in the province of Ontario. We are here to ensure competition and fairness, because nowhere else in the world is a consortium of the largest multinational brewers given effective control over 70% of the beer retail market, including exclusive rights to sell 12 and 24 packs.

This is about fairness. This is about increasing competition in a sector that will ostensibly lead to lower prices for the consumers of this province, and this is about our broader economic vision for Ontario, one where affordability is the centrepiece, one where income growth and job growth can be realized.

When we lead the nation in job growth, when we lead the nation in economic growth, when we lead the nation in immigration in this province, we can be proud that we are doing everything we can, morning and night, to attract investment, to encourage jobs and to give dignity to those who seek them. This is the priority of this Premier, and we will not stop until every young person, until every single able-bodied individual, those who have the ability to work, have the dignity and the opportunity to do just that.

This is what leadership's about, and this is what fighting for jobs looks like.

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

Hon. Todd Smith: No further debate, Speaker.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day. I recognize the government House leader again.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you. I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion carried on division. This House stands adjourned until June 3, 2019, at 10:30.

The House adjourned at 2222.

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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteuse générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Orléans	
Lecce, Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (IND)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, 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, Randy Hillier
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, Michael Gravelle
Jim McDonell, Norman Miller
Christina Maria Mitas, Suze Morrison
Michael Parsa, Peggy Sattler
Kinga Surma
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Will Bouma, Paul Calandra
Lorne Coe, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
John Fraser, Joel Harden
Belinda C. Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie