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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 17 April 2019 / Mercredi 17 avril 2019

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

The People's Health Care Act, 2019, Bill 74, Ms. Elliott / Loi de 2019 sur les soins de santé pour la population, projet de loi 74, Mme Elliott

Mr. Jeremy Roberts.....	4435
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell.....	4437
Ms. Andrea Khanjin.....	4438
Mr. Ian Arthur.....	4438
Mr. Sheref Sabawy.....	4438
Mr. Jeremy Roberts.....	4438
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	4439
Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria.....	4441
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4441
Mr. Vincent Ke.....	4441
Mr. Chris Glover.....	4441
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	4442
Ms. Andrea Khanjin.....	4442
Third reading debate deemed adjourned.....	4444

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	4444
Hon. Caroline Mulroney.....	4444
Ms. Jane McKenna.....	4444
Mr. John Fraser.....	4444
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4444
Mrs. Robin Martin.....	4444
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	4444
Mrs. Amy Fee.....	4444
Ms. Bhutila Karpoche.....	4444
Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	4444
Mr. Stan Cho.....	4444
Hon. Jeff Yurek.....	4444
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	4444
Ms. Lindsey Park.....	4444

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Education

Ms. Sara Singh.....	4444
Hon. Doug Ford.....	4445

Teachers

Ms. Marit Stiles.....	4445
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson.....	4445

Ambulance services

Mr. John Vanthof.....	4446
Hon. Laurie Scott.....	4446

Economic development

Mrs. Robin Martin.....	4447
Hon. Doug Ford.....	4447

Government advertising

Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	4448
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	4448

Public transit

Mr. Ross Romano.....	4448
Hon. Jeff Yurek.....	4448

Public transit

Ms. Jessica Bell.....	4449
Hon. Jeff Yurek.....	4449

Education funding

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	4450
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson.....	4450

Taxation

Mr. Roman Baber.....	4451
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	4451

Transportation infrastructure

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4451
Hon. Jeff Yurek.....	4451

GO Transit

Mr. Lorne Coe.....	4452
Hon. Jeff Yurek.....	4452

Ontario budget

Mr. Gurratan Singh.....	4452
Hon. Christine Elliott.....	4453
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	4453

Child care

Ms. Jane McKenna.....	4453
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson.....	4453

Legal aid

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown.....	4454
Hon. Caroline Mulroney.....	4454

Moose tags

Mr. Doug Downey.....	4454
Hon. John Yakabuski.....	4455

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	4455
------------------------------------	------

Member's conduct

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4455
The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	4455

Correction of record

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson.....	4455
----------------------------	------

Visitors

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	4455
Mrs. Nina Tangri.....	4455

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Environmental initiatives in Kingston and the Islands	
Mr. Ian Arthur	4456
Passover	
Mr. Roman Baber.....	4456
Mental health services	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4456
Al-Qazzaz Foundation for Education and Development	
Mr. Kaleed Rasheed.....	4456
Library services	
Mr. Jamie West	4457
Access to justice	
Mr. Randy Hillier.....	4457
Ontario budget	
Ms. Goldie Ghamari.....	4457
Home care	
Ms. Jill Andrew.....	4457
Volunteer awards	
Mr. Norman Miller.....	4458
Nurses	
Ms. Natalia Kusendova	4458

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

End the Public Funding of Partisan Government Advertising Act, 2019, Bill 101, Mr. Natyshak / Loi de 2019 visant à mettre fin au financement public de la publicité gouvernementale partisane, projet de loi 101, M. Natyshak	
First reading agreed to.....	4458
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	4458

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Injured workers	
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4459
Affordable housing	
Ms. Jill Andrew	4459
Injured workers	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	4459
Autism treatment	
Mme France Gélinas	4459
Autism treatment	
Mr. Jamie West	4460
Child advocate	
Ms. Jill Andrew	4460

Driver education	
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	4460
Services en français	
M. Michael Mantha	4460
Services en français	
Mme France Gélinas	4461
Child advocate	
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	4461
Eating disorders	
Ms. Jill Andrew	4461
Wearing of poppies	
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4461

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Protecting What Matters Most Act (Budget Measures), 2019, Bill 100, Mr. Fedeli / Loi de 2019 pour protéger l'essentiel (mesures budgétaires), projet de loi 100, M. Fedeli	
Hon. Victor Fedeli	4462
Mr. Doug Downey	4466
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4470
Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria	4470
Ms. Jill Andrew	4471
Mr. Roman Baber.....	4471
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	4471
Mr. Jeff Burch.....	4472
Mr. Paul Calandra	4475
Ms. Marit Stiles	4475
Mr. Will Bouma	4475
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4476
Mr. Jeff Burch.....	4476
Mrs. Robin Martin.....	4476
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	4479
Mrs. Amy Fee.....	4479
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	4479
Ms. Andrea Khanjin.....	4480
Mrs. Robin Martin.....	4480
Mr. Gurratan Singh	4480
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	4482

**ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR
LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT**

Premier's comments	
Mr. Jamie West	4482
Ms. Jane McKenna.....	4483
Education	
Ms. Sara Singh	4483
Mr. Stephen Lecce	4484

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 April 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 avril 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH CARE
ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LES SOINS DE SANTÉ
POUR LA POPULATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2019, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I rise today to speak on Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act, introduced by my friend and colleague the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable Christine Elliott.

Mr. Speaker, it was Winston Churchill who once said: "To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often." These words ring true when it comes to health care. We are always seeking to improve upon our health care system to reach for better outcomes, to seek that perfect system.

That's why a successful health care system is one that adapts. One need only look to history to see this. Until the 1960s, hospitals, Mr. Speaker, weren't designed to treat emergencies. Visitors at night would often find the doors locked. Ironically, ambulances at the time were often run by mortuaries, not exactly the stuff of great confidence-building.

Now, in the United States, emergency medicine ranks as the seventh-largest physician speciality out of 38, and its numbers are rising in Canada. The system changed and adapted for the better.

For those of us who have, unfortunately, needed to access an emergency room, I am certain that we are all thankful that the system changed for the better. I would rather wake up in a world-class hospital like the Ottawa Hospital than in a mortuary, Mr. Speaker.

As documented in the book *SuperFreakonomics*, Dr. Craig Feied would lead another wave of change in the late 1990s at Washington Hospital Center. Feied was amongst the first physicians to realize that the flow of information

within a hospital could mean the difference of life and death for some patients.

In his early research, Dr. Feied found that doctors in the emergency department were spending 60% of their time on information management and only 15% on patient care. Those are startling statistics, Mr. Speaker: 60% on information management, 15% on patient care. It's an alarming statistic.

By "information management," Feied meant that doctors were spending much of their time trying to transcribe information, send it to different sources that didn't communicate well with each other, if at all, and receive critical information that they needed in return. It was a veritable hodgepodge of handwritten notes, lab results, scanned images and videos.

Feied set to work to rectify this by building a computer system that could centralize this information into a quick, efficient and easily accessible program for front-line hospital workers. Naturally, he faced resistance. Any time someone seeks to introduce change, there will be those who resist that adaptation. Feied tells us that one top administrator hated him so much, he would routinely go into the hospital service request system at night and delete his requests for new computer equipment.

But Feied persevered and developed his information management system, which he called *Azyxxi*. Putting it into use in the hospital ER, the results were astounding. After a few years of testing, doctors began spending 25% less time on information management and double as much time on directly treating patients, which is exactly what we want our front-line hospital workers to be doing. To quote from the book, "The old ER wait time averaged eight hours. Now, 60% of patients were in and out in less than two hours. Patient outcomes were better, and doctors were happier and less error-prone. Annual patient volume doubled from 40,000 to 80,000, with only a 30% increase in staffing. Efficiencies abounded, and this was good for the hospital's bottom line."

The program was eventually bought by Microsoft and rebranded. It is now used all over the world, covering roughly 10 million patients. Dr. Feied saw an opportunity to change the system for the better. Using technology and data, he was able to propel the health care system into the next generation. Most importantly, he improved patient outcomes, which, at the end of the day, is what we're all trying to achieve.

Our own health care system has traversed many miles in the past several decades, jumping forward with leaps and bounds, but problems still arise that demand a response.

As I have stated many times in this chamber, I have the unique privilege of representing the riding with the largest seniors' population in all of Ontario. This is a tremendous honour and it allows me the opportunity to engage with many of the incredible people who helped to build our great province, but it also comes with challenges. As one gentleman said to my staff recently when they were trying to arrange a meeting between him and I, "I'll have to get back to you and see if I can fit Mr. Roberts in between doctors' appointments."

"Hallway medicine" was not just a slogan for me during the election. It was a reality that I faced on a daily basis at the doors. Our local hospital, the Queensway Carleton Hospital, was over capacity, with many individuals taking up beds who should have otherwise been in long-term-care facilities.

The facts speak for themselves. Every day, there are 1,000 people being treated in hallways—1,000. That's unacceptable. Likewise, long-term-care facilities in my riding have been overburdened, with some staff suggesting that a better home care system might free up their resources and beds for other patients who are more critically in need.

The wait time for long-term-care beds ballooned during the previous government's administration by 300%. The wait time went from 36 days to 146 days. Minister Elliott's recent announcement of 8,000 new beds across our province was welcome news in Ottawa, and particularly in my riding. It's part of a broader plan to hit 15,000 beds and then 30,000 beds, to start getting us ahead of the curve on this important and critical challenge.

0910

All of these health care challenges are interconnected, and they can't be solved on their own. They demand solutions that will engage multiple pieces of our health care system and harness them together towards a patient-focused delivery system. That's exactly what this bill seeks to do. It will seek to bring about a fundamental change in our health care system that will put patients at its centre, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what we want out of a health care system.

In leading these changes, I can't think of a better person to lead the charge than our Deputy Premier. Along with being the opposition critic for health for many years, Minister Elliott also served as Ontario's first Patient Ombudsman. She also co-chaired two all-party select committees, one on mental health and addictions and the other on developmental services. This tremendous experience has meant that she has had the opportunity to engage with hundreds of patients, caregivers and front-line health care workers and hear about their challenges and some of their ideas on how we can improve. There is no one I would rather see leading this charge, and she's well supported by two talented parliamentary assistants, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence and the member for Oakville North-Burlington.

When I first had this bill explained to me, the analogy used was that of our local family health teams. I am fortunate enough to be a patient at a local family health

team, Riverside Court Medical Clinic. It's a phenomenal team of health care practitioners. When I'm dealing with a health issue, I have access through them not just to a family physician but also to a nurse practitioner, a dietitian, a therapist and on and on. It's a one-stop shop for health care needs.

Bill 74 will empower health care partners to do the same on a larger scale. Hospitals, long-term-care facilities, home care providers and community health centres will be encouraged to form partnerships that allow them to share resources and give their patients access to a network of care, a wraparound network of care. It will put the patient at the centre of the health care experience. Now instead of being left feeling disconnected from the various health resources at your fingertips, patients will be able to seek assistance in navigating these health care teams. It's taking a model that works, Mr. Speaker, and scaling it. That's exactly the sort of thing that our government has committed to do.

These new groupings will be called Ontario health teams. These teams will be focused squarely on front-line patient experience. No more complex transitions between different treatment centres: Under this plan, patients will experience easy transitions from one health provider to another. Patients will have one patient story, one patient record and one health care plan. That's going to make it a lot easier for patients and their families. Moreover, each patient and their caregiver will have help navigating the system 24/7.

I'm thrilled that this bill not only puts the patient first but also emphasizes the experience of caregivers. This is an issue close to my heart, Mr. Speaker. As you know, back in November, I tabled my private member's bill, the Caregiver Recognition Act. The act enshrines a set of eight principles about the important role that caregivers play in our health care system. I'm going to list those eight principles.

The first is recognizing and respecting the relationship between caregivers and the persons for whom they care; second, recognizing and supporting the valuable social and economic contribution that caregivers make to society; third, acknowledging caregivers as individuals with their own needs within and beyond the caring role; fourth, supporting caregivers to enjoy optimum health and social well-being and to participate in family, social and community life; fifth, considering caregivers as important contributors with other care providers in the provision of care, support or assistance and acknowledging their unique knowledge and experience; sixth, treating caregivers with dignity and respect; seventh, supporting caregivers to achieve greater economic well-being and sustainability, where appropriate, and making sure they have the opportunities to participate in employment and education; and lastly, supporting caregivers in a timely, responsive, appropriate and accessible manner.

We know that a successful health care system cannot exist without caregivers. The Canadian Association for Retired Persons, CARP, estimates that the economic contribution of caregivers is as high as \$31 billion in this

country. Imagine taking \$30 billion out of our health care system.

My private member's bill calls on the government to take these eight principles into account in the development of new policies. While my bill has not yet passed final reading, I am so pleased to see that these principles are already being taken into account in this bill, Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act. For example, the minister is making the Patient and Family Advisory Council a permanent body so that she can benefit from direct input from patients and caregivers on evolving issues. I had the great honour of attending that announcement with Minister Elliott in Ottawa at the Ottawa Hospital.

Moreover, by helping patients and caregivers better navigate our complex health system, we are easing the burden that they are facing. As these reforms roll out, I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure that both the patient and the caregivers remain squarely at the centre of our public health care system.

Make no mistake, while the opposition might want to keep suggesting that privatization is on the way, nothing could be further from the truth. These reforms will strengthen our public—I'll say it again, Mr. Speaker, public—health care system. The opposition may not like change, but we know from history that change and innovation in the health care system is the best way to move ourselves forward and improve outcomes.

In our quest to improve and innovate, part of this will involve looking at best practices here at home and considering how to scale these elsewhere across the province. We have a lot of examples of best practices in our health care system, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I am incredibly proud that some of the phenomenal centres of excellence are right in my backyard, in Ottawa. The Ottawa heart institute is likely the best centre of cardiac care in all of Canada, let alone Ontario. I had the chance recently to tour the heart institute with its CEO, Dr. Mesana, and my good friend Brenda Rothwell to see the remarkable work that they are doing there every single day.

By increasing interconnectedness, we will be able to help share some of these best practices, whether it be from the heart institute or other such centres, and expand them across our health care system. That's going to be particularly helpful, Mr. Speaker, in our historically low-served areas in health care, areas like mental health.

Here again, we see another area of leadership in Ottawa. From a young age, I have been deeply involved with our local children's hospital, CHEO. I might have even donned the mantle of CHEO's furry teddy bear mascot once or twice. At a recent visit at CHEO, I spoke with my friend Alex Munter, their hospital CEO, about their impressive plan to expand the #1door4care project. I am proud that our government funded this project in our 2019 budget, Mr. Speaker. This project will make it easier for families to navigate and access mental health in-patient and outpatient services by centralizing these services on the CHEO campus. No more, if your child is going through a mental health crisis, will you be trying to figure out, "Do I have to drive to Vanier or Kanata or go downtown." Now, families will know, "I can take my child to

CHEO and that's going to be where they can get the help they need." I have no doubt that this project will serve as an example of best practices that can be spread across Ontario to improve access to mental health supports everywhere in this province. I think this is something that all of us across all party lines want to see happen.

0920

As a millennial, I am immensely pleased to see the focus on technology in Bill 74. As we look to scale best practices, we must look at areas where technology has helped to make our public health care system more efficient and effective. Just like Feied caused a quantum leap forward with his Azyxxi program, so too are app developers across our province helping to lay the groundwork for that next great leap forward. I had the chance several weeks ago to attend an enlightening presentation at Algonquin College in my riding that highlights innovations in health care. A local app developer presented to us his CANImmunize app, which is giving parents an easy tool to track their children's immunization records and access them when needed for school verification. It's a simple yet groundbreaking way that we are helping to improve our health care system through technology.

Mr. Speaker, my family has been embedded in Ontario's public health care system throughout my entire life: My mother is a nurse, my father is a hospital fundraiser; and when I was born, Mr. Speaker, I had a cleft palate. The doctors at CHEO told my parents I'd never be able to talk, and now they say they can't shut me up.

All this to say, Mr. Speaker, I am deeply committed to our public health care system in Ontario, and I think that this plan lays down the groundwork for us to innovate, to change and to adapt, and to leap forward into that next generation. With change for the better, we can build an even better public health care system.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the honourable member from Ottawa West-Nepean. I have severe concerns about Bill 74, because it does not create legislative restrictions to prevent some areas of the province from being overserved, while others are being underserved. We already had a service where rural and northern Ontario had less. We have a northern travel grant that is insufficient, and nothing about that is changing.

The system was broken. I had people from many areas of health care come to me and visit with concerns. I have nurse practitioner clinics, family health teams, hospitals and long-term-care facilities saying they are wanting change in our health care system. They know it's in crisis, but they feel that the time that they have to address and for their feedback is far too short. They're confused. They're being asked to sit in on webinars to apply for family health teams, but feel that the system right now is in chaos because they have so much uncertainty.

Bill 74 just fails to ensure equitable access, and in northern Ontario we've lived with that long enough. We

need a system that addresses that in the legislation, that ensures universal health care for everyone in northern Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm delighted to rise in the House this morning. I'm very delighted to speak to The People's Health Care Act, 2019, introduced by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Deputy Premier. I'm just thrilled that I get to sit with two of her hard-working parliamentary assistants who are in front of me: the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and, of course, the member from Oakville North–Burlington.

This bill is necessary, as we all know. The member from Ottawa West–Nepean had mentioned it very well, and that's the fact that he himself has had experience with the health care system, and the fact that improvements do need to be made. He has seen the rollout of long-term-care beds within his community, as well, and the impact that has had on the lives of many people in the Ottawa region who rely on health care every day.

Mr. Speaker, we made a solid commitment. We said we were going to end hallway health care, and that is what we are doing.

I just want to wrap up my quick remarks, following my colleague opposite, and say, promise made, promise kept. We said that we were going to end hallway health care, and this bill here today is a step towards that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you, Speaker. I always enjoy your introductions of all the members in this House. They're fantastic.

It's great to rise today and talk about Bill 74 a bit.

It was mentioned that the member from Ottawa West–Nepean had experience with the health care system, and I think that's probably true of almost every Ontarian. You are a very lucky person if you have not had some sort of interaction or experience with this health care system. There's a universality to that. There are lots of us who have experiences with it.

And then there are people who actually work in the system and understand it. Those are nurses, doctors, administrators and health experts from across Ontario, be it in mental health, community care, long-term care—all of those different groups.

What troubles me about this legislation—and I've said this before, but I'm going to keep saying it because it's incredibly important—is that those folks who are experts in their fields were not consulted on this piece of legislation. Over 1,500 people wanted to testify before committee; only 30 got to. Of those 30, only one was consulted by this government in the drafting of legislation that dramatically transforms the health system in Ontario. So regardless of the outcomes, regardless of whether you agree with the direction that this government is taking on health care—maybe they will get to the right spot. I doubt it; it's an incredibly complex system that they're trying to

radically change in a very, very fast manner. Maybe they will get there. Maybe the outcomes are what they say they're going to be. Even so, there is an obligation to consult with people who understand the system, who are experts in their field and who can provide valuable input to avoid the mistakes that were made in the past. We have to honour the process in this Legislature, and I have not seen that done.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I do agree with my colleague the MPP from Ottawa West–Nepean that the health care system should be dynamic and flexible. What was a great enhancement 15 or 20 years ago might not be good enough for today—not only technology changes, procedure changes, profession changes, capacity changes; but also, costs and cost structures change. We need to reflect that in our legislation. We need to reallocate the resources to serve the new changes. Management methods change, with all the new tools and communication methods, being able to seamlessly—and communications methods change. Having one management, one board, one agency could enable the system much further. Being able to seamlessly move patients through one system, one agency—Ontario Health—removes many barriers, saves time and, I might also say, saves lives.

Families of patients always complain about their struggle with the different areas of the health care system. Even front-line service teams complain about their challenges with the silos of the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to take steps to move our health care system to the 21st century and enable it to serve Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for final comments.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you to the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Barrie–Innisfil, Kingston and the Islands and, of course, my wonderful seatmate, the member from Mississauga–Erin Mills, for their comments. They were appreciated, and despite the fact that we may have some disagreements, I think we all fundamentally agree on the need for change in our health care system. That's one of the reasons why I'm so thrilled with this bill.

0930

I opened my speech by saying a quote, “To improve is to change....” This bill, Bill 74, is going to introduce the kind of fundamental, once-in-a-generation change that we need to get our health care system moving in the right direction.

I'm thrilled to see us focusing on those in their golden years, making sure that seniors are getting that interconnected care between long-term-care facilities, hospitals, home care and local health teams so that when a family goes in with a parent who is perhaps dealing with a degenerative disease like Alzheimer's, it's not, “Well, we're going to have to treat you here and then you're going to have to find a long-term-care facility.” No. Now when

a family goes in, their caregivers and the patients will access that network of support, which is going to be fantastic to see.

Not only are we focusing on those in their golden years, but we're also focusing on making sure that the experience of our younger generations improves too by tapping into the wealth of innovation that is happening across our province, whether it be app developers or folks looking at information management the way that Dr. Feied did at Washington hospital.

We are on the cusp of what I believe will be a tremendous amount of innovation in our health care system, and I, for one, can't wait to see it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Kiiwetinoong.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Mr. Speaker.

Remarks in Oji-Cree.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I'm going to use my second language to speak to you, as you cannot understand my language.

Today I'm going to speak about Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act.

I was given an opportunity to sit on the Standing Committee on Social Policy two weeks ago. We were given the opportunity to listen to 30 presentations from a variety of stakeholders in the health field from all over Ontario. Again, only 30 groups got to come and present to the committee, and over 1,500 groups that applied for standing were not heard. The two days of hearings were held in Toronto, but nowhere else in the province of Ontario. The last time I checked, we have a very big province.

Our health care system is public, and it's unfair that such a big change is made without further consultation. There are many organizations doing very good work across Ontario in First Nations health, and we were only permitted to hear two of them.

They pointed out that there were no meaningful consultations with First Nations in Ontario prior to Bill 74 being introduced. First Nations in Ontario are the treaty rights holders and must be consulted directly on any changes to legislation and policy that may impact and infringe on their inherent, Aboriginal and treaty rights. What this means for First Nations is that they are then forced to respond to legislation that does not respond to the realities and the needs of our communities.

So these new laws also do not respect our inherent, Aboriginal and treaty rights. The requirement to consult and accommodate First Nations' interests is a must, but it is also good practice.

First Nations in Ontario do have concerns with Bill 74 and its content, and also what it means when implemented. They believe the way health care is planned and delivered in this province must change and improve. First Nations want to see structural changes to the way health care is designed and delivered for our people, but they have concerns that Bill 74 will not bring about the changes that are so badly needed without consideration and action and response to First Nations' input in this process.

First Nations have already developed relationships with the provincial and federal governments, either bilaterally

or trilaterally, and these must be respected, as the Minister of Health committed to on the day this legislation was announced. But there have been no meetings to date.

Also, we know that governments come and go; programs and services come and go. But our people are still here. Work with us.

First Nations have the poorest health outcomes out of any group in Ontario. Suicide rates are six times the national average. Diabetes currently occurs in 6% of First Nations children as compared to 4% of the general population, and in 19% of the adult population as compared to 12.5%, and these numbers are climbing. Over the past decade, they have risen by approximately one third. The complications in our communities from diabetes include amputation, dialysis, palliative care, and kidney and liver failure.

Our people are continually failed by a broken health care system, but over the last few years I've learned that it's in fact not broken. The systems that are there provincially and federally are working exactly the way they are designed to, which is to take away the rights of our people to the lands that people have access to—lands and resources our people have. It's not broken. It's working exactly the way it is designed to.

This shouldn't even be a discussion. When we talk about humanity, when we talk about human rights for First Nations, what our communities ask for should be supported. I'm not sure if you've been on-reserve in the north, Mr. Speaker. The things that happen there would not be allowed anywhere else in Ontario. The status quo in our communities is construed as normal and acceptable but would be unacceptable anywhere else in the province and in the country of Canada. There are people dying in our communities. The level of services that we have to deal with would be unacceptable in your communities.

I represent 27 fly-in First Nations in the north. The provision of health care services is mostly federal. I know that our people get caught in a jurisdictional black hole of health services because of who we are and where we are. I have two small hospitals in my riding, in Sioux Lookout and Red Lake. Also in northern Ontario, we have 28 airports, which act as lifelines for these communities in order to access service. In 2015, Mr. Speaker, there were 2,750 medevacs in those 28 communities, 28 airports. That's about eight per day, at a cost of about \$12,000 to \$15,000 per medevac.

The system that is in the north is a sickness system; it's not a health system. When we talk about integration in a provincial sense, integration is more than that for First Nation communities because it creates a larger jurisdictional barrier for our people.

Since being here, I've asked the government about health. Often, one of the things I get in response is, "It's a federal responsibility." I have asked many times for this government to respond to on-reserve services, physician services, health services, water and housing.

0940

In my home community, we get five days of physician services per month—60 days per year. Out of those five

days, two of those are travel days, which leaves three days per month of physician services. That's what health care is. That's what health care looks like. I ask my colleagues from southern Ontario, from the south, would you settle for only being able to see a doctor three days a month, for a community of 600?

We heard from the First Nation leadership, such as Nishnawbe Aski Nation, during the hearings. They have a plan. That plan has to be respected because they are ready to transform their own health care system, using both federal and provincial resources, the two responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of complacency, of doing nothing, will be at the cost of people's lives and people's health. In January 2017, one community in NAN territory lost two 12-year-old girls—they were 12 years old—in a two-day span. That community struggled for months. They got sent all over the country to get services—BC, Edmonton, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ottawa—because there are no services in the communities. Even Thunder Bay couldn't handle providing all the services that they needed during that time.

Also, we cannot discuss health without talking about treaty. First Nations possess constitutionally protected, inherent treaty rights to health. The inherent rights to health and health care are granted by the Creator. The riding of Kiiwetinoong is covered by three treaties: Treaty 9, Treaty 5 and Treaty 3. We have to understand NAN First Nations have always asserted treaty rights to health care.

Ontario was a direct signatory to Treaty 9. As such, First Nations in NAN territory in Ontario are regarded as having a government-to-government relationship with treaty partners. The signatories of this treaty and its adhesion understood that the treaty contained a promise of health care. In fact, in 1905 and 1906, a physician who performed medical examinations and assistance was part of the treaty. This created a reasonable understanding and expectation that the treaty included the provision of indefinite, quality health care.

All First Nations have a right to self-determination, including the rights and the responsibility for their own health and wellness programs and services, which includes the inherent right to lead the First Nations health system. If the government did properly consult communities, it would show that racism is a factor in hospitals and that our people are being discriminated against by the systems that are there.

For First Nations to participate in these institutions that will become the new Ontario health teams is unconscionable. The new system that this government is entrenching is the same system that will be designed by these same people, and our right to self-determination will not be visible in these new health teams. Ensuring equitable access to health care services requires a removal of jurisdictional barriers through the development of trilateral partnerships that do not take away the existing Aboriginal and treaty rights.

In February 2016, NAN chiefs in the Sioux Lookout area and the Chiefs Committee on Health declared a health

and public health emergency. The declaration stated that the entire health system for NAN First Nations is in a state of perpetual crisis. As a result of that system, we have seen devastating health outcomes due to inadequate diagnosis and treatment of preventable diseases such as diabetes, hepatitis C, rheumatic fever and invasive bacterial diseases.

First Nations suffer from multi-generational trauma from residential schools and social conditions, including an ongoing suicide epidemic and high rates of prescription drug abuse. People in our communities also suffer from the epidemic of sexual abuse committed by Ralph Rowe, who was a former Anglican priest and a Boy Scout leader who victimized over 500 First Nations boys across NAN territory in the 1970s and the 1980s. These issues are made worse by interjurisdictional squabbling, leading to inequitable access to health care that is unthinkable in the general population of Ontario.

I'm going to share a quick story here. It's a story about Laura Shewaybick from Webequie. In the fall of 2016, Laura Shewaybick had been struggling to breathe. She and her husband were desperately waiting for a medevac, Ornge. Norman decided she needed to go back to the nursing station. On their way, Laura fainted twice. The oxygen tank that had been alleviating some of her distress had emptied, and there were no oxygen tanks left. The other tanks sat empty in the hallway of the nursing station, which is operated by Health Canada.

Laura was flown to Thunder Bay. She was sedated and remained unconscious for the first two days in the ICU. She spent a few weeks there, and she was transferred out of ICU. With the move, the quality of her care dropped dramatically. Norman sat quietly beside his wife's bed as a nurse pushed the monitor near her face and told him, "There's nothing wrong with her." Laura stood up, then collapsed into her husband's arms. The husband said, "I watched her run, that nurse. I watched her use the little radio: 'Code blue!'" Then everybody showed up, he recounted with a grimace. "They tried to revive her." He said, "I lost my wife. She wasn't supposed to die. She fought hard to stay alive."

That's one story of what's happening in our communities. Preventable cases like this, like Laura's, should not be happening in this decade, with the advancements in medicine. This is not equity. This is not equality. This is not human rights at all.

One of the things that communities have told me is that they want proper consultation and they want meaningful involvement in whatever decisions are made that involve the treaty rights of our people. I mentioned earlier that Ontario is a signatory to Treaty 9 and must start acting like it. Within the treaty, we agreed to share, Ontario agreed to share—the representatives that signed the treaty for Ontario said our rights would never be lost.

I'm here to tell you that the government has not lived up to that agreement and the government has not lived up to the treaty. The government took most of our lands, outlawed our religious beliefs and practices, destroyed much of our animal life and forests, restricted our movements,

stopped us from using our languages and tried to convince us that our music, dances and arts were barbaric. Despite the overwhelming odds, our people have survived, and we will continue to survive.

0950

Today, on Bill 74, I call on this government to quit underserving First Nations communities. Today, I call on the government to quit using jurisdictional ambiguity as an excuse to let our communities suffer and die. There are too many unnecessary deaths and needless suffering that is happening in our communities.

Why are we not entitled to the same health and safety as everyone else in Ontario? This is not acceptable because of the doublespeak that gets used when we talk about First Nations here in the House. First Nations people have come forward and said to the government over and over again that our communities are suffering and are provided sub-standard services, and this government continues not to listen.

I call on my colleagues once again: We can do better; the government can do better.

I thank you for listening. Meegwetch.

Remarks in Oji-Cree.

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

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Once again, I'm very happy to speak to this piece of legislation because it's about strengthening our public health care system. It's unfortunate that after 15 years of scandal, mismanagement and waste, we've been left with a system that's on life support. That is why this piece of legislation is so important.

We see over 1,000 patients who linger in the hallways of our hospitals across this province. We see it in my community of Brampton. This government needed to take action, and it's exactly what this piece of legislation is doing.

It's unacceptable that Ontario, on an average, pays 30% more of its health care costs on administrative expenses than any other province. That's exactly what this piece of legislation is going to help fix, because we're going to make sure that health care dollars are getting diverted to front-line care—front-line care that can be used to end hallway health care, a commitment our government made back in June, something that we have been delivering on and something that this piece of legislation really focuses on.

It's also reflected in the budget that was presented last week and something that this government and I are very proud of because, contrary to a lot of what was being said, we increased spending in health care by over a billion dollars. That's a commitment to ensure that the system that was left behind by the previous government, a system on life support, a system that didn't care about the patients, will be fixed: a system where we will respect our front-line workers and we will invest in our front-line workers and, ultimately, end hallway health care.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to say congratulations to the member. I have a hard time pronouncing his riding, so I'm going to ask for the pronunciation of your riding.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Kiiwetinoong.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Kiiwetinoong.

The member from Kiiwetinoong always brings us down to the reality of what we are experiencing in the broader Ontario and then what's really happening in First Nations communities. I don't think this bill is going to really address the disparities that are happening in First Nations. You hear the stories. These are not things that we can understand because we don't experience it, so we have to respect the voices that bring what is really happening in the riding of this member. People are dying and they can't get services in their own communities. Imagine if that was happening in your city. No one would sit back and let that happen; there would be an outcry.

I hope that this bill will really focus on what is going on in First Nations. We owe it to everyone, and especially to people in First Nations who are suffering so terribly with the lack of health resources, to make this bill work for them. And I don't know if there's enough legislation here that's strong enough because we tried to push that in committee and a lot of our amendments—everything was shut down except one. So, I hope the preamble will be strong enough to make this government act and do the right thing in these First Nation communities.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: It is my honour to rise and speak again on Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act, 2019. I want to thank the Minister of Health for bringing this transformational piece of legislation to the House.

We have a great health care system, but it is on life support. Daily, thousands of patients are treated in hallways and storage rooms in our hospitals. We spend 42 cents of every tax dollar into our health care system; however, wait times grow longer. The long-term-care wait time has increased 300% since 2003. Quality of care is decreasing too. Hallway health care has become the norm when it should not be.

Bill 74 will work towards patient-centred care that is for the patient, their families and the caregivers who treat them. Our health care system should be better, faster and provide connected care to a team of health care professionals. The era of working in silos must end. The creation of Ontario health care teams will give health care providers the power to work as a team to address a patient's health care needs in a coordinated and integrated model.

We know ending hallway health care will take time, but passing Bill 74 will start the process in ending this practice.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Trinity—sorry, Spadina—Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: Trinity—Spadina was the old name, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Let's see: I want to just make a couple of points about this. Obviously, our public health care system is one of the best in the world, and it's one of our competitive advantages. It not only provides good-quality care for people, but it also provides us with that good-quality care at a fraction of the cost that the private system in the States provides.

My big concern about this bill is the way it's been developed. First of all, there was no consultation, as my colleague from Kingston and the Islands said—a completely inadequate consultation for a major transformation of one of our biggest competitive advantages: our public health care system. There was no consultation with the people who understand it best. So, there's going to be mistakes that are made that could have been avoided.

The other concern about this bill is, and my colleague from Kiiwetinoong mentioned it, there is a health crisis in the northern communities. We're talking about unsafe drinking water for decades, mould in the buildings, mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows that has been going on for 50 years, and a suicide epidemic. And yet there is nothing in this bill that gives direction to address those, to set goals about how that health epidemic, those health crises, in the north will be addressed.

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Finally, my biggest concern is that this government refuses to say that they're not opening the door to private, for-profit care. Private, for-profit care, we know, from comparing with the cost in the United States, is far more expensive. We also know that from our own experience here where some hospitals were built through the public sector and some hospitals were built through the private sector, through a P3 model, a public-private partnership model. The P3 model ended up being many times more expensive and ended up costing taxpayers much more.

I would ask this government to please reconsider this bill. Take it out and consult with the people who understand it best.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. Thank you to the members from Brampton South, London–Fanshawe, Don Valley North and also Spadina–Fort York on their response.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the responses and also for an opportunity to speak on the bill. I know one of the critical things that impacts the health of our people and First Nations Indigenous people is the jurisdictional ambiguity. I believe with proper consultation, with proper involvement, where we sit at the table as First Nations to make change and transform the health care system, we've been told, using both of the jurisdictions of provincial and federal—First Nations believe they are ready to transform their system. They are ready to create a system that is First Nation-led.

We believe also that we can actually build a better health care system than the rest of Ontario because of the uniqueness of the challenges, the barriers, that we have in

the north. It's not just challenges; it's about the successes that are happening in the north as well. We are very unique, and we have access to the land resources that are there. You just have to work with us.

Again, we need better consultation, we need real engagement, we need real involvement within the processes of when we build legislation in this House. Meegwetch. Thank you for listening.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm delighted to speak to The People's Health Care Act, introduced by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This bill is very necessary, Mr. Speaker, as it helps strengthen and reinvigorate our very damaged health care system left to us by the previous administration.

Our government is building a connected and a sustainable public health care system for all of the people of Ontario. We were elected to ensure that patients get the best possible care. We were elected to make sure that we cut hospital wait times and end hallway health care. This was one of our core commitments. Since being elected, I've met with patients, doctors, constituents and other health care professionals, and they have all agreed that there are major flaws in our current system. Our professionals have stated time and time again that change needs to be made, as previous governments have severely damaged our health care system. Our new health care plan, however, provides hope and prosperity again to this province. It will recognize the types of flaws in the system and introduce positive solutions to start addressing ongoing concerns in making our system more efficient and effective.

Ontario's health care system is broken, and everyone knows that these changes are well overdue. Health care providers tell us on a regular basis that they are ready for a system that encourages collaboration and partnership, one that finally frees them from a system slowed down by government red tape and the current administrative burden. These are medical professionals. These are front-line workers that have told us over and over again that change is needed. Our government is delivering that change. Our government is the one that respects the opinions of our medical professionals, values the constructive feedback from professionals in their industry field. They are the ones that are the most knowledgeable and their insights are very valued by our government. They want to make sure that patients are well taken care of, and we're on track to do that.

Constituents in my riding of Barrie–Innisfil have met with me and they've emailed me and spoken to me first-hand about our broken health care system. Time and time again, I hear the same things: They want to fix the wait times, they want to end hallway health care and they want change. That is why our government was elected to bring that change. The people of Ontario are always wanting a government that will put them first and make them a priority. We are listening to the concerns of thousands of people and we will create a public health care system that works for them. This bill is a major step in the right

direction. We will stick to our promises and ensure the people of Ontario get the services they want and deserve.

Our health care dollars need to be spent where it is most impactful: on our patients and our front-line workers. Our patients should not be confused about the care they need and how to access that care. Our patients have said time and time again that our system is not working for them and they need a desperate change to happen. We have heard these concerns time and time again, and it's time to listen. It's time to fix the problem and work toward a much-needed step forward in our health care system.

My riding of Barrie–Innisfil is serviced by the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre, also known as RVH. RVH is currently operating at over 135% capacity. That is why it was much relief to Janice Skot, the president and CEO of our local Royal Victoria hospital, who welcomed our proposed changes in this bill. On March 1, she said as she was talking to local news and media, “We have 110% occupancy, which constantly leaves us with a lack of beds for patients and we know how frustrating that is for them and their families.... With a new system that can be seamless and easily integrated, we can get the patients to where they need to be right away and turn their long wait times into the more immediate help they need....

“It is often very complex to navigate the system from the technology side,” as our CEO said. She went on to say, “We're already looking at updating our system, so this should be quite seamless for us. But the truth is, health organizations across the province will need to do this and I look forward to working with all our partners to make a new Ontario health system a joint effort by everyone.”

That is coming first-hand from many of our front-line service workers in the health care system. That is why we made a promise as a government to ensure that we end hallway health care. The People's Health Care Act will ensure that we keep that promise. It is not fair to patients to be receiving health care in hallways and storage rooms. This is unacceptable, and it is no way to treat our family and our loved ones.

As amazing as our health care professionals are, there is no way they can deliver exceptional and quality health care under the current circumstances. Our system is broken. We have thousands of excellent health care providers who want to ensure that their patients get the highest standards of care they can possibly provide. With their dedication, one would think that it should be easy for patients to get the care they need, but the current system works for the bureaucracy more than it actually works to provide patients with care.

The previous government, over the last five years, spent 30% more than the Canadian average in administrative expenses on our health care system. I think we can all agree that we have not seen a 30% increase in efficiencies in that system. If we are going to go on to have an effective and an efficient health care system, change is needed. If we continue down the path we are currently going on, our patients will not get the care and assistance they need on a daily basis.

Our patients need to be our number one priority, and we need to ensure we're getting value for our health care

dollars and that they're being well spent. Patients should receive the care they need and not have to wait for the absurd wait times. Mr. Speaker, 85% of the people who arrive at RVH emergency end up leaving due to wait times and only 15% are actually admitted. This roughly corresponds to 85 out of every 100 people. If we have better health care access and we have better access to professionals, they wouldn't necessarily need to go to the emergency room. The reality is, a vast majority of patients don't have access to a family doctor, so their first instinct is to go to the hospital. Roughly 25% of patients don't need to be seen at RVH, but they simply don't have access to an alternate level of care.

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Why is it that even though 42% of every tax dollar that the government spends into our health care system—Ontario still ranks poorly compared to our provincial counterparts? We have one of the worst wait times, and our quality and system of integration in Canada is broken.

Let me give you examples of wait times in my region—and that is why our government is working to fix these wait times. For example, a resident needing cataract eye surgery will need to wait 330 days in order to get surgery. Wait times are becoming absurd. For more common surgeries, such as knee or hip replacements, you are looking at 250 days.

Here's another example. I spoke with a constituent who just finally received a knee replacement she had been desperately waiting for. She had been referred to a doctor about her knee in November 2017. It took 300 days since her referral to get the knee surgery she needed. She couldn't walk around the house, she was very immobile, and prior to the surgery she wasn't able to move as it caused her much pain. She had lived like this for 300 days because of the dreaded wait times.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, it is unfair to our patients that they must endure pain for that long.

With this bill, however, there is hope. Together, we will fight. We will fight to end hallway health care. We will continue to fight to end wait times. Together, we will put patients first and give them the services they need.

Physical activity, for example, will help patients who are ready for rehabilitation—to go out and explore the outdoors—but they can't do this if they don't have their health.

One would expect that if you receive a major injury to a ligament, you should be able to get quick, convenient services and not have to wait 131 days to get an MRI, for example, just to have a doctor determine that something needs to be done. That's over four months before getting to a surgeon—and looking at 250 days of a wait period.

Patients are looking at over a year-long process before they can get back on their feet and do the same things that they love to do again: walking, exploring our parks, running and enjoying the great outdoors. That is why we're constantly encouraging Ontarians to be active and live healthy lives—so they can also focus on prevention. But if there's fear of getting hurt and not being able to see a doctor, how will people want to start living healthy lifestyles again?

One of my constituents I spoke to most recently shared with me a story about a torn ACL they had suffered during a sporting event. Torn ACLs are very painful and require lots of care. My constituent suffered this injury playing sports and needed to go to the hospital to get it checked out. It took over four months to book the MRI just to confirm that they had suffered a torn ACL, and six months to actually get the surgery they needed. This is unacceptable. In addition to this, after they did receive the surgery, it took about six to nine months for the ligament to heal. People who suffer this type of injury may not be fully healed until up to two years.

With this new patient-centred care model that we have introduced, our government is proposing local teams of health care providers who know and who understand the patient's needs and will be able to provide the appropriate, timely, high-quality, connected care that residents of Ontario deserve and expect.

The People's Health Care Act will start improving access to secure digital tools, including online health records and virtual care options for patients. This means that medical professionals will be able to have access to our records with technology, and it will allow for patients to book appointments online.

We are bringing the outdated health care system into the 21st century, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Just to remind the member: You do have time left on the clock, and there will be an opportunity for questions and comments—should the opportunity arise.

Right now it is 10:15, and this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): With us today in the Speaker's gallery we have some very special guests from the Parliament of Ghana: two members of Parliament, the Honourable John Ntim Fordjour and the Honourable Della Sowah. They are accompanied by the consul general, Thomas Seshie, and Minister Counsellor Alexander Ben-Acquaah. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature today.

Applause.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to welcome Madeline Della Mora to Queen's Park for the first time. She was an amazing volunteer on my campaign, and I'm just thrilled that she's here with us today.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I just want to introduce today, in the east lobby, my friend Jim Fitzpatrick and his son Andrew, who was just at his first year in political science at Guelph. Welcome.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome Sylvain and Denise Belanger, parents of today's page captain, Julian

Belanger, who are visiting from the great riding of Ottawa-Vanier. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure to introduce today a special guest who we have here, Rebecca Machado. She's the executive director from Daya Counselling Centre in London. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I just wanted to welcome to the Legislature today my friend Alanna Newman, daughter of former parliamentarian MPP Dan Newman, who is in the gallery.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I'd like to welcome my son, Hosea Mamakwa, and my daughters, Martina and Juanita Mamakwa. Meegwetch.

Mrs. Amy Fee: I'd like to welcome my legislative assistant to the chamber this morning, Brandon Crandall, as well as his mother, Joanne Crandall.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to welcome a very special group today: grade 8 students from Parkdale Junior and Senior Public School, visiting the Legislature as part of the Girls Government program. I would like to welcome Antonette Ha, Ava Nelson-Balda, Bintou Singhateh, Courtney Powers-Luketic, Georgia Clark, Lily Otis, Maddy Bennett, Mephah Shakyatsand, Nirvana Singh, Zoe King, and their amazing teacher, Stephanie Hawkland.

I'd also like to welcome in the House today David Morales. David is completing his last day of placement in my office as part of the community worker program with George Brown College. I'd like to thank David for all of his work and wish him the best in his future endeavours.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to introduce Blake Weber, who is here somewhere in the gallery. He's from the municipality of Central Elgin, in Sparta, and he was the youngest candidate in their 2018 municipal elections. He almost won, but he threw his hat in the ring, and we're happy to have him here in the Legislature.

Mr. Stan Cho: I'd like to welcome Alanna Newman again and point out that Madeline Della Mora is from Willowdale. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce a former page. Jacob Will is with us. Also another former page, Ryan—I'm going to kill your name here—Shahmohamadi, and his brother and future page, Jamie, are here with us. Welcome.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm pleased to welcome a town councillor from the town of Oakville, Natalia Lishchyna.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Aimee Chada and her son Jaden Chada. Aimee was very involved in my campaign. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is to the Premier. Parents, students, teachers and school boards have been raising concerns about the Premier's plan for cuts in our classrooms. Yesterday, the Premier made it clear they should

also plan for chaos in September. The Premier accused teachers of being underworked and overpaid and then described the relationship with teachers and the government as being at a state of war.

Does the Premier think this strengthens our education system?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I'll tell you what strengthens our education system, but, even better, what strengthens our country was the big win from our friend Jason Kenney yesterday. What a great ally to join the anti-carbon alliance. I'll tell you, he's going to be there, shoulder to shoulder, for everyone in the country. We see just a blue wave going across this country from west to east, no matter if it's Blaine Higgs out in New Brunswick, if it's—

Interjections.

Hon. Doug Ford: —Jason Kenney—sorry, good one—Scott Moe, Brian Pallister. There's going to be five Premiers who are dead against this carbon tax. We're building an anti-carbon tax alliance like this country has never seen.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you, Speaker, but that does not answer the question. There hasn't even been a single day of negotiations and the Premier is already talking strike. He's declaring a war on the people who teach our students, and our students will pay the price. We're already seeing the results. In my community in Peel region, 369 teachers with the Peel District School Board learned yesterday that they will no longer have permanent positions heading into the new school year.

If the Premier respects teachers and educators in our province here in Ontario, why is he firing so many of them?

Hon. John Yakabuski: They were out picketing before the budget, before negotiations. What do they want?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry has to come to order.

Premier to respond.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, this is a process that's been going on for years and years. It went on under the Liberals. You know how the system works. The school boards are going to get their budget. They're going to be hiring back the teachers, because not one single teacher will lose their job—not one single teacher.

We put \$700 million back into education, Mr. Speaker, making sure that our grade 6 math students are going to be able to be at the top tier of this country instead of the bottom tier of this country. We respect the teachers. Teachers do an incredible job, an absolutely incredible job. We're going to support them.

The teachers' union went on strike under Bob Rae. They went on strike under Mike Harris. They went on strike under McGuinty and under Kathleen Wynne as well. What stops them from striking again? We don't want a strike. We want the teachers back in the classrooms. What they're going to be doing is hurting the parents. They're going to be—

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you, Speaker, and through you to the Premier: If you want to work with the teachers, maybe you should listen to the concerns that they're raising. But even the education minister couldn't defend the Premier's comments yesterday. It's clear that he's hoping for a fight, and we know what that means: cuts and chaos in our classrooms, and our students will pay the price. It truly does not have to be this way.

Will the Premier tone down the rhetoric and scrap his plan for larger classes, fewer courses and his war with our educators?

Interjections.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Oh, no, just give them what they want?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, come to order. The member for Kitchener–Conestoga, come to order.

Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Before the ink was dry, when we won the election, the teachers' unions declared war on us. They told all the teachers to save up three months of pay because they're going to war. It was the day after. They couldn't help themselves.

We don't want to go to war. We want the teachers in the classrooms. We want the kids in the classrooms learning. That's what we want. We're going to do everything we can to negotiate a fair deal—a fair deal for the teachers, a fair deal that the parents and the students get back into the classroom.

1040

Mr. Speaker, we have a great system; we just want to make it better. We want to make sure there's accountability. We want to make sure there's transparency. Most importantly, we want our students to succeed when they get out into the work world. They'll be able to go out there and find an incredible job because we have the economy booming right now.

We support our teachers. We support our students and the parents as well.

TEACHERS

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday, in response to the Premier's comments, the minister emphasized “the importance of making sure we have good-faith conversations with our labour partners and our education partners.” Would the minister describe the Premier's declaration of war against teachers as good-faith conversation?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased today to stand in front of you and share with everybody in this House, as well as everyone watching, that we are approaching our negotiations with the teacher unions—our labour partners and our education partners—in good faith. We've actually invited them to come to the table as early as April 29. We're ready to go because, again, teachers want to teach and we need to ensure that they have a great

learning environment so students can learn, because they want to be in the classroom. They want to be learning and they want to be achieving. That is our number one focus.

I would suggest to you, Speaker, that everyone in this House should agree that our number one priority should be student achievement. The politics need to be left to the politicians and we need to leave the classrooms alone so that, again, teachers can teach and students can learn. That is what we're standing up for.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Minister of Education: I'd like to remind the minister that her responsibility is to defend the students and staff and not the Premier. Students, parents and educators are watching this government with concern. They're already seeing the cuts. We mentioned the 369 layoff notices in Peel, but just yesterday we got news of 111 teaching jobs disappearing in Lambton Kent and 69 in the Avon Maitland board in the minister's own riding. And today in Ottawa, the board is reporting 300 more teaching positions at risk.

Now we see the Premier gearing up for a strike before a single day of negotiations have taken place. Does the minister believe the Premier picking a fight with teachers is good for our education system? And if not, what is she going to do about it?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Well, Speaker, I can tell you very clearly and distinctly that I will not cave in to the nonsense and the rhetoric that is coming across from the member opposite, the critic of education, because it's absolutely ridiculous, what she is suggesting.

She referenced surplus notices that have been given out around southwestern Ontario. I find it interesting that she should reference one in my particular riding, because if anyone went to Blackburn News and checked the source of that particular story, they would see that that press release came from OSSTF. Again, it's shameful. It's shameful, the forces behind the scene. There's no end to what they will do to cause chaos. It's the forces behind the scenes that are propping up this opposition party. It's that behind-the-scenes nonsense that is causing the chaos.

We are focused on student achievement. We're focused on making sure teachers have a great environment in the classroom where students can learn. That is—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa Centre has to come to order.
Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, let's talk rhetoric, because if the government would come clean about what these cuts mean, then you wouldn't have to have OSSTF explaining what these cuts look like. And by the way—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: —board after board after board is repeatedly contacting us and talking out publicly now.

Good-faith conversation with the people who teach our kids and make schools work is absolutely vital to our education system. The minister can't claim she's talking

to teachers in good faith while the Premier has declared war on educators. And she can't claim that no one is losing jobs as the layoff notices are flying out the door. This is not normal. This is a recipe for cuts in the classroom and chaos in our schools.

Will the minister stand up for education, tell the Premier to tone down the rhetoric and scrap the government's plan for larger classes, fewer courses and a war on education?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Markham–Stouffville will come to order. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville will come to order.

The Minister of Education, to reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: The only rhetoric that people are hearing is being generated by the NDP and their friends behind the scenes. That needs to stop, because what they're trying to do is deflect from the amazing things that we've announced in our budget and that we announced in our education plan. They are deflecting. They are deflecting from the reality that we have a broken education system in this province. After 15 years of mismanagement, the school system is broken, and it's time we get it back on track.

We're not going to cave in to rhetoric from the opposition party or their forces behind the scenes. We're going to stay focused. We're investing in education. As the Premier said, we're investing \$700 million alone this year. Again, not one teacher will involuntarily lose their job. We're investing \$1.6 billion in attrition protection. That is a fact.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I apologize to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. I should have called to order the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville, as a matter of fact.

Now we have to start the clock again. There's another question to come. Next question.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Communities across Ontario were blindsided by the government's surprise decision to scrap 49 of the province's 59 local paramedic services. Michel Chrétien, director of emergency services in Prescott–Russell, expressed the views of many rural communities: It "really scares me, where the rural communities will be less well served than the urban communities."

Why did the government blindside these professionals instead of working with them?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Our government was elected to transform the health care system. We're modernizing the emergency health services in Ontario by building a more integrated and efficient dispatch and communication service delivery system that will better meet the needs of Ontario communities.

I've heard for years, if not over a decade, of the need for transformation to come about in the emergency medical system dispatch. I want to say to the member opposite

that no Ontario paramedic will lose their job—just the opposite. We're actually empowering our great front-line paramedics to improve the already great emergency care they provide in communities each and every day.

Our government has said all along that we're reinvesting back office administrative efficiencies right into improving front-line care, where it's the patients first that we care about, and that's what we're focused on.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: People in rural Ontario have a right to be afraid, because in a lot of parts of rural Ontario, we don't even have 911 service. But even if you look in urban Ontario, in Hamilton, when only one or fewer ambulances are available for emergencies, it's known as a code zero. It happened 19 times in February alone.

Paramedics say a plan to disband and amalgamate municipal ambulance services will be "a kick in the teeth." Why did the government develop this scheme without talking to front-line providers first?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, I take a bit of offence to the member opposite for the question. He's saying that the government and especially myself, representing rural Ontario, don't know the needs of rural Ontario. That is absolutely not true. We do, and we've heard from those communities.

This isn't happening overnight. In the coming months, we're going to continue to work directly with our municipal partners, our paramedic service providers and others as we modernize emergency health services. We're going to upgrade technology used by ambulance communication services, better connecting ambulance and communication centres, dispatchers and paramedics; introducing new models of care to ensure patients are treated at the most appropriate health care facilities; and modernizing that system by better integrating dispatch and service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, I've already had communication this morning from paramedics and former paramedics who said the system was long overdue in changing and that the patients will receive better care. That's what we're going to do on this side of the—

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Next question.

1050

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Robin Martin: My question is for the Premier. Last week's budget showed that we are taking a balanced approach to government. We are on a path to balance, while at the same time, putting money back into people's pockets and making Ontario open for business and open for jobs.

Just look at the action we've taken so far: Since taking office, we've sent a clear message that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs, we cancelled the Liberals' cap-and-trade carbon tax and we reduced WSIB premiums, allowing businesses to keep more of their money to reinvest and to create jobs.

We've been hard at work making Ontario a competitive place to invest, grow a business and create jobs. Could the Premier tell the House how our first budget builds upon this success?

Hon. Doug Ford: First of all, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. What an incredible champion. Do you know something? I know a lot of people up in Eglinton–Lawrence, and she's an absolute champ up in the area there.

Let me also take a moment to thank our incredible Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. We've been travelling around the province, Mr. Speaker, talking to small, medium and large companies. They're just over the top with our government. They know that they have a pro-job legislation government. That means it's pro-people, and when you have pro-people, you have pro-community and pro-Ontario.

We are thriving right now. Our biggest problem out in the province: We've created the environment to create so many jobs that we don't have enough people to fill these incredible jobs. We're putting incentives out there for companies to thrive. Again, when companies thrive, the employees thrive—

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

Supplementary question.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the Premier for his response. It is exciting to see the renewed confidence the business community has in Ontario, because for far too long, we've watched businesses leave our province, over-taxed and overburdened, and take their jobs with them. But those days are over.

Ontario's competitiveness is a top priority for this government. We know that restoring the province's fiscal health goes hand in hand with restoring its economic health. This is particularly important in light of recent tax reforms in the United States. Now more than ever, we must ensure that Ontario can truly be open for business and open for jobs.

Could the Premier please inform the House what our government is doing in our budget to increase Ontario's competitive advantage?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the great question.

We promised we would cut corporate income tax, and that is exactly what we're doing. We're actually delivering earlier on our commitment for that. The Ontario Job Creation Investment Incentive will reduce the tax burden on businesses. We create immediate investment into Ontario.

I've always said, with the federal government, if they do something great, I'll compliment them. They've worked with the province to accelerate the write-offs in any capital investment in any company. What they're able to do is invest and write it off immediately, compared to prior—you would have to wait years over years over years to write it off. So they're investing back into their companies.

This incentive will provide \$3.8 billion in Ontario tax relief for businesses over the next six years. It's estimated that the incentive will create between 50,000 and 90,000

net new jobs. That's on top of our other 125,000 jobs that we've created. We're creating the environment—

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

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Throughout the week, the Premier and his team have struggled to defend their plan to spend millions of public dollars on making campaign stickers for Andrew Scheer, millions more on forcing every gas station in Ontario to sport one and even millions more to collect a \$10,000 fine from any businesses that refuse to pledge allegiance to Andrew Scheer.

Now the Toronto Star reports that the government is about to flood the airwaves with even more partisan ads. The Premier campaigns and sends the bill to the taxpayers.

Speaker, how much are we going to pay for the Premier's massive ego trip with these stickers in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, come to order. The member for Etobicoke Centre, come to order.

The question is to the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I just want to say, last night, Alberta sent a clear message—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So you're ducking my question?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Essex, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Essex, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order. The clock's ticking.

Interjection: The clock's ticking.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Yes, it is.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo, come to order.

The question has been referred to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last night, Alberta spoke loud and clear, Mr. Speaker. They said, "End-DP." They chose a Premier who said right off the bat that Alberta is open for business. Mr. Speaker, I see an alignment here: ending the carbon tax. From Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick, we stand shoulder to shoulder to get rid of this job-killing, regressive carbon tax. We are hearing from businesses across the province that the price, the sticker on every product, is going to go up as a result of this job-killing, regressive carbon tax.

We won't have anything to do with it, Mr. Speaker. We have a responsibility to let the people of Ontario know how much the tax is costing and we're going to put those

stickers up as an opportunity to be reminded of it every time they go to get gasoline at that shop.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, it's clear that the Premier wants to campaign for the Prime Minister's job and stick the taxpayers of Ontario with the bill. Not only that, he plans to hit anyone who doesn't go along with his plan with a \$10,000-a-day fine.

If the Premier wants to be a part of the federal campaign, he should register with Elections Canada as a third party today. I can send the guidelines along to the Premier for his reference. Speaker, will he do that, or will he admit that these schemes are wrong and cancel them today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member for Kitchener–Conestoga, come to order. The Minister for Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade—I can hear—must come to order as well. The member for King–Vaughan has to come to order.

Start the clock. The minister to reply.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, what's sticking in the minds of the people who live in Essex, what's sticking in the minds of people from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, what's sticking in the minds of people in Timmins, Kiiwetinoong and Algoma–Manitoulin is the cost of this job-killing, regressive carbon tax. Some of those members over there drive big pickup trucks—I know at least one does—to get around their vast riding for safety, to help folks out. This is going to make gas way more unaffordable.

As those costs climb for the people of northern Ontario, we're taking a stand. We're fighting this job-killing, regressive carbon tax. At every opportunity, we are going to let the people of Ontario know where it hurts the most, when they're fuelling up their automobiles, their buses, their business vehicles, that this is costing them and the people of Ontario too much and we won't have anything to do with it.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Ross Romano: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. I am ecstatic to hear our government's announcement of the subway expansion project to get the GTHA moving again. With a total project cost of \$28.5 billion, this is truly an amazing opportunity.

An investment of this magnitude is not only important to help get the Toronto area back on track, but it is important for so many others in the province of Ontario. This incredible plan will take years to build and will certainly provide a significant boost to the economy by creating many jobs, as well as creating great opportunities to suppliers in many industries and sectors.

Can the minister please explain the ways this project will help the province, outside of the benefits to the future riders of the subway?

1100

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I want to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for a great question. He truly is an amazing member for northern Ontario, and a strong voice.

As the member noted, last week we made a historic announcement in Etobicoke: \$28.5 billion to build new subways in Toronto and the GTA. This is the largest investment ever made in Canada in order to get shovels in the ground and to build the subways. And that's what we're going to do: We are going to build subways in Toronto and the GTA. The construction of these projects is going to create tens of thousands of jobs, well-paying jobs for middle-class people and for the hard-working people who want to get to work.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to sharing more of the economic benefits in my supplementary.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: Again to the minister: In the words of my friend the member from York Centre, I want to hear more about subways, subways, subways. While the GTHA anxiously awaits the building of all this infrastructure, I can tell you that the people of my riding of Sault Ste. Marie are getting just as excited. As you are well aware, Mr. Speaker, my riding is home to Algoma Steel, a manufacturer of high-quality CITT-certified steel plate. And we are thinking that you are going to need a lot of steel, steel, steel—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to interrupt the member and ask the opposition to come to order so that I can hear the member, who is at the other end of the chamber. I would ask the member to conclude his question.

Mr. Ross Romano: And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? That is going to create a whole lot of jobs, jobs, jobs. Will the minister please tell us more, more, more about all of the opportunities that this will create for all of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks for that follow-up question. As the member has stated, our province is going to need plenty of skilled-trade workers and materials like steel to build the subways going forward, so we can build the subways in Scarborough and the Yonge extension, so we can build out the Eglinton West and, of course, the much-needed Ontario Line.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP may want Algoma Steel not to be involved in the process. They may want them to shut it down. But we believe all companies throughout Canada and throughout the world should be able to bid. We need people like Algoma Steel and all job creators to put their pencils down and to sharpen them up and be part of the RFP process so that we can get the shovels in the ground as soon as possible. As soon as they're released, we're going to get these tenders, and we hope that all companies are part of the process. We're not giving up on northern Ontario. We think it's a possibility. If they bid right, if they participate in the RFP process, there are jobs, jobs, jobs for northern Ontario.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Yesterday, Toronto city council released

61 important questions about the Premier's vague transit plan. These 61 questions cover everything from cost estimates, project life cycles, types of vehicles, ridership levels and station locations. With the lack of details we've seen on the Premier's plan, it will be years before he can provide answers to these questions.

How can the minister expect Ontarians to support tearing up well-researched plans in favour of lines on a map when there are this many unanswered questions?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks very much to the member opposite for the question. I've answered this question previously, that we're going to utilize the work that has been done to date in building our Ontario Line. We're going to take the spine of the relief line and extend it out from Ontario Place to the Ontario Science Centre. The Ontario Line is going to be built, and it's going to be built two years ahead of schedule. We're aiming for 2027, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're doing.

Now, the city council has offered a bunch of questions. It's not going to take years to answer these questions, Mr. Speaker. We're going to get to work on these questions and give them back to the city council. I think what the member opposite is missing out here is, generally, the mayor is supportive of our plans. The regional councillors are supportive of our plans. The subway rider, the commuter, is finally saying, "Thank you, thank you, thank you. We're finally going to get the extensions we need."

I would hope the member opposite can get to work and help us move this project further. Let's build subways together.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the minister: The very same city of Toronto report also confirmed that the Premier's broken promise on the transit tax transfer will cost Toronto \$1.1 billion over the next decade. That means that much-needed repairs to buses, subway tracks and stations will be put off indefinitely, putting the safety and sustainability of the system at risk.

If you want to address overcrowding, you invest in the TTC with a transfer tax.

If this government won't support transit now, why should anyone believe they will support transit in the future?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Mr. Speaker, I don't understand how the member opposite can say that we don't support transit in this province. We have invested \$1.2 billion in the Ottawa LRT. We have committed \$1 billion to the Hamilton LRT. We've committed to expanding the six-laning of Highway 401 from Tilbury to Elgin county. We've committed to twinning the highway up in Kenora. We have committed \$28.5 billion to subway expansion in the city of Toronto.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope the member opposite could look up in a dictionary and see what is the opposition to this build.

We are supportive of transit in the city. We are going to work with the city through the terms of reference and

continue our upload. We're going to take those maintenance costs off of the city's books in order to help them operate the TTC day to day.

Subways are coming to Toronto and we're going to deliver them on time, on budget.

We're looking forward to your support going forward.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question is for the Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, we have had an announcement from the minister about the plan to take thousands of adults, including teachers, out of grade 4 to 12 classrooms in schools and to remove 440 hours of in-person classroom time for high school—

Interjections.

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

The member for Don Valley West has every right to ask a question, just as every other member does, without constant interruptions right off the bat.

I ask the member for Niagara West to come to order and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services to come to order.

Start the clock. I apologize to the member. Please place your question.

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

Right now, there are no details about what those cuts are actually going to mean school board by school board.

Right now, schools can't plan for the next school year. Their staffing committees can't do their work because the minister has not yet informed boards about the size of their Grants for Student Needs.

As Minister of Education and then as Premier, I endeavoured to get GSNs to boards by March 31, even if that meant releasing them before the budget, so that boards could have information about what was coming.

Because of the uncertainty this year, the surplus that the NDP has been talking about and that is happening all over the province is happening because boards don't have those numbers.

Mr. Speaker, the government made a very big fuss on budget day about releasing future budgets before the end of March, and if that did not happen the millionaire Premier and the millionaire finance minister would have to pony up a few thousand dollars—

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

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Northumberland will come to order.

Start the clock. Minister, to reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, I'm stunned at the question and the manner in which it was presented by the member opposite. The fact of the matter is, after 15 years of mismanagement, when she had her hand on the education wheel, we saw schools across the province crumble.

Speaker, we are getting back on track.

1110

We're listening and we're working with our education partners, and we want to work with our labour partners. We've invited them to come to the table as early as April 29. We want to hear, in good faith, their ideas and suggestions on how they might try and put some elbow grease into the situation that's broken and help us solve the issue that the Liberal government created under that member's watch.

Hon. Todd Smith: How many schools did she close?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: The fact of the matter is, we're investing. We're investing \$13 billion over the next 10 years to build schools and to renew schools—

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

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Every time I ask a question about education, there's a heckle across the floor that there were schools closed on our watch. Mr. Speaker, there were 800 schools built on our watch—

Interjections.

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

Mr. David Piccini: Shame on you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Northumberland–Peterborough South will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Northumberland–Peterborough South is warned.

Start the clock. I would ask the member for Don Valley West to conclude her question.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: The point is that the question has not been answered. This is not business as usual. The minister knows full well that if all the decisions about cuts and changes have been made, she could either release the GSNs or at least reach out to the directors of the 72 boards and tell them what is coming. The minister's lack of action on this front raises the question of what else is going on.

Is the minister actually interested in creating turmoil in the system or is the minister withholding information from the boards because she is looking for further ways to cut the education budget? Is that what is going on, Mr. Speaker?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for Windsor West has to come to order.

The minister can reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I totally and absolutely re—reject—I can't even spit that word out. I reject the premise that that member opposite is trying to perpetuate. The fact of the matter is that it is taking absolutely every effort we have within our ministry to get back on track after 15 years of mismanagement that that member was responsible for.

Let me tell you what we're doing: We're working with our boards every day, and they know that they'll be receiving their GSN numbers by April 25. Over and above that, they know that we're sincere when we say we are going to focus on getting back to the basics and the fundamentals to make sure student achievement is once again the number one priority for education in Ontario.

Again, we're investing in education this year, over \$700 million alone to start fixing the problem that that member opposite created under her watch. I can't wait to get started. Again, the GSN numbers are going to be out by April 25.

TAXATION

Mr. Roman Baber: My question is for the Minister of Finance. The most difficult time for a family is the loss of a loved one. It's a time when families need support most. When dealing with the death of a loved one, the last thing a family wants is to deal with a tax bill from the government. That is why I'm proud of the changes being proposed to the Estates Administration Act in last week's budget.

Can the Minister of Finance please tell the House what our government is doing to restore respect for families in their time of need?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from York Centre for that thoughtful question. Last week, we were proud to stand in this Legislature and deliver our government's first budget. Budget 2019 is a plan that respects families, puts people first and protects what matters most. As part of that plan, we are proposing to eliminate the estate administration tax on the first \$50,000 for all taxable estates.

With our proposed changes, about 2,500 estates would be exempt from paying tax, and all other taxable estates would see an approximately 20% reduction in the estate tax they are required to pay. This is all about restoring compassion and respect for families, putting people first during the most difficult time of their lives.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Roman Baber: Thank you to the Minister of Finance for that response. I'm proud to be part of a government that stands up for families when they need it most.

The previous government imposed arbitrary timelines for families to file returns, which caused undue hardship and stress on already grieving families. They were forcing families to provide a detailed account of their assets to the government within days of the passing of a loved one. It was an approach which showed no compassion whatsoever. This is a tough time for families, and they have every right to expect sympathy and understanding from their government.

Can the Minister of Finance further outline how these changes speak to our government's commitment to put the people first?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: As a government, we should be focused on reducing the burden, not adding to the burden, of families. That is why we are extending the deadlines for filing returns from 90 days to 180 days in order to reduce the burden on grieving families. Unlike the previous government, we will give families more time to respond to the unexpected death of a loved one.

In addition, our government will continue to explore options to provide even further estate administration relief, including to charitable donations. We're fundamentally

changing the way government treats taxpayers and building a relationship that is founded on respect. The people of Ontario deserve nothing less. Our government is and will remain focused on putting people first and ensuring they are always at the centre of every single decision we make.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. This government's first budget cuts \$250 million from our provincial highways, with further cuts planned down the road. This means less money, or even no money, for projects like the twinning of Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph. This project was first announced in 2007. It is the ultimate Groundhog Day project. Unfortunately, this project was absent from this budget and, so far, the government has only committed funding for repaving. The province has already spent \$120 million on this project. It just needs to get done.

Can the government commit to a funding—a commitment and a completion date for the twinning of Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks to the member opposite for that question. I heard yesterday on the radio the member opposite saying that this project was cancelled, which is untrue, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we're doing our due diligence in reviewing every and all projects that we've put forward that have been on the books and ensuring that we're going to plan this out right and ensure that projects are under way.

The new Highway 7 from Kitchener to Guelph, as I said, is still under review and our capital plans are going to be released in the next couple of months, so I respectfully ask the member to stay tuned for how we're going to proceed. But construction of Highway 7 is undergoing three new phases to be built. Eighty per cent of phase 1 constructions are complete. The final phase 1 construction project at the Victoria Street bridge in Kitchener is going to be completed later this spring.

The design of two new highway bridges across the Grand River continues, which is part of phase 2 of the project. A design and construction report of the new Grand River bridges will be made available for a 30-day public review after the design is complete, and environmental fieldwork is ongoing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, Kitchener-Waterloo has stayed tuned for 12 years now. It's a long time in coming, and right now it is not in any plan and it was not in any budget. If this government won't commit to twinning Highway 7, then they should be actively working to ease traffic between Kitchener and Guelph. If two-way, all-day GO, for instance, was actually delivered, at least some people would be able to move safely between Kitchener and Guelph, saving valuable time.

This project has also been proven to be an economic driver for the entire region, but both projects, both the GO and the twinning of Highway 7, are without concrete plans, set maybe to be delivered at an undetermined future

date but with no funding commitments attached. But the government has been clear that there is money on the table for Toronto transit projects, while other areas in the province, like the Highway 3 project in southwestern Ontario—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Why can't they be clear about the funding for Kitchener-Waterloo?

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for King–Vaughan, come to order.

The Minister of Transportation will reply.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I don't understand why the member is trying to be divisive on this issue. I think it's something we're all working to put forward on this. Members of the Kitchener region on this side of the House talk to me daily about how we're working with Highway 7. We've increased Kitchener GO by 25% over the last year. We're working towards two-way, all-day GO for Kitchener.

Look, Mr. Speaker, we're investing across the entire province in builds, as I mentioned earlier in a previous question, from Kenora to Ottawa, all the way down to the London area and everywhere in between. It's ironic that this member opposite is standing up. Where was she for the past seven years under the Liberal government, which never delivered? What did this member do? She propped them up and supported them on every single budget that didn't deliver Highway 7.

This government is going to deliver on our promises, Mr. Speaker.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Yesterday, the minister made a very exciting announcement that affects Durham region residents. Our government for the people made a commitment during the election to get the people of Ontario moving, and in just nine months, we've made strides in doing just that.

For Durham region alone, our government has announced 15-minute midday service between the Oshawa GO station and Union Station from Monday to Friday, doubling midday weekday service; the opening of new park-and-ride lots in Durham region; increases in the size of some of the trains on the Lakeshore East GO, from 10 to 12 cars; and allowing kids ages 12 and under to ride free on GO Transit.

Can the Minister of Transportation share the details about yesterday's announcement?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I want to thank the member from Whitby for that question. He's such a great caucus whip, keeping us in line here every day.

Members of our government from the Durham region are unrelenting champions on improving transit opportunities for their region, and I'm constantly working with them day in and day out. I was pleased to announce yesterday that as of today, our government is adding a new express GO train on the Lakeshore East line. This line will offer more choice for transit users and commuters travelling from Oshawa, Whitby, Ajax and Pickering.

We are putting people first by investing in public transit to shorten commute times and get people moving faster so they can be where they need to be much faster and, in fact, get home after a long day outside. When we build and invest in transportation, we're getting people home, and that's the key focus, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to continue to build. We're going to continue to expand on GO Transit. It's going to be nothing but great news coming from this government with regard to transit.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the Minister of Transportation for that great response. I'm thrilled to hear this news and I know the residents of Durham region, as well as my caucus colleagues, are excited about these additional trains.

Durham residents will now be able to enjoy a new weekday morning express GO train leaving from the Oshawa GO station at 7:50 a.m., then serving Whitby, Ajax and Pickering before arriving at Union at 8:42 a.m. The return trip will leave Union Station at 4:50 p.m., running express to Pickering GO station and stopping at Ajax and Whitby stations before arriving at Oshawa GO station at 5:43 p.m.

Can the Minister of Transportation share more information about this great announcement?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks again for that supplemental.

As the member stated, we will be adding an express train in the morning and in the evening commute. Our government for the people in just nine short months has made significant announcements that benefit people across the entire province. I'd be happy to share what we've announced so far, Mr. Speaker, so the chamber and the members opposite can hear what has happened.

We've announced the largest investment to build subways in Toronto and the GTHA: \$28.5 billion. Together, we ended the Drive Clean program. We've expanded GO service that offers more choice for commuters in Markham, Brampton, Etobicoke, Kitchener and Niagara. We've invested \$1.3 billion in highway infrastructure outside of the GTHA. We're investing \$1.62 billion in joint provincial and federal funding for critical public transit outside of the GTHA. We're investing \$1.2 billion in Ottawa's stage 2 LRT. We're investing \$1 billion in the Hamilton LRT.

Mr. Speaker, we even announced that kids ride free on GO. We have new GO stations in Woodbine and Mimico, and we're just getting started. The next three years are going to be so exciting for transit.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Gurratan Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. Brampton has been left behind for far too long. The past 15 years of Liberal governments have left our city having only one hospital that is chronically underfunded and overcrowded, the most expensive car insurance in this country, and an eleventh-hour promise for a university that was cancelled by this Conservative government.

People in Brampton want change. But instead of things getting better, they're going from bad to worse. There was not one word in the budget about a new hospital for Brampton. But there are drastic cuts to education and transit that will hurt our city. Why is this Acting Premier leaving Brampton behind?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member for the question. I agree with you that the previous Liberal government led things from bad to worse, especially in health care, but we're fixing that. We have a plan. Bill 74, if passed, is going to make sure that we put the needs of patients first and foremost, as we have in every other decision that we make.

We understand that Brampton is a growing community, that there are concerns with growth. We have a capital plan for hospitals, both for new builds as well as for making sure their existing hospitals are kept in good shape.

So we have put aside a huge amount of money, \$17 billion, in capital over the next number of years to make sure that we can do those builds and that we can do that maintenance and repairs that need to be done to keep hospitals across the province open for business, including in Brampton.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Let's look at the Conservative track record for Brampton. Since getting elected, they have already approved increases to car insurance rates, they cancelled our university and they voted against ending our health crisis in Brampton.

Brampton is the ninth-largest city in our country. It is the fastest-growing city in this country. But despite this, the Conservative government does not even name Brampton even once—not even once—for any sort of investment in their budget.

The people of Brampton deserve better. We deserve a budget that would have ended hallway medicine, brought in a university and lowered car insurance rates. Instead, we got a budget that gave us nothing. My question is very clear: Why?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: As can be seen in our thoughtful budget, the fearmongering that came from the NDP was all for naught. The budget balances in five years, while protecting what matters most: health care, education and our core public services.

The health budget alone increases \$1.3 billion this year, with \$384 million to hospitals and \$267 million added to home care. In addition, we're investing \$90 million in a new low-income seniors dental plan. I'm really looking forward to the NDP voting in favour of this budget to give those seniors that much-needed relief.

The education budget increases by \$700 million this year, and we're investing \$13 billion over 10 years in capital improvements, including \$1.4 billion this year alone, and \$1 billion for 30,000 new daycare spots in schools. We're looking forward—

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

Next question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Minister of Education. It is clear that our government's budget is designed to protect what matters most and puts people first. After years of waste and mismanagement, it is great to see that we finally have a plan that will restore the people's trust in government and put more money in people's pockets.

I've heard from numerous people in my riding of Burlington that child care is unaffordable and not accessible. The good people of Burlington are thrilled that the CARE tax credit is going to help them access high-quality and affordable child care. Can the minister please explain how the government is bringing relief to Ontario's parents and helping them access more options when it comes to child care?

1130

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you to the amazing member from Burlington. She's a very proud mom and a very proud grandma, and she shows that she cares every day.

I am so proud to share with you, Speaker, that our plan is proposing to help support our parents like never before. This is about giving parents, not the government, control over the child care decisions that they have to make. Our Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses tax credit, or CARE for short, will provide 300,000 Ontario families with funding of up to 75% of their eligible child care expenses. Families will have the ability to choose the child care option that is best suited for their children, including care in centres, in home care or camps.

We know that choosing appropriate child care is absolutely the most important decision parents make, and that's why we've designed CARE to be one of the most flexible child care initiatives ever introduced in Ontario. It's about giving parents choice and leaving more money in their pockets.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the minister. You're doing a phenomenal job for all the parents and all the children. Thank you so much.

I'm so glad that this government believes in empowering parents to make the decisions that are best for their children and their families. Time and time again I heard that the previous government simply did not listen to the good people of Ontario. It is so refreshing to hear that finally we have a government that will support parents and put them in charge of making important decisions for their children.

Could the minister please tell me more about how the CARE tax credit will bring the greatest relief to parents and families in Ontario?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Absolutely, I'd be pleased to share more information on this support. Families in Ontario could receive up to \$6,000 per child up to the age of seven, \$3,750 up to 16. Families or parents that have children with special needs will receive \$8,250. That is per child in the family, and families who support a child with

going to camp or in care or in-home child care have so many opportunities to offset their expenses that may incur. This will enable them to take on a new job, or maybe work longer hours.

We were in the amazing riding of Pickering last Friday. The Minister of Finance and I heard first-hand from Herb Goldsmith—he has been in the business for 40 years. Herb Goldsmith says this is the best thing to happen for parents in decades. We really appreciate that perspective.

We're going to build on the existing Child Care Expense Deduction, the CCED, and focus benefits on low- and middle-income families. This will make—

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

Next question.

LEGAL AID

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is to the Attorney General. Recently I met with lawyers from the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, which assists residents in Beaches–East York and elsewhere with their legal issues. They were worried that legal aid funding would be slashed, and they were right. The 30% cut to Legal Aid Ontario will be devastating for women like Monica, a client who was a victim of human trafficking, brought to Canada and forced into sexual slavery. The clinic helped her get permanent residence and build a better life.

Can the Attorney General explain why the government is balancing the books on the backs of vulnerable women like Monica?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member opposite for the question and for raising the difficulties that Monica has been facing. It's something that the government would like to work with clinics and with other government service providers to assist her with.

Mr. Speaker, the issues with legal aid have nothing to do with the kinds of services they are providing. As I've said in this House, they provide vital legal services for the most needy in our society. The problem with legal aid is the way it is currently structured. It doesn't make sense that a government spends more and more money on legal aid services, and yet fewer and fewer people actually get those services. Over the last five years, legal aid has spent \$86 million more and over 100,000 fewer people have received those services.

Mr. Speaker, I know that change can be a little bit difficult, but at this time, the Auditor General has pointed out the need for historic—

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Cuts have deep consequences. Another client, Arti, was desperate to leave her abusive marriage and needed her parents' help to take care of her kids while she resettled. SALCO helped her parents get a visitors visa. The racism and barriers that these clients face—

Mr. Ross Romano: You have no idea what you're talking about.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown:—mean that they often live in fear. For them, legal aid is a lifeline. Without it, more women, especially racialized women, will be trapped in situations of poverty and gender-based violence.

Can the Attorney General explain why this government continues to pay lip service to victims of gender-based violence, but has just made it harder for women like Monica and Arti to rebuild their lives?

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Sault Ste. Marie will come to order.

The Attorney General to reply.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Legal aid is a vital service, and that's why it is so important that we take the time and do the work to reform it.

It is not working as it is currently structured. The Auditor General provided 15 recommendations on ways to improve it, to make sure that those services are being provided to more and more people. Eligibility requirements were being increased year after year after year. Over those five years, Mr. Speaker, 106,000 fewer people had access to those services. That doesn't make any sense. It is difficult to change such a huge agency—

Ms. Catherine Fife: You have no credibility anymore.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo, come to order.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney:—but it is essential for the people of Ontario that we do this work. So I would ask the member opposite to join us in supporting legal aid as it continues down this path of reform—

Interjections.

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

I apologize to the Attorney General. Once the ovation started, I could not hear her. I had to cut her off in mid-sentence.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa Centre has to come to order. The member for Niagara Centre has to come to order.

Start the clock. The next question.

MOOSE TAGS

Mr. Doug Downey: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Our government is aware of the absolute disdain the previous Liberal government had for Ontarians who enjoy taking advantage of our bountiful natural resources. Fifteen years of neglect led to a moose tag draw system that failed both the hunting community, as well as the tourism industry, in northern Ontario.

Starting today, April 17, Ontarians can submit applications for the 2019 moose tag draw.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is very vocal in supporting the things that matter most to Ontarians, and this is yet

another example. Can the minister take a shot at updating us on how the government for the people is fixing this failed Liberal system and address the concerns expressed by the hunters?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for that question, and I also want to thank him for standing up for Ontario hunters. My family are hunters too, and I'm hoping the Premier will give me a couple of days off this fall maybe to join them. They were ignored for far too long under the previous government.

Unlike the Liberals, our government for the people is listening to the valid concerns expressed by hunters. My ministry is reviewing our approach to how the province manages moose, including the current tag draw system. We want to ensure a sustainable moose population and hunting opportunities for future generations. Throughout the review, we will engage with hunters and other stakeholders to inform them of our decisions.

In the supplementary, I'll be happy to expand on how our government is listening to hunters' concerns.

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

Mr. Doug Downey: I want to thank the minister for his answer. I have some bad news for the minister. Even if the Premier says he can go, he has to get through the whip.

We know hunters across Ontario will be relieved to hear they finally have a government with a Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry who is willing to listen and take their concerns seriously.

The current situation is a personal one for a lot of Ontarians. They're avid hunters and they use the moose tag system frequently. A review is long overdue. The previous government had years to fix a well-known problem in the system, and they chose to ignore it and focus on raising taxes instead. Can the minister update the House on what he hopes to achieve through this review?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Again, I want to thank the member for his supplementary. As mentioned in the great budget put forward by my colleague the Minister of Finance, fixing the current tag draw system is an important part of the overall review of Ontario's approach to moose management. By continuing to engage with hunters and other stakeholders, I am confident that we will be able to identify solutions and address their concerns. Hunters are some of the best stewards of our natural resources, and by working with them we will make the system simpler and more accessible and ensure a healthy moose population.

Later today, I will have more to say on our new Big Game Management Advisory Committee—or BGMAC—and the work they will do in the coming months. The work to clean up yet another Liberal mess is only just beginning.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Brampton Centre has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier concerning education cuts to the

Peel District School Board. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): A number of members have informed me that they'd like to raise points of order. The first one is the member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I rise on a point of order this morning to draw your attention to a concerning behaviour by the member from Peterborough–Kawartha, and it truly is disappointing that I actually have to bring this to the House's attention.

This morning, the member from Peterborough–Kawartha stooped to the level of looking over the shoulder of the member for Waterloo to copy information from her question to take details of the text to the government staff before the question was even asked. This type of behaviour, Speaker, is a new low here in this Legislature, and it falls beneath the standard of conduct expected by all of us here, the honourable members. Members should not have to worry about being accosted at their desks here in this House, and I ask you to do whatever is necessary to ensure that this does not become the norm in this place.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the member's point of order. I will take it under advisement, but I would certainly, obviously, indicate to the House that there has to be courtesy extended from member to member, and we have to maintain a standard of decorum in here if we're going to have a civilized debate over the course of the next three years and a bit.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I just want to correct my record because I want to manage expectations accordingly, given that we don't know exactly how well the mail will work. I want to assure school boards across Ontario will have received their GSN numbers by the end of April.

VISITORS

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I beg the indulgence of the House to introduce the mom of Gwen Chasson, who is one of our pages, Vanessa Silver, and Gwen's grandfather, Martin Chasson, who are both in the House today.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I would just like to take a moment to welcome a civilian member of the Peel Regional Police, Mr. Jaz Singh.

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

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES
IN KINGSTON AND THE ISLANDS

Mr. Ian Arthur: Today I want to proudly bring attention to several environmental initiatives going on in Kingston and the Islands.

Today, outside of city hall in our historic market square, an exhibit titled Climate Change Is Here was unveiled by Sustainable Kingston. The exhibit uses photography to provide an informative look at the effects of climate change on the biomes of Canada, and the Canadian technologies being developed to fight it. This is only one example.

In March, the city council of Kingston voted unanimously to declare a climate emergency, and have changed their strategic direction to ensure that sustainability practices are a strategic priority in their planning. They are the first municipality in Ontario to do so.

Most encouraging is all of the advocacy being done by youth and children in Kingston and across the province. In September, a grade 5 student named Ryan Faaren was spurred into action to write a petition to the city to ban plastic straws after watching a video online of a turtle with a straw in its nose. Since then, other elementary classrooms have taken up the cause, and just yesterday they handed in the petition, with over 1,500 signatures.

Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to be a member of the community of Kingston and the Islands and to see true leadership on environmentalism and the fight against climate change.

PASSOVER

Mr. Roman Baber: I rise today with a sense of joy to speak about the upcoming Jewish holiday of Passover. Beginning this weekend, Passover commemorates the 400 years of slavery of the Jewish people in ancient Egypt, their exodus through the desert, and the 40-year journey to the promised land.

For Passover, it is customary to host a Seder, a festive dinner with family and friends, when we get together to recite the story of Passover and our journey to freedom. You see, Mr. Speaker, Passover is first and foremost about freedom: freedom not just from slavery, but freedom to live, to worship, to speak, to love.

During Passover, I often reflect on the freedom that my family gained after leaving the Soviet Union, freedom that so many of my friends and constituents only gained about 30 years ago.

More than 4,000 years since the exodus from Egypt, many in this world are still yearning for freedom. Whatever that freedom may be, freedom is a blessing. Freedom is the greatest human right.

So on this Passover, I wish you and everyone here their own individual freedom. I'd like to wish the Jewish community of York Centre, Ontario, Israel and around the world a happy and kosher Passover.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today I rise advocating for more mental health support funding from the government of Ontario.

Organizations across Ontario are struggling to provide support and keep up with the demand for mental health care in our communities.

Daya Counselling Centre is one such organization in London. Daya was founded to serve the personal and emotional counselling needs of individuals, couples and families, and help people to reach their full potential. Their programming helps clients to address mental health issues that include depression, anxiety, addictions, abuse, trauma, family conflict, complicated grief and more.

Regrettably, the demand is so high that the staff at Daya cannot serve every person who may contact them. Their allocated weekly funding for free and low-cost counselling will run out by Monday morning each week. People are often referred to them by family doctors, hospital staff, crisis lines and various community agencies who know Daya's reputation for service to their clients. Clients are often caught up in referral loops, with each agency trying to refer clients to the next one when their own resources won't allow them to take on another case.

It's clear that our mental health system appears to be relying on the availability of community services, but many of those community services, like Daya, are dependent on donations.

Providing appropriate care in a timely manner benefits individuals and the community, with direct and indirect impacts on hospital demands, emergency response services and child welfare needs, among many others. I stand today to recognize the value that organizations like Daya have in our communities and ask that the government recognize that value through the financial supports they deserve.

AL-QAZZAZ FOUNDATION FOR
EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Mr. Speaker, this past week I had the privilege to attend the third annual gala hosted by the Al-Qazzaz Foundation for Education and Development. The Al-Qazzaz foundation is a not-for-profit organization that runs innovative, needs-based education and development programs serving disadvantaged communities in our province, country and around the world. They turn to creative education technology to fill gaps, address resource shortages and increase accessibility of resources to individuals who have no education and language skills, and to vulnerable communities such as refugees who arrive from war-torn lands to seek hope, home and future in Canada.

The foundation was founded by U of T graduates Khaled Al-Qazzaz and Sarah Attia. It was Khaled and Sarah's passion for democracy, human rights and social justice, combined with their professional experience in education and development, which led to the birth of the

Al-Qazzaz Foundation for Education and Development. Mr. Speaker, the foundation's vision is to foster equity of access and outcome through innovative education and development projects rooted in the values of human rights, democracy and social justice.

Thank you, Khaled and Sarah, for your shared dedication to serving the community and creating such an astounding organization with such a great vision. I cannot wait to see what great programs and projects the foundation will be working on next.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Mr. Jamie West: Today, I want to express my support for the proud members of CUPE Local 4705 in Sudbury from Ontario Library Service—North and CUPE 3604 in Toronto from Southern Ontario Library Service. Yesterday, both the northern and southern Ontario library services informed their clients and staff that their budgets are being cut by 50%. This is the fallout of the government's cut to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. It's a cut that we didn't see in the black and white of the recent budget.

The Ontario library services ensure equitable access to public libraries across the province and they help all Ontarians have access to opportunities for lifelong learning. In the north, library services help us overcome the unique challenges of supporting library development in First Nations and francophone communities. Today, their attention is on the difficult cuts the organization will have to make to staff and to services.

My thoughts and those of my colleagues in the official opposition are with these dedicated public sector workers today. We know that a 50% cut of your budget will mean a significant overhaul of your work and a substantial amount of stress. I want you to know that we will stand by you. We will fight to protect your jobs and the jobs of all workers affected by the government's cruel cuts.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mr. Randy Hillier: For 10 years, Craig Wilson has been trying to build a subdivision off Highway 7 in my riding. He has faced 10 years of obstacles, moving yardsticks and increasing costs which have been perniciously reducing the scope of his project. Bill Katsoulis owns a restaurant on Highway 7 and is having similar experiences. MTO bureaucrats continue to press a capricious interpretation of poorly worded regulations to obstruct the objective of vibrant and healthy rural communities.

While the Premier touts that we're "open for business," it appears that access to fair and just treatment outside of Toronto doesn't exist. With schedule 17 of the budget bill, we are now headed for even further restrictions on access to justice, blocking the public from seeking remedies against the crown for failings, acts or omissions of its officers, employees and agents.

I have two expectations: first, that a true government "for the people" will restore access to justice in the critical

elements of checks and balances in our system by revisiting schedule 17; and that the Minister of Transportation will direct MTO employees that they are to facilitate development and growth in rural Ontario, not obstruct and hinder it.

1510

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I want to take this opportunity to talk a little more about the budget that our government for the people unveiled on April 11. The people of Ontario can sleep a little easier these days, knowing that our province is on the path towards balancing the budget so that we can protect what matters most: our vital services, such as health care and education.

I was especially encouraged by what this budget does for the city of Ottawa. Adding on to the \$1.2-billion investment our government is making in the LRT, which was incredible news for residents in Riverside South, Findlay Creek, Manotick, Stittsville and, in fact, everywhere across the riding of Carleton, our budget included the word "Ottawa" 13 times. It included \$2 million in funding for the Ottawa Police Service to help combat gang- and gun-related crime.

This budget will also mean great things not just for the residents of Carleton but for everyone in the city of Ottawa and across Ontario as well.

Not only that, but the province has also promised to contribute funding towards the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario's children's treatment centre, and it has committed to help the Ottawa Hospital with the expansion of the Civic campus, expected to open by 2026.

With that, I want to thank the Minister of Finance and his parliamentary secretary for their dedicated work, as well as the Premier of Ontario.

HOME CARE

Ms. Jill Andrew: Kristina Tomory is a member of our Toronto—St. Paul's community. She recently had hip replacement surgery. Kristina is 72 years old. The stress of her surgery was made worse when she learned that there was no home care, no physiotherapy, and that she didn't qualify for publicly funded home care services such as out-of-hospital rehab. Kristina, like many seniors, can't afford private home care. She didn't eat for three days because she couldn't get to the kitchen.

Kristina met with me recently and broke down in tears. She said, "I never told anyone how alone and scared I felt, and if, at 72 years, I didn't qualify, who would?"

One senior citizen falling through the cracks is too many. Ontarians deserve publicly funded health care and home care, not this Conservative government's health scheme that rolls out the red carpet to privatization and private, for-profit service providers.

The government is failing our seniors. There are no standard eligibility criteria for determining how patients qualify for publicly funded home care services post-

surgery, and there are not enough publicly funded home care services to keep up with our aging population.

So let's look beyond PC buzzwords of "health system restructuring" and "modernization." After all, there's nothing modern about a health budget that's funded grossly and dangerously below inflation.

Our senior citizens have given their all to our communities, and the least they can receive is the opportunity to heal with dignity.

VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Mr. Norman Miller: Three residents of Muskoka have recently been recognized by our Lieutenant Governor.

Cyril and Marion Fry of Gravenhurst received the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement on February 22. This award recognizes people who have made an exceptional volunteer contribution to heritage conservation for 25 years or more. Cyril and Marion were instrumental in creating the Gravenhurst Archives in 1978, and have been involved in collecting, preserving and sharing the history of the town ever since. They were also involved in the Segwun Steamship Museum.

On March 7, Jean Polak of Bracebridge was one of eight people to receive the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship. This award recognizes individuals for their exceptional efforts and outstanding contributions to their communities, and I can't think of a more deserving person. Jean is highly involved in the community. She is probably best known for her work with the Rotary Club of Bracebridge. For 26 years, she has been involved with the Rotary Club's annual theater production, most often as producer. This year, I attended the Bracebridge and Huntsville Rotary Clubs' production of *Mamma Mia!* and I have to say it was a great show. Jean has also served on the boards of Muskoka Conservancy and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital, and volunteered with Community Living South Muskoka and other organizations. Beyond our community, she has been a member of the Chief Justice of Ontario's Advisory Committee on Professionalism and worked with the Advocates' Society.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Cyril and Marion Fry and Jean Polak for their contributions to our communities and offer my congratulations.

NURSES

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Last week, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and I had the pleasure of attending the annual general meeting of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. The RNAO represents registered nurses, nurse practitioners and nursing students from all across Ontario, and this yearly event brings them together to recognize their hard work and to celebrate their achievements. The AGM is also an opportunity for Ontario's nurses to meet with stakeholders and elected officials, to share their experiences and to engage in thoughtful discussions on policy recommendations.

I'm proud to have been a member of the RNAO since 2014. In previous years, I remember how excited I was to attend the AGM as a nursing student and then as a registered nurse, so you can only imagine how proud I was to return this year as an MPP, to return as that voice that represents nurses in this House, as someone who can relate with lived experiences of my own.

Every nurse has a story, and every story has the potential to improve our health care system to achieve the best patient health outcomes possible. That's what the RNAO is all about: speaking out for nursing, speaking out for health. Nurses are the backbone of our health care system. They provide an incredible amount of support to patients and physicians when they report for duty at the crack of dawn, and in doing so they make a difference in people's lives each and every day.

This year the RNAO's Lifetime Achievement Award was given to Judie SurrIDGE, who has been an RN for an incredible 48 years. Throughout her career, Judie has never ceased supporting the profession and Ontario patients. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank and to congratulate Judie on her award and years of outstanding service. Well done.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

END THE PUBLIC FUNDING OF PARTISAN GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 VISANT À METTRE FIN AU FINANCEMENT PUBLIC DE LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE PARTISANE

Mr. Natyshak moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 101, An Act to amend the Government Advertising Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 101, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la publicité gouvernementale.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Essex care to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The Building Ontario Up Act (Budget Measures), 2015 made numerous amendments to the Government Advertising Act, 2004. Among the amendments made were changes to the rules that apply when the Auditor General reviews government advertising. The bill amends the act to reverse those amendments so that the act reads substantially as it did prior to the 2015 amendments.

PETITIONS

INJURED WORKERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. On such a beautiful afternoon, it was great seeing you outside, taking a little walk out there. It just feels good to refresh your soul and get some of that vitamin D on you.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

1520

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

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

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

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Gajan to bring down to the Clerks’ table.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jill Andrew: I’m proud to present this petition on behalf of the residents of Toronto–St. Paul’s.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I absolutely support this petition, sign it and hand it over to Katherine.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I present this petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AUTISM TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank a number of people—Sean and Julie Staddon, Sara Pothier, Shannon and Chris Lavoie, Laurie Zaldiner and Chantal Chartrand—for collecting these petitions. The petition reads as follows:

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

“Whereas in 2003 and again in 2016, previous age caps on comprehensive therapy were removed...;

“Whereas ABA is not a therapy, but a science, upon which interventions including comprehensive treatment is founded...;

“Whereas accredited peer-reviewed empirical evidence in the treatment of children with ASD has repeatedly shown that for some children with ASD, comprehensive ABA therapy is best practice...;

“Whereas wait-lists for services have increased in length as a result of the 66% increase in costs to administer direct service...;

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

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

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

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Jamie West: We had an excellent town hall last night in Garson arena on autism, so it’s appropriate to bring this “Support Ontario Families with Autism” petition forward to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

I’d like to thank Christa Morel for collecting these. I’ll affix my signature and give it to page Ishwarejan.

CHILD ADVOCATE

Ms. Jill Andrew: This petition is entitled “Protect the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

“Whereas the closure of the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth represents a step

backwards for Ontario that will harm our most vulnerable children and youth;

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

I absolutely sign this petition in support—it’s never too late to do the right thing—and hand it over to Mirren.

DRIVER EDUCATION

Ms. Marit Stiles: I’m very pleased to be able to table this petition on behalf of Jared Kolb of Cycle Toronto and Jamie Stuckless of Share the Road, who were kind enough to provide me with some copies of petitions. It reads as follows:

“Protect Cyclists: Teach the Reach.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas hundreds of Ontario cyclists are injured every year in collisions with car doors; and

“Whereas the Dutch reach helps ensure people exiting a vehicle take a clear look for passing cyclists before opening their door; and

“Whereas teaching drivers the Dutch reach can help reduce injury and death while supplementing other measures, like separated bike lanes and vulnerable road user legislation; and

“Whereas state Legislatures in Illinois, Massachusetts and Washington and the UK Department for Transport have adopted the Dutch reach method in driver training;

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

“Pass Bill 89, the Teach the Reach Act, so that the Dutch reach is taught in drivers’ education in Ontario.”

I’m very pleased to affix my signature to this petition, and I’ll pass it along to page Katherine to table with the Clerks.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Michael Mantha: « Ensemble, résistons!

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que la décision du gouvernement de dissoudre le Commissariat aux services en français et d’annuler le projet de la création de l’Université de l’Ontario français met les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s en péril; et

« Attendu que les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s qui, jour après jour, doivent se battre pour maintenir leurs droits d’avoir accès à des services et l’éducation dans la langue officielle qui est la leur; et

« Attendu que les Franco-Ontarien(ne)s occupent une place importante en Ontario, et méritent d’avoir leurs droits linguistiques constitutionnels respectés, protégés et défendus;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de :

« Rétablir le Commissariat aux services en français et remettre sur les rails le projet pour une université francophone. »

Je suis complètement d'accord avec cette pétition. Je la présente à la page Erynn pour l'apporter à la table des griefs.

1530

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Petitions: the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président.

M. Gilles Bisson: Une table des griefs? C'est pas la table des griefs.

M. Michael Mantha: Ils sont syndiqués, eux autres.

Une voix : On se chicane avec vous autres.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mon collègue fait des farces.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier M. Clement Lacelle de Chelmsford pour m'avoir fait parvenir cette pétition.

« Respectez la communauté francophone.

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

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

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

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

CHILD ADVOCATE

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to present this petition on behalf of Antoinette Turner of Ajax, who sent it to me. It reads as follows:

“Protect the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I'm very pleased to affix my signature—it's never too late to do the right thing—and I will pass this on to Saniya to table it with the Clerks.

EATING DISORDERS

Ms. Jill Andrew: This is the “Petition for Eating Disorders Awareness Week in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas as of 2016 there are an estimated one million people suffering from eating disorders in Canada;

“Whereas the mental health system in Ontario is fragmented and is failing to provide the necessary supports to those suffering;

“Whereas eating disorders have the highest mortality rates of any mental illness;

“Whereas an estimated 75% of young people suffering from mental illness in Ontario do not receive treatment;

“Whereas the morbidity of eating disorders is extensive and as of 2016 the life expectancy of individuals with anorexia nervosa is 20 to 25 years less than would normally be expected;

“Whereas the 2016 Ontario's Auditor General reported that the past Liberal government spent \$10 million sending 127 youth to the United States for services not offered in Ontario;

“Whereas that \$10 million could have helped more than 500 people ... suffering from eating disorders....;

“Whereas factors like food and income security, access to housing, health care and mental health supports and experiences of systemic violence like sexism, racism and homophobia can contribute to the development and treatment of eating disorders;

“Whereas public portrayals often depict one type of body as an ideal over other diverse or different bodies;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 61, Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act, 2018 that would make the week beginning February 1 in each year Eating Disorders Awareness Week (EDAW).”

I proudly sign my signature and hand it over to Alma.

WEARING OF POPPIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have time for one more petition. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: You got that right, Speaker.

I want to thank the community of Thessalon, and particularly my comrades over at the Legion there.

“I Wear My Poppy with Pride and Respect.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the poppy is a powerful symbol of remembrance worn by millions the world over with respect and gratitude for those who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect peace and freedom for all people;

“Whereas the poppy has been the principal emblem of the Royal Canadian Legion since its inception in 1925;

“Whereas the poppy is an enduring symbol of sacrifice that was initially inspired by the Canadian poet and soldier John McCrae while in the trenches in the Second Battle of Ypres, Belgium, during World War I;

“Whereas the use or reference to the universal poppy symbol for purposes other than remembrance and respect for fallen servicemen and -women and peacekeepers worldwide may be offensive and disrespectful in the minds of their family, friends and comrades;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: educate and promote the poppy as a universal symbol of remembrance and sacrifice, and that its heritage and origin from Canadian roots be highlighted. With this positive focus and purpose in mind,

“We further petition” the Legislative Assembly of Ontario “to demonstrate leadership in this endeavour by exemplifying respect and pride in the poppy symbol when referred to by members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and provincial political parties.”

I couldn’t agree more with this petition and present it to page Mirren to bring it down to the Clerks’ table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS MOST ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2019

LOI DE 2019 POUR PROTÉGER L’ESSENTIEL (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Fedeli moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes / *Projet de loi 100, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter, à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I turn it back now to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I will be splitting my time with the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte.

By making smart, long-term decisions, reinventing the way government delivers services, and focusing our resources on the individuals and families in greatest need, the province is restoring trust, transparency and accountability and balancing the budget in a reasonable manner.

Speaker, I’m going to be talking today about promises made and promises kept. And of course, from what can be seen in any page of our thoughtful 383-page budget, the fearmongering that came from the opposition was certainly all for naught. The budget balances in five years while protecting what matters most, and that’s health care, education and our core public services.

The health care budget itself increases by \$1.3 billion this year; \$384 million in hospitals, \$267 million in home care. In addition—and I’m really looking forward to the

NDP supporting us on this in the budget—we are investing \$90 million in a new, low-income seniors dental plan. I’ve been an MPP for eight years now, and in my office, when I’m home on constituency day, there’s nothing more painful to see than somebody coming in our office with chronic pain, and especially chronic pain in their mouth and problems with their teeth, when they are low-income and cannot afford it. This was, quite seriously, painful for us to watch over all of these years. We brought it up year after year after year. The Liberal government, supported by the NDP, failed to act on that. We asked for it year after year and could not get support for that. So now, for the first time, finally, Speaker—and again, we’re looking forward to the NDP supporting this—\$90 million for a new, low-income seniors dental plan.

Part of that, Speaker, is towards our end of hallway health care. When they leave our office and can’t get the help that they need, they end up in the emergency department in the hospital. That is a big part of what’s causing the congestion at our emergency rooms and hallway health care. So that is a very big part of our plan to relieve hallway health care.

Another big part of it is \$1.75 billion to create 30,000 long-term-care beds.

1540

Speaker, in my riding, there’s a small town right on the south end of my riding: Trout Creek. Two years ago, the previous government had shut down the Lady Isabelle Nursing Home. We lost 66 long-term-care beds. Those individuals, quite frankly, had nowhere to go, so they had to be sent to other long-term-care facilities, if they had a space. So they jumped to the top of the line, properly, and it just caused such huge congestion and a backlog. Most of these families ended up in the hospital. That, of course, is the most expensive place and is a big, big part of the problem with hallway medicine. In our community—a small town—66 new people were either admitted into the hospital or jumped, properly, to the top of the queue for the long-term-care facilities, and others couldn’t get in who then themselves ended up in the hospital.

It was a situation that needs help, and that’s why we’re investing \$1.75 billion into that. Of course, there’s a \$3.8-billion long-needed injection into mental health: \$1.9 billion from the feds and \$1.9 billion from our government as well.

Speaker, the same can be said about the education budget. The education budget in Ontario increases by \$700 million this year alone. Again, all of the fearmongering that came from the other side is for naught. We’re investing \$13 billion over 10 years in upgrades, capital expenditures, including \$1.4 billion this year alone. We’re also investing \$1 billion over five years to build 30,000 child care spaces in our schools—another incredible investment in our entire education system. Those child care spaces can be operated either by a not-for-profit or a for-profit business.

That leads me to talk about one of our signature programs, and that is the CARE tax credit. It technically is

called the Ontario Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses—thankfully, we call it simply CARE—tax credit. This would support families with incomes up to \$150,000 and help them access a broad range of child care options.

This is the most flexible child care program offered in the history of the province, Speaker. It is offering families up to \$6,000 per child under the age of seven, \$3,750 per child from seven to 16, and up to \$8,250 per child with a severe disability, regardless of their age. This is up to 75% of the eligible child care expenses for about 300,000 families in the province of Ontario. From a technical perspective, this is above and beyond the existing provincial and federal tax credits that can be claimed by families. This is new. This is plus all of that, Speaker. Unlike how the Leader of the Opposition framed this rather rudely two days ago, this is, quite frankly, the most flexible and generous child care program. We're so very proud. We look for support from the members of the opposition and really hope that they support this for their families back in their ridings as well.

The budget is one thing to present, but we also need to know that it can be relied on, that the numbers that we're being presented are being presented frequently, according to the laws, and accurately. So we have developed a Fiscal Sustainability, Transparency and Accountability Act. This act comes with a guarantee. This is the Premier and the Minister of Finance guarantee, and this guarantee would increase the accountability for the people of Ontario by requiring the Premier and the Minister of Finance to pay a penalty of 10% of their Premier's salary or ministerial salary for missed public reporting deadlines. Now, Speaker, nobody should take that lightly. There are multiple dates where the Minister of Finance and the government must present documents to the Legislature, and sadly, in the last government, there were so many dates that were either missed or just never honoured at all, period.

Under this guarantee, with this new sustainability, transparency and accountability act, the former Minister of Finance would have had to pay fines of \$40,000, and the former Premier would have ended up paying fines of \$75,000 for not presenting the documents that were required by legislative acts to be presented. They just flat-out ignored the deadlines. It's no wonder why so many people were left, first of all, guessing what numbers could possibly be in the province of Ontario, but it also left us with the fact that we now know that the previous government was spending \$40 million a day more than they took in. That, Speaker, is why they did not want to make the reporting when they were supposed to: because we would have learned, a long time earlier, that the deficit—the actual, built-in, systemic deficit that this government left—was \$15 billion. It's no wonder why they didn't want to report, but, Speaker, we make a guarantee that we will report.

There are going to be transformative movements here in the province of Ontario. We're talking about a Digital First program, as an example. You'll notice I called it "Digital First," not "digital-only." This Digital First program will make sure that people can have all of their activities simpler, faster, with better services.

I'll give you an example. ServiceOntario's top 10 transactions will be able to be done digitally. We're talking about you going online for your driver's licence, your vehicle registration, your health card. That's an example of the efficiencies that we're talking about. This will greatly improve service in the province of Ontario. But again, it's a Digital First Strategy; it's not a digital-only strategy. People who want those services in person will still be able to receive them.

I've got to tell you, while we're talking about the changes in the ministry of government services, this is a really great example of the transformation that Premier Ford talks about. We're talking about reinventing government. We're talking about modernizing government. We're talking about investing smarter. We're talking about spending smarter. It's really, quite frankly, about a different way to do business.

I'm going to give you a great example of what the minister has introduced in the past. When I served as mayor of the city of North Bay, we had a brand new OPP station open up in North Bay—a beautiful new building. I went as mayor—years ago, more than 10 years ago—to the ribbon-cutting of this great new building, which is a success story, but it kind of gets ruined by the fact that for 10 years, whenever I was home on the weekends, I would drive down Highway 11/17, and there sat the old OPP building. It just sat there empty. In the winter, the smoke would come out the chimney and somebody was out there plowing the big, massive driveway and parking lot. In the summer, they would cut the lawns. In the fall, they would have all the leaves raked. It turns out that we have spent \$1.1 million to keep that one little building in North Bay empty. It's of no value. Nobody needs it. It's fenced off from the highway. You can't get there from here. You drive in from an access where our other long-term-care centres are; it's on that street.

So here we are, driving by there for 10 years, thinking, "Wow." You talk about a government that just gave up caring about money, about the burden that they placed on taxpayers. Whether it's big money or small money, they just didn't care—to drive by that every day and see that money literally going up the chimney.

1550

So we put that building for sale, along with 135 other pieces of property around Ontario. I'm very pleased to report that on March 25 we received an offer, and tomorrow it closes. Speaker, we will earn a tremendous amount of money for the province of Ontario. I can't release the number yet, because it closes tomorrow.

First of all, Speaker, we're going to have a cheque to the province of Ontario, for the people of Ontario, to reduce our tax burden. Number two, there's going to be a business put in that empty OPP. I'll let the owner of it announce specifically what he wants to do. We're going to do an event where—I hammered in the "For sale" sign a couple of months ago; I'm going to hammer in the "Sold" sign in the next week or two. But also, the city of North Bay will now earn taxes on that facility. This is a win-win-win for everybody in the city.

This is exactly what we're talking about when we say we're reinventing government. We're transforming. The opposition shouldn't be afraid of this transformation in government. We're actually modernizing it and, as I mentioned in an earlier example, we're digitizing it. This is all good news for the taxpayer.

I can just take a moment early in my speech to talk about northern Ontario, because I want to make sure that I go through the items. It's a rather lengthy list. There were seven pages of this budget that spoke about northern Ontario.

Interjections.

Interjection: There was thunderous applause.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The thunderous applause led by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Northern Ontario communities face unique economic and demographic challenges to growth. We have, in some areas, a lack of economic diversification, gaps in infrastructure, so we've had some very serious attention paid to northern Ontario in the last nine months. In this budget, we talk about promoting economic development and meeting our local transportation needs in the north right off the bat by identifying those opportunities for bus, passenger rail, freight rail and other services in northern Ontario.

Speaker, we are creating more opportunities for Indigenous people and addressing the north's skilled labour shortage with a new Northern Ontario Internship Program. This is something that is very exciting for the people of the north. In the past, the internship program has been exclusive for university and college graduates. Now, we're opening it up.

Part of the problem in the north is—we call them the NOC codes.

Hon. Todd Smith: The NOC codes.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yes, they're the "not" codes.

It's the codes used for immigration, and it's very limited in northern Ontario as to which codes, which of these categories, are allowed to be able to be—

Interjection.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It's the Provincial Nominee Program?

Interjection: Yes.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: What we are doing now is expanding that. In the budget, we have a chapter devoted to how we're going to be opening that up. A big part of it is going to be opening it up through the Northern Ontario Internship Program as well.

I know that the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade is coming to North Bay sometime early in May to talk specifically about part of this—oh, the National Occupational Classification, the NOC codes.

Hon. Todd Smith: That's what I said.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yes. It's not the NOC codes that are in Mission Impossible. That is a different set of NOC codes that they had.

I know the minister is coming to North Bay and we're going to talk about the expansion of those NOC codes.

Hon. Todd Smith: Yes, good news.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It's very good news.

We're going to be ending delays blocking development of the Ring of Fire. We're going to be working—I know the minister is working with willing partners to ensure sustainable development. We're really looking forward to it. I've been in the Ring of Fire many times, as I've said in this Legislature. I've been there five times. That first trip to the Ring of Fire was so hopeful as I flew in after an airplane ride into Webequie, and then another float plane ride over to Koper Lake, and then a helicopter flight into the actual base camp. I was flying over and I saw these blue-and-white tents, a small city of them. I had a big smile on my face because those blue-and-white tents are made in my riding. They're made in the small town of Rutherglen. That was the first sign that there's business happening. And then you could see piles and piles and piles of drill rods. Of course, in my riding of Nipissing we have 12 manufacturers of drill bits and drill rods—a big, broad smile. There were about 250 men and women working. It was an active base camp. This was 2011.

Speaker, every time I've been there since then, there are fewer and fewer people. The last time I was there, sadly, there were fewer than six people left in the camp. The biggest investor that spent \$700 million—gone. They not only left the base; they left Ontario, left Canada.

Ontario used to be the number one mining jurisdiction in the world; now we're down far into the double digits. What has happened is tragic.

But we're encouraging economic growth by developing a mining working group that has a huge mission ahead of them to develop new mines in the province of Ontario, and we're developing a forestry strategy to see even more and more fibre available. We're looking to ease the restrictions that are blocking economic development in the Far North by consulting on a proposal to repeal the Far North Act. I'm really looking forward to that. Again, I was mayor at the time that the Far North Act was being debated, and mayors weren't consulted, First Nations were not consulted. This is just something that this anti-business government that was in power for the past 15 years rammed through the Legislature.

Speaker, the list of what's happening in the north can go on and on. I'm not even a quarter of the way through. But I think it's very important to know that today the Big Game Management Advisory Committee was announced. This isn't something to take lightly. This is all about our tourism and our heritage in the north.

Again, in the little town of Trout Creek, there used to be 56 moose tags available. This government, in the past, reduced it to 12, then to six, and today it's one. It's not because there's not an abundance of big game in the north. Sadly, I have photographed, for the ministry, more than one or two animals killed on the side of our highway—moose, deer, killed on the side of the highway. Every Saturday, I can photograph it. We know exactly the spot in Powassan where they're going to come out. They are so plentiful. This ideology that the Liberal government had was against anything at all that was in the north. They continued to stifle economic growth.

We're really looking forward to the results that this new Big Game Management Advisory Committee is going to deliver—and open the north back up again. The tourism sector can grow again.

One of the biggest issues in this budget is our announcement of the fact that we are going to fight the carbon tax with everything that we've got. That's all there is to it. We're all in on this one. Before I leave my chapter on northern Ontario, I bring that up because I see the government saying, "Oh, yes, but you're going to get a credit back," and I just have to chuckle at this, because not only is the price of gas going up—and in the north, my riding is two hours from end to end; we have huge distances in the north—but our winters are longer and colder. They're certainly more harsh. We use a lot of natural gas or propane. It's all about to have this massive carbon tax put on top of it.

Speaker, we turned the heat on in our house in September, and we still have several feet of snow in our backyard in North Bay—Corbeil, actually, where I live—and the heat is still on full blast because our nights are cold, and here we are, in the middle of April. Our heat won't turn off until probably mid-May. The ice was three feet thick on the lake this year. We're guessing that it will come off the 17th of May to the 24th of May, but that just keeps our whole area cold.

1600

The federal government uses an example that says, "Oh, your natural gas bill? Don't worry. You're going to get this credit back. But your natural gas bill will go up by \$90 a year"—\$90.83, I think they use. Speaker, I can tell you, my natural gas bill at home in Corbeil, just the carbon tax portion alone, will be about \$45 a month. We're talking around \$550 just on my natural gas bill. So this credit that they say, "Oh, this is going to be all neutral; you're going to get a credit, don't worry"—that credit won't even begin to cover my natural gas bills' increase by the carbon tax, never mind when I go to the grocery store or hardware store, because there's a price on everything.

That's why we will be putting a sticker on the gas pumps right across Ontario to tell you just how much Justin Trudeau is taking out of your pocket, and we'll be looking to put a notice on your natural gas bill. When mine comes on my natural gas bill, I will photograph it and put it on my social media, just like I photographed the one—when we took the cap-and-trade tax off, my bill said, "You will be saving," and it showed how much I'm going to be saving each month. I publicized that and I will now be publicizing the other side of that.

Speaker, there are so many things to talk about in this 383-page budget. One of the things that we're going to be doing—one of the schedules is called Modernizing the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Act. I can tell you that there is a mismatch, Speaker, of the students today that we're training and the jobs that we need. They're not lined up; they're not lined up at all, Speaker.

I had one of the presidents of one of the largest companies throughout northern Ontario contact me about a month and a half or two months ago now. He said, "Vic,

we need to speak and we need to speak today." We met, and I was so concerned over what was so urgent. He said, "In Témiscaming, Quebec"—just across the border from North Bay—"we need 35 people today." Most of their employees come from North Bay. "We need 35 people today. We can't find the people." Then he went on to tell me that in Kapuskasing and in Hearst they need 50 people, and they cannot find the skilled trades they need.

Interjection.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The minister says it's the same in Dryden. I can give you these examples all up and down the highway.

Premier Ford, whenever he and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade go to a business—I know they hear it. The Premier tells me and the minister tells me: We need people. The Premier talked today in our cabinet session, talking about the fact that there is a huge demand for people.

We need people, and so a big part of our program for modernizing skilled trades will make it flexible and adaptive. We're going to be able to listen to what the Auditor General reported in the 2018 Auditor General's report, where the fact that our employment service system is unnecessarily complex—it's not focused on getting results for job seekers, Speaker.

Everything we do is focused on the people. It's for the people, and this is a classic example of being for the people. In some cases, it's for the students; in some cases, it's for the patients; in other cases, it's putting the drivers first. But no matter what it is, it's always putting people at the centre of every decision we make. It could be putting families first with their child care, but everything evolves around being for the people.

I'll tell the story; I've told it before: When we all got elected, the Premier gave every single one of us a desk plate that says, "For the people." Mine sits between where I keep my cellphone on the desk and my stand-up computer desk. It's right there: "For the people." The Premier says, "Before you make that phone call, before you hit the send button on your email, just look at that sign and ask yourself: 'What I'm about to do—is this for the people?'" And that is what we're doing, Speaker. We're putting the people at the centre of every decision we make. We are creating jobs, providing relief to families, individuals and businesses, seniors and students. We're building a sustainable future while fighting for Ontario workers, all while protecting front-line jobs. As I talked earlier, the benefits of this budget reach out to every corner of the province. We're bringing relief to families and support to businesses. We're restoring trust, transparency and accountability.

I started by talking about a summary, and I'm going to end with exactly the same summary. By making smart, long-term decisions, by reinventing the way government delivers services, and by focusing our resources on the individuals and families in greatest need, the province is restoring trust, transparency and accountability and balancing the budget in a responsible way.

Speaker, that is all about protecting what matters most, and that is a budget for the people.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Please be seated.

Continuing along with debate, I now turn to the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to pick up right where the finance minister left off, and I want to talk about where I've put my "for the people" plaque: It's right at the desk as you walk into my constituency office. It's there so that the public understands when they walk in that this is their space. But it's also there so that my staff know, every day that they walk in, why they're walking through that door, and that, although they may be employed by me, they're not working for me; they're working for the people. They see that every single day.

Mr. Speaker, it's not a trite thing; it's an attitude of servitude. It's a mentality that our leader, our Premier, our finance minister and our leadership team in cabinet bring to our entire caucus: an attitude of servitude. It's so important. It's a part of our culture, and it's part of the culture that we want for the people of Ontario.

I also want to talk about the north a little bit and then I'll move into some other topics. The finance minister talked about the stifling development in the north. I can't quite come to terms with whether it's intentional or it's just that they don't understand. I still have snow in my yard. My heater's still on, and I'm not as far north as the minister, and certainly not as far north as the minister for northern affairs. Jokingly, sometimes we talk about places in the Far North of Ontario, which many members in the House may not have been to. My uncle lives up in Lake of the Woods, and he talks about 10 months of winter and two months of bad sledding. It's pretty north.

There are so many good things in these 383 pages. There are so many good things, but we all draw on our own experience. So I want to talk about a situation where the average person is trying to figure out a complex system. They will come into a lawyer's office, and they'll be confused about what they should do, what they could do to try and avoid estate taxes. They come in and do gymnastics with their properties and with their assets to try to avoid estate taxes. Our government has said, "Look, we'll simplify this. We're going to reduce estate taxes. We're taking 2,500 people off the system altogether. They just don't pay that death tax." It's a great initiative. It's just fantastic.

And it's not just those 2,500 people; it's thousands and thousands more that get the benefit of the reduction on the first \$50,000. The reason it's \$250 on the first \$50,000—that's half a per cent on each dollar of the value of the estate, so it's up to \$250. It's something that touches families in their greatest time of need. I expect there will be several constituents and several citizens of Ontario that will no longer need to move their assets around to try and avoid a tax. When you move your assets around, there's always a cost. We're taking away the need to do that. It's a common-sense thing to do, and it's something that I was thrilled to see in the budget.

1610

On schedule 52 of the bill, the MPP for Brantford–Brant brought this forward as an issue, and it's something that we've talked about in the past. Schedule 52 is the PTSD Awareness Day Act. It enacts PTSD Awareness Day, which will be June 27. Again, this is something our government is picking up the mantle on, where several people have talked about things, but we're actually doing things. And we're doing things quickly and we're doing things right.

It's only one line; it's one sentence in the entire piece, but it affects so many people. I have to commend the member from Brantford–Brant for bringing this forward, Mr. Speaker, and then I have to commend the Minister of Finance for picking it up and saying, "This is important. This is so important, we want to get it through as fast as possible. We're going to put it in the budget bill because it's something that affects people in all of our communities."

Mr. Speaker, the next piece that I want to touch on is title protection for financial advisers. Most people think that there is an accreditation. They just assume that that's there. It's not, and it leaves the consumers vulnerable. It's been called for for over a decade. Again, the previous government was tone-deaf to what people expected of their government. It just languished, and they couldn't get any traction. All the while we were in opposition, we were trying to move it forward and we just could not make it happen. So at the first possible opportunity, we brought title protection to an entire industry to create certainty for the consumer and to create protection. Quite frankly, the individual financial planners and advisers wanted it because it's a source of credibility. It is saying, "I actually do operate at a certain standard. I do operate at a certain level. You can trust my services." It's the kind of thing that people expect would have happened anyway. It wasn't happening, and it was causing a little bit of confusion.

I'm going to go a little bit more into how this affects my riding and how it affects other ridings as well. But the day after the budget was introduced, on Thursday, I had tons of calls Friday morning in my constituency office. I went home Thursday night and, of course, I was there early on Friday, in my constituency office, and the phone started ringing. And do you know what they were asking, Mr. Speaker? It was the senior dental care—seniors phoning. So somehow, Thursday night, they watched the news and they managed to pick up that this was part of the budget. They found my phone number, they picked up the phone and they phoned Friday morning to say, "How do I access this service?" That's how badly it was needed.

I've been given numbers upwards of 60,000 people a year end up in emergency based on oral need. That's 60,000 people. So it's also helping with hallway health care. If we can do preventive, if we can help seniors—again, I'm thrilled that that's in there. This isn't a promise that will come some day. This isn't a promise that will show up down the road. This will come online this year, Mr. Speaker, because the need is acute; the need is there. It helps us on every level. It helps with low-income seniors in terms of not just their physical health but the mental

anguish that goes with a severe oral problem. It's not only painful, but you would feel at a loss.

I heard a member of the opposition earlier today talk about somebody who needed this. They weren't eating because they were in such pain. So this is not a political, partisan thing. This is doing the right thing for our seniors and for low-income. It's just fantastic. I know the members opposite will support so much of this because it is just the right thing to do.

I really hope people get a chance to read the budget because, again, there are all sorts of pieces in here we haven't been talking about. I'm going to give an example. In the previous government, they put together a group called the Business Law Advisory Council. It was a group of professionals who donated their time to advise the government on how to reform corporate laws and how to do things differently in terms of commercial transactions. I happened to have been on that committee. They knew my politics; they appointed me anyway, so kudos to them for that. But Mr. Speaker, advice went to the government that was not enacted, and it was picked up here.

So if we go to the schedules again, schedule 49, the Personal Property Security Act: I'm just going to talk a little bit about what that is. When you buy a house, you get a mortgage—everybody sort of understands what that is—and the mortgage gets registered on title, because it's land. So everybody has that concept. But when you go to lease a car, you have to register it somewhere. You have to somehow attach that loan or the lease to the vehicle. The only way to do it is through the Personal Property Security Act system, the PPSA. That covers boats, cars, trailers and tractors. Just about any chattel, any item, you can attach through the PPSA, and that secures it. It makes you a secured creditor so that if things go sideways and they have to liquidate your assets, your lender is first in line when they sell your assets. It jumps ahead of Visa, Mastercard and the telephone bill and all that.

The system was dealing with what was called chattel paper. There's actually a physical piece of paper. When you leave the car dealer, that piece of paper goes somewhere, and it's handled by different people. Whoever actually holds the piece of paper, at the end of the day, holds the asset. It's in warehouses all over the place. The car industry alone is a multi-billion-dollar entity, just in terms of holding debt, and it's all just piled up in places where they have to physically get that piece of paper.

Well, in schedule 49, we've modernized the electronic chattel paper system so that it's now in the modern day, and this is totally in line with the things that we've been talking about: modernizing and digitization. It sounds like a relatively small thing, but it's a multi-billion-dollar impact for lenders and borrowers. It drives the cost up for people who are borrowing, who are trying to lease a car, who are trying to get a loan for a car. This simplifies the process so that we can drive costs down for the consumer.

There are so many of these pieces. Schedule 51, the Provincial Offences Act: Here's what happens. You have a justice who's in the middle of a hearing, and they've spent time and they've heard from the parties. Judges and

justices of the peace have to assess credibility, and credibility comes from hearing them directly and assessing their evidence. Halfway through a trial, if they get appointed to another court, they're off and they start over again, or another judge steps in and just basically picks up where the previous justice or JP left off. It's very disjointed. It's not helpful. It's certainly not customer-facing. It's certainly not an attitude of servitude. It's facilitating the job of the judge who just got appointed, not facilitating the person who's having the trial.

So we've changed that. We've made it possible that a justice who's appointed to another level can finish the trial that they're in, and that's in the interest of the people who are in the system, who are in the trial. It's also the system, so that we're not gumming up the system trying to find another trial date that could be six, eight—a year and a half away.

Hon. Todd Smith: It's efficient.

Mr. Doug Downey: It's much more efficient, and that's the kind of thing that we're up for right across the board.

Digitization: a fancy word for "Let's get with it." If we have to serve documents, they still have to be done in paper—well, they did. If this bill passes, there will be several things that don't.

It touches on things that I had never even thought about, quite frankly. The Bees Act—like bees that make honey. If the director issues a notice or an order, he can't do it by email. Well, now he'll be able to—or she—because now they can send the decision through email. It doesn't have to be a registered letter or any of that kind of stuff.

Interjection.

Mr. Doug Downey: It will save a couple of bucks. It's a little more efficient.

I was talking to one of my local farmers in Springwater last week when I was home on Friday. He does tall-bush blueberries, so he has migrant workers come up. He has had the same crew, more or less, for the last 10 years. They know what to do. He brings them up, he houses them, and because he houses them, he has to get water tests because, of course, housing has to be appropriate. So he has to get regular water tests.

He gets the water test, he sends it off to the lab, which is in another city about 25 minutes away. They process the water test, and then they issue a piece of paper and they mail it back to him. That's all well and good until you have Canada Post on strike. Now he's got to go get in his car and drive there, and they refuse to scan it and send it to him, and they refuse to take a picture and send it.

1620

Hon. Todd Smith: That's not efficient.

Mr. Doug Downey: It's not efficient, Mr. Speaker. These are the kinds of things that we're tackling. The Bees Act is so much better. I didn't even know we had a Bees Act, to be fair. That's just one example.

There are other examples here: the Drainage Act. Now, farmers know what the Drainage Act is. A lot of rural people know what the Drainage Act is. I'm not going to get into exactly what it is—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Oh, come on.

Mr. Doug Downey: Okay, it's about drainage. It's about moving water and not having water move onto your neighbour's property. You can't have water on your property drain onto somebody else's property. You can't create a pond on neighbouring property. There's all sorts of case law around if a beaver builds a dam and causes it to happen naturally, and there's all sorts—it can get interesting and complicated.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Very interesting.

Mr. Doug Downey: It is very interesting. I have had Drainage Act cases, and it is interesting. But here's the deal: You can't deliver decisions any other way than registered mail—until this bill passes. Then they can send the decisions out by email. That's just a better way to do business. We are opening Ontario for business, Mr. Speaker, in every sense.

While I'm talking about farmers, I'm going to slide in some things I wanted to say about agriculture. We're making an amendment to the Farm Products Payments Act to allow a board to be established to carry out functions and exercise powers that are already in the regulations, in addition to what's already in the act. We're reaching out to farmers and we're looking for their input. We're looking for their input on a whole variety of things, and if you have the budget in front of you—I don't see any here, but certainly you can look it up. It's on page 216, Mr. Speaker. There are quite a few things.

Hon. Todd Smith: That's a good page.

Mr. Doug Downey: Oh, it's a great page, because our farmers—and we talked about supporting farmers earlier. We talked about mental health initiatives with farmers and we've talked about reducing red tape in agriculture. We have some pretty good ideas on how to do it, and we've already put some things forward. But we're also focused on hearing from the farmers. Now, I have a group in my riding that I've invited in. We meet on a regular basis—it's a group of farmers, a pretty loose group; it's my personal farm caucus—so that I can meet with them and hear about things going on. Look, farmers, one—

Hon. Todd Smith:—feed cities.

Mr. Doug Downey: They feed cities, but they talk to each other. They have time when they're working—and I grew up working on farms and roofing, so I know when you're out and you're working a field or you're doing something in the barn, you're thinking, thinking about other things sometimes, while you're doing manual labour, and you're percolating and you're coming up with ideas. These farmers that I have in my farm caucus are, quite frankly, brilliant. They pay attention. They know what's going on. So we're taking the same approach as a government, and we're setting up some round tables to go after the red tape that is in agriculture that's really not serving any purpose.

Some things we know we have to do. Some things we know the answer to already. The wildlife compensation fund was one thing that came in and we already knew it was broken. But here's the irony: Like so many things that we've come across as we're going through the departments, it wasn't broken when the Liberals inherited it.

They broke it. They took a perfectly good system and they broke it. What you had to do if you had livestock be killed was you used to get an inspector to go out and make a determination on whether it was wildlife that killed your livestock. Well, the Liberals, who—same as the north. They just must not understand. I mean, they just don't understand. Their new system was, "Take a picture and send the picture in, and then we'll have a look at it." Do you know what was happening, Mr. Speaker? They were taking the picture, whoever was getting the picture on the other end, and saying, "Well, I can't quite tell. Can you take another picture?" A week later—it's nonsense. So this kind of thing was going on. We've adjusted the compensation fund to get back to reality and be in tune with the farmers and how they're operating in the real world.

We're also—and we ran on this—modernizing their protection programs. We're modernizing the risk management tools. We're supplementing the risk management fund. We're doing so many things to support farmers. We're taking their advice and we're listening to them. They're just the core of—everything that you eat can come from Ontario—everything. There's nothing like a good farmers' market, Mr. Speaker.

I know that we're on the tail end of maple syrup season, and maple syrup farmers are included in that. We have so many wonderful Ontario producers. The maple syrup area is something we can grow. Quebec happens to be the largest producer, but let's put Quebec on notice that we're after that volume, because we can export around the world. This is such a good product.

I'm going to move from there to the Liquor Licence Act—schedule 38, for those following along at home.

Interjection.

Mr. Doug Downey: I know. I'm being a little sarcastic, Mr. Speaker.

Schedule 38, the Liquor Licence Act: Again, our government is not only serving the people of Ontario—and we're treating them like adults—but we're also doing it in concert with our municipalities, unlike the previous government, which railroaded over municipal wishes when it came to the Green Energy Act. It was just—well, I can't use the word that I want, because I'll have to withdraw it, Mr. Speaker. It was inappropriate at best.

The Liquor Licence Act—what it does is allow municipalities to pass a bylaw to designate public places where people can consume liquor, subject to regulation. To translate that, it means that if there is an appropriate park in a municipality that the municipality is okay with people drinking liquor in, then they can pass a bylaw and allow that to happen.

Let me tell you a story about how this will operationalize. I was a member of a service club. We used to run the beer tent for a waterfront festival. All of the money with this service club goes to kids. There's no administration. It's all volunteers. It's fine. We used to run that beer tent. We'd make three or four grand. It would take us three days. But the real magic was, we had a lot of fun doing it.

The previous government suggested that they might allow drinking in parks, but then what they did is, they

swung the pendulum the other way. All of a sudden, that same beer market on the waterfront had to have double fencing around it. We had to have four paid duties, when there were already paid duties at the festival. They put on regulation after regulation and requirement after requirement. We just stopped doing it. We just stopped. It wasn't worth it, and we were probably going to be losing money, in any event.

So, Mr. Speaker, this goes the other way. This says, "Look, let's treat people like adults." The municipality knows areas that make sense. We're not saying every park, everywhere, but there are times and places that it makes total sense to supplement other things that are going on in parks and in community events.

I read a great line the other day, Mr. Speaker, about tailgating. The suggestion was that some people think it's okay to go out for wine and cheese before you go to the theatre, but somehow they look down their nose at doing a responsible tailgate before a sporting event.

Hon. Todd Smith: I think we know who those people are.

Mr. Doug Downey: I think we know who those people are.

We're modernizing, and we're treating people like adults. We're not doing a free-for-all, Mr. Speaker; we're doing it in a responsible, measured way, and we're doing it in partnership with our municipal partners. Our municipal partners, all through this budget, show up. We're helping them modernize. We're not just modernizing—our digitization—we're helping municipalities modernize. The Minister of Municipal Affairs announced \$200 million to help modernize and create efficiencies across Ontario.

In my little area, the municipality of Oro-Medonte—which is home to Burl's Creek, home to Napoleon Wolf Steel, a huge manufacturer, and home to an airport, Lake Simcoe Regional Airport. It's a very complex area. There are only 20,000 residents in the entire municipality. I was chatting with somebody last night, and I think there's one stop light in the entire municipality. It doesn't have the tax base to create the kind of innovation and the kind of forward-looking efficiencies that can save them a ton of money in the long run. So the Minister of Municipal Affairs stepped up and said, "We're going to invest in that municipality to create efficiencies that will create jobs, that will create a better environment, that will create more tourism." Almost all the roads are paved, and if you want to go on a cross-country bike ride, I have three ski hills and hardwood hills in there. We have cross-country biking on the roads. The tourism industry is huge. If we want to create efficiencies for that municipality, they need the help—and they got the help. They got almost \$700,000 to find those efficiencies, and that's fantastic.

1630

Interjection.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'm coming to the Rolling Stones. I'm waiting with bated breath for the rescheduling of the concert series. But it's not just the Rolling Stones; it's Boots and Hearts, it's Big Sky, it's all sorts of great things. If you look back in Hansard, I think it was the minister in

front of me here who said that Chattahoochee is—it's right in Hansard. It's so fantastic.

I want to get back on track. We have done so many things in here that are so good for so many people in Ontario.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about auto insurance and the forward-looking, fantastic things that our caucus has done. We are transforming the way that auto insurance is regulated. We're transforming the way that auto insurance is used. We're transforming the way that auto insurance is delivered. We're transforming the way that people will experience dealing with the auto insurance industry. We are harnessing technology. We are making sure that the experience is second to none.

Let me give you one example: the electronic pink slips. It may seem like a small thing. But I would challenge everybody to tell me if the pink slip in their glove compartment is up to date right now. With certainty—are you sure?

Mr. Roman Baber: The Conservatives are sure.

Mr. Doug Downey: I've got a few yeses. The Conservatives are sure. Not everybody is sure. But if you have the electronic pink slip on your phone, then you have certainty that you have it with you whenever you have your phone. Again, as the minister has said, this is optional. It's not obligatory. It's the kind of thing that I would do. I would want it with me at all times. My phone is with me at all times.

Here's how it works, for those who wonder, "What is an electronic pink slip?" First of all, it's in place in 48 of the American states, and it's in Nova Scotia. We're not creating anything novel; this is tried-and-true technology, and it's working very well in those jurisdictions. We're just adopting it and modernizing Ontario. You get an email from your insurance provider and it has a password-protected document. You receive that email, you download the PDF document, and it's housed in the wallet on your phone. You may or may not know that you have a wallet on your phone. It's an app. You just put it in there. When you go to use it and you bring it up, you can lock your phone so the police officer does not have access to the rest of your phone. The police officer only has access to the pink slip. That's how it works. It's a fantastic idea. Again, you can carry it with you everywhere. That's just one example of how we're modernizing. It's very efficient.

I'm really very excited about this next part. We're moving toward FSRA, the financial regulated services agency, and it is going to allow us to create more choice and more convenience for consumers. It's going to allow flexibility in rate regulation. It's going to allow costs to come out of the system. That is how we're going to get the cost of auto insurance down: by taking costs out of the system. There are several ways that we're doing that. It's laid out in six pages in this budget. If you go back in the previous budgets, they sometimes have one page talking about auto insurance, they might have two pages, and if you actually put them side by side year to year, they often say the same thing.

Hon. Todd Smith: Cut and paste.

Mr. Doug Downey: Cut and paste.

They didn't know what to do; they were at a loss. The Liberals said, "I'll tell you what. We're going to reduce auto insurance by 15%." And what did they do? They cut coverage by half, and they didn't even hit the 15%. They left people vulnerable.

One way that they left people vulnerable—and we fixed this—is the catastrophic limit. They had reduced it to \$1 million. That may sound like a lot of money, but it is not a lot of money when you're catastrophically injured and you have to renovate your home for a wheelchair or you have lingering issues that cause you to not be able to work; \$1 million really does not go that far. It used to be \$2 million, and then they dropped it to \$1 million. That was irresponsible, Mr. Speaker. We've moved it back up to \$2 million.

I thought about, for my time coming in here and bringing in clips of response from the industry and from people who have experienced either injuries, the FAIR group. They're thrilled with some of the things that we've been doing to try to protect them. I was going to take my time—I could spend 30 minutes reading the news articles of people who are thrilled with our auto insurance policy, the way that we're creating choice and we're protecting people.

We're protecting what matters most to people. We're helping protect their families, their children. We're protecting their loved ones, Mr. Speaker. And this is just the start. This is just the start. This is going to be a multi-year project that, as we turn the boat on auto insurance and we take the cost out and we provide a product for the consumer that has the attitude of servitude—they will see themselves reflected in this. It's the right thing to do, Speaker.

This budget—I can't say enough. It has been an absolute honour to work with the Minister of Finance as this came together. As a caucus, we are behind you. There's something in here for every Ontarian. It's responsible. It's measured. And we're going to get the debt under control. We're moving to a five-year—the Goldilocks approach is working, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say thank you one more time, and I can't wait until this passes and we can operationalize everything in here.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Please be seated.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm sure the member meant "if" it passes, right? If.

Anyway, Speaker, I'm concerned when I hear words that I used to hear from the previous government, the previous Liberal government. They used these terms like "modernize," "streamline," "more effective." Do you know what? When you hear those types of words, the thought that comes to mind: Liberals and Tories, it's the same old story. We're not going to see the changes that Ontarians are expecting from them.

I sat here, and I was actually excited, because I'm here where the Minister of Finance stood, him being a northerner from North Bay, where he said he had a lot to talk about how this budget was going to help northerners. I really was anticipating hearing some of it. I have to give credit where credit is due. Some of the individuals actually

got up and defended and talked about the things in the budget, but I did not hear a lot of things in regard to northern Ontario. He touched on a couple of things, but then he started talking about branding and he started talking about a plate that the Premier prepared for his desk. The previous member who just got up talked about this plate at great length.

I really wanted to take notes, because I wanted to do my research in regard to what he was talking about and how this budget is going to be benefiting northern Ontario. They did talk about alcohol sales and how that's going to be able to help. Now, I'm a big promoter, because I do have two small craft breweries that are on Manitoulin Island; I have Split Rail and also Manitoulin Brewing. I'm not just a promoter; I'm a consumer of that product. I like to help out in the business and I like to be out there, but I didn't hear that on the doorsteps going across northern Ontario. When you hear a budget that talks well over 40 times about alcohol and booze, and none about poverty, there's a problem with this budget.

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

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Protecting what matters most: That's exactly what this budget is doing. I'm very proud to support this budget. I want to take an opportunity to really talk about what my colleague was talking about, something that is so important to Bramptonians, which is auto insurance.

For the first time, we have a government that is taking real action on auto insurance, a system and an industry that needs a complete overhaul because, for the past 15 years, governments have failed us. For the past 15 years, they passed it off as stretch goals. It's about time that a good driver in Brampton pays as much as a good driver anywhere else in the province. That's exactly what the Putting Drivers First blueprint that was introduced in this piece of legislation is doing.

1640

I know that people across Brampton are excited about this because we pay some of the highest auto insurance rates in the province, and Ontario, as a province, pays some of the highest auto insurance across the country. This needed to be changed. Ten million drivers across this province are counting on us, and I know this piece of legislation is going to help us.

But that's just one part of this budget. It's about investing in health care: over \$1.3 billion invested into health care. It's about education—protecting education, investing in education: over \$700 million in extra funding towards education.

But that's not all. We are also protecting our seniors. For the first time, we're going to see dental care for our seniors. I know this is a huge issue among seniors across my constituency, across Brampton.

I'm very proud to support this bill, and I look forward to seeing it come through this House.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: It's a pleasure to add my voice to the debate on Bill 100. I absolutely oppose the bill, so I will not be supporting the bill. There's no surprise there.

This budget is a cruel budget which, quite frankly, attacks marginalized and the most vulnerable persons there are in our wonderful province of Ontario—like Kristina, who I just spoke about today, who couldn't eat for three days because she couldn't get to her kitchen.

This budget talks about adding money to health and adding money to education. What you have added is dangerously below inflation, so this doesn't do anything for anyone. If you're giving a billion bucks to education, and there's a \$15-billion or a \$16-billion school disrepair, that's not helping anyone. You've got to come better than that for Ontario. Ontario deserves better.

We want to talk about things that we haven't talked about, since everyone in here is saying that the bill addresses something for everyone in Ontario. Well, I don't know if it addresses things for Indigenous communities, because the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs has been slashed by 50%. We're talking almost \$75 million taken away from Indigenous people. How, in goodness' sake—

Mr. Ross Romano: You're wrong. You're wrong.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Ms. Jill Andrew:—can taking away \$75 million from the Indigenous affairs ministry—
Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. The member from Sault Ste. Marie, come to order.

Ms. Jill Andrew: How does that take us anywhere closer to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action? This government should be ashamed of itself.

Mr. Ross Romano: Absolute lies.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie will come to order. As well, the member from Sault Ste. Marie will withdraw.

Mr. Ross Romano: Withdrawn.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.
Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That's correct. You must go back to your seat to withdraw.

Mr. Ross Romano: I withdraw for asking the member for—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All you need to do is simply say “withdraw.”

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

I will now return back to the member from Toronto—St. Paul's to finish up, please.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to leave Ontarians with one note—

Mr. Ross Romano: You owe us an apology.

Ms. Jill Andrew: While I was making a case for Indigenous communities across Ontario, the PC government decided to deflect from Indigenous rights and talk about—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie will come to order.

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Roman Baber: I'm delighted to come up again and speak in the House on our government's first budget. I'm incredibly grateful to the Minister of Finance and his PA for doing a terrific job. We have a lot to be grateful for. I'm not even sure if, in the short time that I have, I want to go into some of the essential Personal Property Security Act changes that make so much sense and have finally been implemented by this government, or the change to simplified procedure, which will allow to clear what I refer to as “holy justice,” with juries spending a day in jury panel and then sitting and listening to disputes of under \$100,000 instead of being at work. Half the time the jury isn't even in the room because the lawyers are wrangling. Typically if it's a technical question then you've got to go a little slower because you may not have familiarity with the subject matter. And now we're able to expedite court proceedings significantly to improve access to justice in the province.

But most importantly, I want to thank the Minister of Finance on behalf of what we refer to as the millennial caucus. It's not really clear who the millennial caucus is because we're not sure how to define “millennial.” But when the Liberals came into power, the provincial debt was about \$130 billion. They left with \$345 billion, give or take, plus \$40 billion in the hydro debt. And what did they have to show for it? Nothing. No subways. No good medicine. Schools in disrepair. Nothing. All they had to show for it is, this year, \$13 billion worth of interest. They were robbing our generation blind, Mr. Speaker, and I'm grateful to the Minister of Finance for finally putting an end to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I will now return to the member from Barrie—Springwater—Oro—Medonte for final comments.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Correction: I will return to the Minister of Finance for final comments.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to acknowledge the comments from Algoma—Manitoulin, Brampton South, Toronto—St. Paul's, and York Centre. I am very sorry to hear that the NDP will not be supporting child care programs in Ontario or the \$90 million into low-income seniors funding for Ontario. I'm shocked, I'm absolutely shocked that they are not going to be supporting the most vulnerable in Ontario, Speaker.

Certainly, we've heard from the member from Toronto—St. Paul's a marked departure from the facts with respect to Indigenous affairs. She was, of course, referring to the fact that last year there was a treaty settlement that was included in the budget. We don't repeat that treaty settlement this year. It's not included. Had she actually read the points in the budget, ministry by ministry, there's a special section in the accountability that we put so that the opposition could actually understand the budget. Apparently she has not read the budget or she would see that there's a section in there that describes that Indigenous

affairs in last year's budget included treaty settlements. This year, of course—

Interjection: A one-time settlement.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: "One-time settlement" means it happens one time.

They've said the same thing about firefighting. They said, "Oh my God, there's a reduction in the firefighting budget. What's going to happen?" Well, of course, last year we put \$100 million, one time, into the extraordinary firefighting. This year the budget is back to normal.

Again, Speaker, if all the opposition has got is this marked departure from the facts on Indigenous affairs and natural resources, then you know we've made a pretty darn good budget that makes smart, long-term decisions and reinvents the way government delivers services. We focus resources on the individuals and families who are in greatest need, and I'm very sad the NDP is not going to support those families.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down the NDP lead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Niagara Centre is asking for unanimous consent to stand down the NDP lead. Agreed? Agreed.

I now turn it over to the member from Niagara Centre to continue with debate.

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's an honour and a privilege to rise on behalf of my constituents and people across Ontario to offer comments on this budget, a very strange and troubling approach to governing in the 21st century. It's certainly contrary to what governments with good sense are doing around the world.

I have two general observations about the budget before I get into particulars. It's amazing to me that any government in this day and age can so thoroughly miss the point in addressing what are obviously the two most crucial, even existential, issues we face as a nation, a province and in our local communities.

1650

First, and most importantly, climate change: How can any government in this day and age completely ignore climate change and our responsibility to mitigate it and eventually stabilize it for our very survival? This government has no plan whatsoever. They believe supporting programs to clean up trash is an environmental plan. Not only do they not have a plan, but they're spending millions of taxpayer dollars fighting someone else's plan, a market-driven plan that puts a price on carbon, a plan that they themselves agreed with just a year ago. I'll talk more about this later.

There's nothing conservative about a government that does not conserve, that ignores issues of environmental and economic sustainability and refuses to acknowledge a green shift that modernizing economies all over the world are taking part in and, most of all, ignores the future of our children.

Speaker, tied to both climate change and globalization, the second greatest challenge we face is income inequality.

This is a brutally cruel budget that cuts a billion dollars from the neediest citizens of our province while saying nothing about poverty, precarious employment and a shortage of jobs that pay a living wage. In fact, there are almost 400 pages in this budget and a reference to alcohol happens about 35 times, yet there is not one mention of poverty. Speaker, this is a budget about booze and rebranding from a Premier who is fascinated by stickers and beer. Parts of it could have been written in a frat house. It reminds me of the kid who runs for student president and as a joke promises to put beer in all the fountains if elected. That kid got elected in Ontario.

This budget is not about investing in vital programs and services for the people of Ontario. While the Conservatives may try to deflect and hide what they're doing, while we recognize that there are props, posters, signs and lots of gimmicks and stickers in it, this budget actually causes real people harm and causes harm to the things that matter most to the people of Ontario. Over the past year, we've seen Ontarians grow more and more concerned about the things that matter most to them. And since this government has been elected, I hear more and more from my constituents about how they're really concerned about the direction this Premier is taking this province.

Just think of it: Instead of being concerned about issues like climate change and income inequality, this government has decided to devote more time and concentration on new rules that will allow people to order drinks at 9 a.m. at bars, restaurants and golf courses; drink at tailgate parties; drink in public parks; drink more at wineries and breweries; and put more booze into more locations.

There's no mention of poverty, no mention of domestic violence, no mention of the challenges faced by autistic children, no mention that the office of the children's advocate has disappeared into the Ombudsman's office and what this might mean, no mention of diversity or equality or of reconciliation with First Nations. If these are not the priorities of this government, Speaker, and if they're not interested in the larger existential issues of climate change and income inequality—if they're going to concentrate on booze, at least there should be some rationale on how this will make life better for Ontario families. But I don't see that anywhere.

Now, Speaker, I like a drink as much as the next guy, but I like to think I also have priorities. I realize that, just as we try to have balance in our personal lives, we need to have balance in our society and in our communities. And whatever happened to evidence-based decision-making? Does the Premier realize that alcohol problems represent a huge cost to the Ontario government? The 2012 report from the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse pegged these costs at \$465.4 million more than government revenues. Every drink sold is actually a net loss to the government. The major contributors to increased consumption are price, the number of sales outlets, private sector involvement and hours of sale.

There is also the question, Speaker, of economic impact. All analysis shows that increased spending on alcohol will be offset by reduced spending elsewhere in the

economy. Where is that likely to be? What will be the social and health-related cost? What will be the effect on grape growers and local Ontario VQA wines that will have to compete in more locations with heavily subsidized blended foreign wines? Speaker, government policy that fails to weigh gains against the predictable harm to health, social well-being and the economy is bad government policy.

We know exactly what the priorities of this government are—it's booze and rebranding—but with this budget, it's also quite clear what they don't value. Despite what is on the cover, this is not a budget that values our children's futures. It's not a budget that values education at all. This budget has been described in some circles as mean-spirited. It has even been described as a callous and cruel budget.

I'll tell you exactly why people feel this way: Because after 15 years of disappointing Liberal governments, families were feeling that they were left behind. They were struggling with things like paying for their hydro bills, finding affordable housing, finding affordable child care, not to mention the crisis in our hospitals and some of the other issues that were most pressing to everyone's everyday lives.

What now? Well, there are a billion dollars in cuts from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services—a billion dollars. These are our most vulnerable people. These are children. These are people who are living with disabilities. They are people who rely on this government at the most vulnerable point in their lives, and this government is taking a billion dollars away from programs that they rely on.

We have \$1.3 billion being taken away from rural affairs, northern development and forestry, the two ministries most directly responsible for dealing with the environment and climate change. We are now losing \$1.3 billion from that budget.

The Indigenous affairs budget has been slashed. This ministry is already a third of a ministry, as it has been combined with two others, and now what we're seeing is a slash to this budget that clearly shows this government is not truly committed to our truth and reconciliation efforts.

There is \$700 million gone from the training, colleges and university budgets. Included in that \$700-million cut is a threat from this government to withhold as much as 60% of what's left if universities don't perform to the standards that this government will determine.

We already have seen health care and education being squeezed, and this budget holds them to less than inflation. As my colleague has mentioned, when you're spending less than inflation, that means cuts. That means we will be creating real job losses for front-line workers in Ontario.

We've heard this government talk about their super health bureaucracy or the super-agency they're creating, upending our world-class public health system and opening the door to private companies. We are concerned that the words "not for profit" are not put in any of the legislation, and this budget does nothing to allay fears that they're taking our public dollars and putting them at risk for private profits.

But I have to say, the thing that is most mean-spirited is the fact that this budget does nothing to allay the anxiety and worry of the people of Ontario. We've heard time and time again from families with children living with autism that they don't know what the future will be for their children. They don't know what these budget cuts will mean or these changes to the program will mean. They have been here on the front lawn. They have been in this Legislature with pleas to help them understand what this is going to mean for their children. This budget does not answer any of those questions.

There's no answer for people living with disabilities. Special Services at Home and the Passport Program, things that people rely on to live lives of dignity, are not mentioned at all in this budget. Again, it's cruel to keep people in suspense, in the dark, when these cuts will mean very real things to their lives.

There's no evidence, Speaker, that this government is concerned, as they say, about the deficit or spending. In the lead-up to this budget, we had a good look at the spending priorities of this government, and there are billions in costs in handouts that this government has already announced. We've heard time and time again about the former government's six-million-dollar man at Hydro One. This government managed to turn Mayo Schmidt into a nine-million-dollar man to make him go away.

The government has been meddling in our hydro system. At OPG, an old political foe of the Premier was fired, and that cost \$500,000 in severance. This constant meddling that we're talking about is what led American regulators to block Hydro One's acquisition of the Washington-based corporation Avista. That cancellation cost \$138 million in penalty fees, and actually it ballooned to a whopping \$191 million when you factor in the finance charges and the interest.

1700

Then there is the Conservative gravy train we've been hearing about. These patronage and favour-trading appointments are adding up to millions of dollars. The former PC president Rueben Devlin apparently will be collecting about \$1 million over the course of three years to consult on our private health care system. We have the former Ford campaign tour director, Ian Todd, now getting a \$350,000-a-year payday, which is a huge bump in salary for the gig as trade representative to Washington. We've even seen that Ford's former principal secretary is making \$197,000 a year after she was appointed to the Ontario Energy Board. These are just a few of these sweet perks in penalties and costs that are starting to add up for the people of Ontario. It doesn't sound like a government concerned with taxpayers' money to me.

But I have to say that one of the biggest handouts of all was that this government cancelled a tax increase to the wealthiest among us. That cut resulted in a revenue loss of about \$308 million—a direct handout to the wealthiest citizens of the province. What kind of government hands out money to the wealthiest citizens of the province while they punish the neediest?

Incredibly, the cost to Ontario families of this government cancelling the cap-and-trade program is about \$3 billion. Instead of a program that paid the taxpayers of Ontario, we now have a scheme that, in fact, will have us spending about \$400 million a year to pay polluters rather than collecting revenue. As I've mentioned, this is a government without an environmental plan.

Now, in addition to their wasteful rebranding of licence plates and government documents, their ridiculous posting of signs at their border and other rebranding exercises, they have resorted to, and I'm not kidding here, Speaker, stickers—mean stickers, not nice stickers, like Conservative caucus members get if they clap loud enough—really mean stickers about the federal carbon plan that have to get posted on peoples' private businesses, and if you don't post the mean government sticker on your business, you get a huge \$10,000 fine.

Meanwhile, the Ontario Court of Appeal is hearing a constitutional challenge from the Ontario government using our tax dollars to challenge the federal Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act. This is at a time when it is clear that without effective carbon pricing, investors will move their capital elsewhere and Canadian businesses will suffer. Regardless of what this government puts on its stickers, carbon pricing is viewed by almost—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria): Sorry. I'm just calling the government side to order. Please be respectful of the member. Thank you.

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Burch: No reduction in carbon emissions, no planet; no planet, no economy. Shame on this government for being on the wrong side of history.

Health care is the number one issue for the people of Ontario. It's the number one issue in my riding of Niagara Centre. It's important to note that Ontario has the lowest per capita spending in the country on health care. We spend less than any other province—10 out of 10—in investing in our health care system. We have a system that's drastically underfunded after years of the Liberals. Now with this PC government, we do not see anything in this budget that's going to even begin to address this crisis in the health care system.

In the province of Ontario, and in Canada, inflation is running at about 1.9%. According to the FAO, in order to just keep pace with health care spending, the inflation rate is 4.3% in health care. In the budget, the 1.2% increase is below the rate of inflation and will result in cuts—not just in the spending, but it will result in layoffs in hospitals. I can remember what happened in Niagara when the Conservatives and the Liberal governments mismanaged and privatized our hospital system, Speaker. Cleaning services were contracted out to the private sector, and people died.

During the pre-budget consultation, the Ontario Hospital Association said that they would require \$656 million just in order to prevent layoffs. This budget comes nowhere close. This is not a budget that will do anything to fix our health care system. We're looking at longer wait times and more Ontarians treated in hallways and closets.

This government plans to cut the number of public health units from 35 to 10, with no real rationale and no evidence produced as to the reason why. That also includes cuts to public health laboratories. Currently, there are about 11 public health laboratories in the province of Ontario. There is zero information on how the \$200-million cut from local health units will be implemented. These are the organizations that would be around to help us prevent a future tragedy like Walkerton. Have the Conservatives learned nothing at all from past mistakes? Thanks to their cuts to health and their backdoor hidden legislation, the government is creating the conditions for another Walkerton.

We know that the Liberal government underfunded education for years, Speaker. With this budget, it is clear that we're going from bad to worse. Education is not keeping up with inflation. If you fund education lower than the rate of inflation, this is a cut to program spending. The thing is, in this case, do you know who suffers? We know who suffers: It is, unfortunately, our children, who are trying to get the best start in life. Ontario's children know that these cuts will have significant impacts in their classrooms. We just learned that the school boards in Windsor, Guelph and Waterloo have sent out about 260 redundancy notices to teachers. We heard that these changes could amount to as many as 3,500 teacher layoffs in the province of Ontario.

There's a lot missing from the government's plan for education. There's no plan to deal with violence in schools and classrooms. There's really no plan for autism supports. There's no mention of special education. There's no plan to make Ontario's system more equitable with regard to northern communities and rural communities. It certainly doesn't even address the additional burden on schools when they operate in low-income communities. There is no new funding for English as a second language, and there are no changes to even begin to address the problem of the funding formula for schools. This government is also making things worse for post-secondary students, who will continue to pile on loans that they cannot pay when they graduate.

There's a lot missing from this budget with regard to Indigenous concerns, Speaker. There's no mention of Grassy Narrows and the mercury cleanup. There's no mention of support for the housing crisis in Cat Lake. Now we're faced with the annual Kashechewan flooding. This budget does not even begin to address the significant issues that First Nations communities have been patiently waiting to be addressed by the people of Ontario.

I would like to end, Speaker, by saying that this is not a budget that any of us here can support. It's certainly not a budget that does any justice for the people of Ontario, who have been waiting for fairness, balance and relief. People didn't vote for cuts. They didn't vote for a government that takes Ontario backward. We will stand here with the people of Ontario and we will continue to advocate for the services they need. And we'll continue to speak against a budget that cuts things from people and makes life very difficult for the people of Ontario.

This budget concentrates on booze, rebranding and cheap gimmicks while ignoring what is most important to the people of Ontario. It's not what we voted for. We can, and we must, do better.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise, Mr. Speaker. I like this member of Parliament. I like my colleague opposite, but I know he's better than the speech that he gave here today. Talk about lowering the tenor of debate in this House today, Mr. Speaker. What we have seen in that speech today was talking down—whether you like the Premier or not, the office is one that commands and demands respect. I think we would all agree with that.

The references made by the member—I know he's better than that. But I think that, really, what it has to do with, colleagues, is that they take their inspiration from their leadership. What we see on this side of the House, obviously, is hope. It's prosperity. We're seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. People are happy again. We're seeing investment come back to the province. That's what people are seeing.

I think what was most shocking to me—we've seen this, time and time and time again, from the members opposite—they talk about our service sector as though they're someone to look down on. Imagine a member from Niagara Centre talking down the tourism industry in this province. It's unfathomable. When you consider the amount of jobs and prosperity that it accumulates for his region, it is unfathomable to me that he would talk it down, so I hope the member will reflect on that.

1710

It's clear to me that they haven't really done the research on this. They've been caught off guard by the fact that we are making important investments in health care. We are making important investments in education. We are making important investments for low-income Ontarians. We've done this without increasing taxes. But ultimately, Ontarians want the budget back into balance, and this program, this budget, puts us on a path not only back to balance, but continues us on a path once and for all to prosperity in the province of Ontario. I am very happy and optimistic, and I wish the honourable members would join us in helping bring that—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm really pleased to be able to respond to the very thoughtful and comprehensive comments of the member from Niagara Centre speaking to this budget legislation. I appreciated how he started out, talking just generally about how thoroughly the government has missed the point with this legislation.

I just want to return to an issue near and dear to my heart, which is something he just concluded with, which was with regard to education and the impact of education cuts. This morning I was asking the Minister of Education about cuts to the Peel District School Board. Just to go through that again, what we heard today was that 176

elementary schools got their notices, 193 secondary school teachers received their notices, and 30 designated ECEs received their notices.

It was interesting because the Minister of Education—I appreciated the member from Niagara Centre's comments on this—was accusing us of fearmongering. I just want to let you know where I got those numbers, Mr. Speaker. I got those numbers directly from Jamie Robertson, the superintendent of human resources support services at Peel District School Board, unfortunately the guy who had to deliver those notices, issue those notices. What was it that he credited these notices with? What was it that he said the government is doing to cause this? He put this right at the foot of this government. He said it is because of cuts to the local priority fund. It is because of the education cuts that this government has already announced.

It is absolutely the responsibility of this government, those layoffs. They are not normal. They are absolutely new and different than what we've ever seen since the Mike Harris years.

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll wrap with that. Obviously the members opposite find that difficult. I appreciate—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Will Bouma: It's always an honour to rise in the House—

Applause.

Mr. Will Bouma: And thank you to my colleagues for their applause. I'm pleased to be able to add a few comments on the words that the member from Niagara Centre brought forward. As always, it's very difficult to follow the member from Markham–Stouffville, because he's just bang on, but what I had to say was that it's so good to hear, in a certain sense, that the only criticism that the member from Niagara Centre has on our budget bill is to be able to make personal attacks against our minister and against our Premier, and that they actually have nothing substantively wrong or any problem with the budget itself. However, I have to say that when I was a child, my parents raised me that if you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything at all, and if you have to make yourself look better by making someone else look bad, that's just bullying.

I understand that the NDP has lost touch with the real hard-working people of Ontario, and I understand that they have sold themselves out to foreign-funded special interest groups like Leadnow, but the reality is that hard-working Ontarians know that for the last 15 years, we have been completely unsustainable.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I did a little bit of math the other day, and if you look at the \$210 billion that has been added onto our provincial debt over the last 15 years, that averages out to almost \$40 million a day that this province went backward instead of forward. Instead of giving constructive criticism on how we could find even more efficiencies, all we hear is more negativity.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Boy, would I love to rewind some of the viewing that has been going on in this House for about, I'd say, six months in regard to when the government of the day was actually in opposition, where we could see that constructive criticism as it was coming from there. Some of these memories are really short.

Speaker, over lunch I was over at the Canadian Club and I was listening to our leader, Andrea Horwath, who was providing a different approach, a new perspective, what individuals are really asking for. And a vision of stability, a vision of predictability, is what a lot of industry is asking for and what a lot of businesses are asking for.

In regard to searching for headlines, the member referred to—I don't have to search for the headlines. We all get these clippings in the morning, and the first one says, "New Law Could Limit Suits Against Ontario; Ford Seeks to Repeal Older Law That Defines Circumstances in Which Province Can Be Sued." We're not making that stuff up. It's there; it's hidden in the agenda.

When you look at the budget itself and you take away the stickers and you do a little bit of scratching on them, it doesn't pass the sniff test, because when you really look at what is happening and the details that are in it, it is going to hurt. It is going to be changes. They're not the priorities that are reflected through for Ontarians. When we stand in our place and I hear, "Be constructive," or, "You're so negative," and that we're fearmongering—come on, wake up. We're trying to identify the ideas that are there and the issues that we have. That's what back-and-forth is all about, when we talk about it. When I'm doing it, it's bad. When you're doing it, it's good. Then when you reverse the stages, "Oh, it's bad, it's good, we're all terrible."

Come on, let's get to the bottom of finding out what the problems are and really start taking some of the ideas that are coming across the table to you because, you know what, they're good.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I will now return to the member from Niagara Centre for his final comments.

Mr. Jeff Burch: That was a really interesting little exchange there. The member from Markham—Stouffville—I like him, too. He's a good guy, I know, in real life. But, Speaker, along with the member from Peterborough South and the member from Sault Ste. Marie, they're the worst hecklers in this House—easily. They heckled through my entire 20 minutes, without stopping. To have the chutzpah to stand up and actually—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Burch: That's really good.

I'd like to thank the member for Davenport for her comments and for the incredible work she has done as education critic. She has absolutely been amazing in this House, pointing out day after day the hypocrisy from this government and the underfunding and what they're doing to our health care system. The member from Brantford—Brant, to actually say to me, "If you don't have anything good to say, don't say it," is just another dandy. That's just beautiful. And Algoma—Manitoulin—one of my favourite

MPPs—thank you for your comments and for pointing out the ridiculous comments coming from across the way.

Thank you, Speaker. That's all I have to say.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Interjections.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 100, the Protecting What Matters Most Act, which implements measures from last week's provincial budget. I listened very attentively to the leadoff speeches by our Minister of Finance and the member from Barrie—Springwater—Orillia—Medonte. I want to begin my remarks by once again recognizing the hard work and the dedication that the Minister of Finance, his parliamentary assistant and the whole rest of his team at the Ministry of Finance have put into developing our government's first budget.

It is a remarkable document, a fantastic accomplishment and an important step in restoring accountability and trust in Ontario's finances.

1720

This budget truly protects what matters most to the people of Ontario, by putting people at the centre of all government decision-making and protecting, maintaining and enhancing health care and education.

We all went door to door during the election—and at every door, I asked people what matters most to them, and they said "health care and education," and specifically the health and education of their children. That is what matters to all of us.

By debating Bill 100 today, we are starting the process of turning our important budget commitments into reality.

One of those commitments is particularly important to my constituents—I heard about it a lot when I was out knocking on doors—and that is the Ontario Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses credit, or the CARE credit, as it has been dubbed. I know from knocking on doors and speaking with my constituents in Eglinton—Lawrence that child care is a constant challenge. People search and search for spaces, and when they eventually find a space, they often have difficulty covering the cost.

We've already taken steps to help give parents more child care options, by passing Bill 66 earlier this year, which made some small changes to the number of children who can be in care in an in-home daycare, which is a form of child care that I know many of the residents in my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence appreciate and rely on every day.

The CARE credit will be one of the most flexible child care initiatives ever introduced in Ontario. It puts parents, not the government, at the centre of child care decision-making. That is music to my ears, because choice in child care means we are meeting parents where they are and helping them with what works for them, not insisting that they rearrange everything around a plan that suits us. I think that's very important.

The CARE credit will build on the existing child care expense deduction by focusing much-needed benefits on low- and middle-income families.

This also builds on our commitment to help low-income workers through the Low-Income Individuals and Families Tax Credit, also known as the LIFT credit, which provides low-income workers, including those making minimum wage, with tax relief.

Under the CARE credit, low- and middle-income families could potentially receive up to \$6,000 a year per child under the age of seven, up to \$3,750 per child between the ages of seven and 16, and up to \$8,250 per child with a severe disability.

When fully implemented, the new CARE tax credit will provide about 300,000 families with up to 75% of their eligible child care expenses and help families to access a broad range of child care options, including care in child care centres, homes and summer camps. I really love that component of it. It allows parents to use what works for them.

Most importantly, the CARE credit correctly recognizes that parents, not government, are in the best position to determine what form of child care is right for them and what works for them and their families. And when quality child care is easier to find and easier to pay for, parents can get back into the workforce faster.

Interjections.

Mrs. Robin Martin: That's right.

That's also why this important credit complements our budget commitment of \$1 billion over the next five years to create up to 30,000 child care spaces in schools, which will make life easier for parents and families searching for affordable and reliable child care.

Speaker, the budget also protects what matters most by making a number of other important investments in health care and education. It will improve the condition of schools—something we all heard about while knocking on doors—to support better learning and keep children and students safe by investing \$1.4 billion, as the minister indicated, in school renewal this year, the 2019-20 school year.

It will ensure tuition rates are lowered by 10% for students at every publicly funded college and university in the 2019-20 school year. Students enrolled in a college program will see an average tuition reduction of approximately \$340, and students enrolled in an undergraduate arts and science degree will see an average tuition reduction of \$660.

Our government is investing an additional \$384 million into hospitals and an additional \$267 million into home and community care. Both of these investments are essential to ending hallway health care and direct more health care spending to where it is needed most.

We are also introducing, as we've talked about earlier, this new dental program for low-income seniors who lack benefits. Individual seniors with annual incomes of \$19,300 or less or senior couples with a combined annual income of less than \$32,300 will be able to receive dental services in public health units, community health centres and Aboriginal health access centres across the province. I know how important this is. My own mother struggled to pay for dentistry in her later years. It really makes it very

difficult for a person to have a healthy diet when they don't have healthy oral/dental care and they can't afford it. So it's very important.

The budget also recommits to 15,000 new long-term-care beds over the next five years and upgrading older long-term-care beds to provide more appropriate care to patients with complex health conditions.

Importantly, it reaffirms our government's commitment to invest \$3.8 billion for mental health, addictions and housing supports over 10 years, developing our connected, integrated mental health and addictions system.

This budget and the measures contained in Bill 100 will also help make life easier and more convenient for the people of Ontario, something the opposition doesn't seem to like. Specifically, it will help our government move towards adopting a digital-first strategy to make more services available online and make them easier to use, moving away from in-person and paper-based transactions. This will change, as the minister explained in great detail, the way that provincial government works, putting people at the very centre of every service, program, policy and process. Simple, faster, better government services: What's not to like about that?

We are also making it easier to buy more affordable auto insurance, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance discussed, including giving drivers more control over their rates and working to enable more documents to be provided electronically, like the pink slip he mentioned, making life easier and more convenient for drivers in the province of Ontario.

Specifically, in budget 2019, Bill 100, the government is proposing to help people injured in auto accidents get the care they need by:

- (1) introducing a driver care card which will streamline access to care and make the claims process easier;
- (2) improving access to treatment for common injuries, including mental health services;
- (3) making sure a driver's insurance policy will pay for the treatment they need, while giving drivers the choice to receive cash settlements if they are eligible.

I just want to pause for a moment. We are increasing the catastrophic injury limit from \$1 million back to \$2 million again, which I wholly applaud. I certainly had people speaking to me about how they were left in a lurch by the irresponsible policy, frankly, of the former government. When you need that kind of care, that limit was not acceptable and did not provide for the kind of services they required. So I'm very happy about that.

And finally:

- (4) bringing credibility and more accountability to the evaluation of injury claims by reforming the medical assessments process.

1730

The government is also working to make finding and buying auto insurance easier and more affordable by enabling insurance companies to offer more discounts and options as well as innovative new products such as pay-as-you-go insurance, combatting fraud so that honest drivers do not have to pay for the dishonest actions of a few,

reducing red tape by improving the way auto insurance is regulated, bringing electronic proof of auto insurance to Ontario drivers and allowing for more competition in the auto insurance market. The government will put drivers first and put money back into peoples' pockets by lowering the cost, increasing consumer choice and making the auto insurance market more competitive.

Interjection.

Mrs. Robin Martin: No. It's brilliant.

I really want to thank the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance for all his fine work in this area. We're lucky to have him.

For those who ride transit, as many in my constituency do, budget 2019 reaffirms our commitment to building better public transit and transportation infrastructure by making public transit an attractive, affordable, convenient and low-stress alternative to Toronto traffic. This includes making the single largest capital contribution to new subway builds and extensions in Ontario's history, as the province commits \$11.2 billion of an estimated \$28.5 billion to support four rapid transit projects in the greater Toronto area—significantly over-delivering on the government's initial commitment to inject an additional \$5 billion in capital funds into subway extensions.

These investments include a proposed much-needed and long overdue Ontario Line to relieve severe overcrowding on the Yonge-University-Spadina line in Toronto. Most significant to my constituents who rely on this subway to get to work—and I imagine many of my colleagues in the opposition also rely on the subway to get to work as well—our government's proposal for the Ontario Line will see the new line begin at the Ontario Science Centre, near Don Mills and Eglinton, connecting to the Eglinton Crosstown and providing relief for the already busy Eglinton subway station, which is only expected to get even busier once the Eglinton Crosstown line opens. Speaker, this is a substantial improvement for my constituents compared to the city of Toronto's current plan for the relief line, which would extend only so far north as Bloor Street and fails to provide any relief for constituents who use Eglinton station each and every day, as many do in my area.

The investment and prioritization of the Ontario Line will also enable us to invest in the creation of a truly integrated regional transportation system, including an extension of the Eglinton Crosstown further west into Etobicoke and to the Toronto Pearson International Airport, most of which is to be built underground. For my constituents, this means they will be able to get on the Crosstown at one of the eight stations currently under construction in our riding and reach the airport by rapid public transit without any transfers or connections. That's pretty amazing.

I know that many constituents are as excited as I am to know that we are proceeding with this uptown Toronto connection to the Pearson international airport, which really just makes sense. It's what should have been done in the first place, so I'm delighted to see that we're moving on that.

We will also deliver on commitments to complete the Scarborough subway extension, which I know many of my colleagues support as well. This will connect to the new Ontario Line. We're moving forward as well with the northern extension of the Yonge subway line to Richmond Hill—

Interjection.

Mrs. Robin Martin: —which I know my colleague is very excited about. That will open very shortly after the Ontario Line, ensuring that sufficient capacity is available on the Yonge line to serve additional passengers. All of that is really fantastic news for everyone in the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence and, I would think, actually, for everybody in Toronto—certainly in my riding, and I think everybody else in Toronto as well.

But most importantly, Speaker, we are going to be able to make these important investments while balancing the budget in a responsible manner, because balancing the budget is both a moral imperative and a necessary step in restoring trust, transparency and accountability in the government's finances. It will help us protect what matters most today and for the generations to come. That's why the budget charts a responsible path to balanced budgets by 2023-24, and measures contained in Bill 100 will help us get to that point.

Remarkably, this legislation proposes the enactment of the Fiscal Sustainability, Transparency and Accountability Act. Among other important new accountability measures, the proposed FSTAA would include a Premier's and minister's accountability guarantee, which the Minister of Finance outlined, with the minister and the Premier both putting up 10% of their salary if they miss a public reporting deadline. The minister would also need to publicly explain why a deadline was missed and when the report would be released.

This is important because we can't restore trust and accountability in the province's finances if we can't rely on the government to share the true state of the books. Had such a requirement existed under the former government, the former Premier and former Minister of Finance would have been forced to pay tens of thousands of dollars for missing important reporting deadlines; a combined \$115,000, I believe, was mentioned earlier during the debate.

I want to briefly touch on one other measure included in this budget and in Bill 100, which the members opposite don't seem to approve of: improving choice and convenience for adult alcohol consumers. I'm not going to go into great detail here, but I will say that our government is making these changes because we respect consumers in this province, and we trust people to make responsible choices that work for them. We are going to allow municipalities to make their own rules about drinking alcohol in public places such as parks—anyone who has ever travelled anywhere may have experienced this, say, for example, in Quebec—and allowing fans to drink at tailgating parties at eligible sporting events.

On hours of service and sale, I will note that just a few months ago, Toronto city council voted to request that the hours of sale, of service of alcohol, begin at 9 a.m. That was Toronto city council; they voted for that. I believe the

councillor who moved the motion called it “putting the mimosa back in brunch.” While some city councillors struggled with that concept of what exactly a mimosa is during the city council debates on this issue, I think it’s a common-sense measure. I am very happy to see the government move forward with these changes, which are good for businesses and tourism and restaurants in my riding, including many small cafes and eating establishments along thoroughfares like Yonge Street, Avenue Road, Eglinton Avenue, Marlee Avenue, Bathurst Street, Dufferin Street, Yorkdale Mall—all of these things are in my riding. I could go on and on. But let me just assure all the members of this House that there are many great places to have lunch in Eglinton–Lawrence. So you can have a mimosa now with that, once the act is passed.

Speaker, this budget, this legislation and this government are about putting people first, making life more affordable and convenient, and making Ontario open for business and open for jobs. I am proud to support a responsible path back to balanced budgets by 2023-24, while creating jobs and protecting what matters most—health care and education—and providing much-needed relief for families. I hope you will all support this important legislation.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It’s really a pleasure to respond to the comments of the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I thought I’d just focus on something that she spoke about earlier in her comments, and it was with regard to the choice, as it’s described here, with regard to child care. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that we have a very significant difference of opinion about what is a choice. What we see in this bill is no choice at all, because what we see here is no child care plan at all. What we see instead is what’s becoming known, quite broadly out there in the public, as the “rebate rip-off.” I want to explain a little bit about why it’s so problematic.

First of all, let’s just be clear: The amount that’s being offered is less than what amounts to about even one month of child care for one child currently in Toronto and in many other parts of the province.

1740

I guess the other thing I really wanted to make clear is that there are schemes like this that exist in other jurisdictions, like Australia and the UK—very similar ones. What we have found in our research, and what we know from around the world, is that it does nothing to cap the cost of child care. For-profit operators continue to raise their fees under this kind of system, and the new rebate, we know, also based on other jurisdictions and experiences in Australia and in the UK, can waste billions—billions—in public funds, while we know that parents will continue to be gouged. Again, all of those dollars end up just going into the pockets of for-profit providers, not into the pockets of a hard-working staff and not ultimately, and really most importantly, into building and creating new child care spaces.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would just quibble a little bit with the language the member used with regard to choice. If there are no child care spaces, then there is no choice at all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Further questions and comments. We’re going to hear from the member from Cambridge.

Mrs. Amy Fee: Kitchener South–Hespeler.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I knew that. Kitchener South–Hespeler.

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you, Speaker. We are bringing this budget forward and this Bill 100 because we are working to get this province back on track, and that’s exactly what I have heard from my constituents.

Last week, when the finance minister finished his speech in this House, I immediately received an email from one of my constituents telling me just that, how excited he is to see that we’re looking towards the future and, again, making sure our province is getting back on track.

For us, we are balancing that budget in five years. While we’re doing that now, we’re making sure we’re protecting what matters most for now but also for years down the road. We need to protect our education system. We need to protect health care.

One thing the opposition keeps talking about that, to me, is fearmongering is talking about those surplus notices that are going out to teachers. As stressful as those are, those go out every year. Our education minister has been working tirelessly to build up our education system. She is constantly out there advocating for what our students and our teachers need in those classrooms, and that’s why we’ve added the additional \$700 million into education for next year. We know we need to make sure that we have great teachers in our classrooms and building up that education system. I’m very proud to see what we’ve put into this budget to protect education down the road and in our future.

One of the other things that my constituents brought up with me is how happy they are to see the additional investment, as well, into home care: an extra \$267 million going into home care.

One of the things that we talked about on the campaign trail was that dental plan for low-income seniors. Promises made, promises kept on that. I’m very happy to see that we’re moving ahead with that and very excited for the constituents I’ve talked to who have been so stressed about accessing dental care.

Again, we are making very smart decisions with our budget to make sure that we can protect what matters most to families across Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: As I always say, I like to give credit where credit is due. I want to commend the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, who brought up some points that I’m going to be able to reflect on. It’s a lot better than hearing the attacks that this government has been making on the previous government for the extent of their comments, which we wholeheartedly agree on, that there

was a mess that was brought in by the Liberals. But it was nice. She brought up some points that I'm going to be reflecting on.

This weekend, just this past week, we had a delegation from Quebec at l'Association parlementaire Ontario-Québec et puis on a eu un échange d'idées. We had an exchange of ideas. One of two topics that we talked about is long-term-care homes and the other one was child care. Guess how much they're paying for daily child care costs in Quebec? Twenty-eight dollars a day.

The member from Timmins just finished sharing a quick story with me, and it's too bad he's not here. He was talking to a couple in his elevator in his building. They're paying \$2,200 a month for child care. They were talking to him and saying, "We can't afford a second child. We just can't do it." He says, "Well, there's available certain"—"But we just can't." The lists are too long, and they just can't get in. Half of their pay—one pay goes towards the mortgage and the other one goes to the rent. It's just so tough, and when these places are not going to be made available or even accessible, we've got to do a lot better than that.

I brought that up because what this government is doing is they're talking about choices, and those choices are just not going to be available because, as the member from Davenport just brought in, it's just not there.

Again, when you grab that sticker and whether it's on the pumps or whether it's—it doesn't matter where that sticker goes—and you scratch at it and you really look at what the contents of this budget is, the meat is not there, and that's what Ontarians are frustrated with this government about.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: It's a true pleasure to rise in this House to talk about this very important budget that the Minister of Finance and his parliamentary assistant have been working on for quite some time. I know they came to my riding of Barrie–Innisfil to do a consultation. They heard loud and clear from all the people all across the province, including the people of Barrie–Innisfil. What did they want? They wanted to protect what matters most to them, but they want to do it in a responsible way, a way that does not burden the next generation and saddles them with mountains of debt.

It's the most unselfish thing a government can possibly do. Sure, they can write cheques that the next generation has to pay tomorrow, they can saddle the next generation with debt and they can win all the votes they want. That's what the Liberal government did. The voters of Ontario sent a clear message. They want a responsible government, a government that protects what matters most but doesn't raise taxes, which is most important.

In this budget, we made sure that the Liberal tax increases of \$3 billion were not made. We ensured that \$100 million of fee increases were not taken. Instead we've given hard-working Ontario taxpayers \$26 billion back in their pockets. That's their hard-earned money, and we're giving them choice: choice in how they use their

health care system, choice in how they use their child care system, choice in how they use different methods of public transportation, because this government—we want to leave a legacy of hope for the future generations, to build on the progress that has been made so far to restore the sacred bond between the people and their government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for her final comments.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to my colleagues the members from Davenport, Algoma–Manitoulin, Kitchener South–Hespeler and Barrie–Innisfil for your comments.

I really liked what the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler said, as I often do. I particularly latched on to her making mention of our slogan that we say sometimes—promises made, promises kept—because I think this budget has a lot of our promises in it that we made during the election, and they're promises that we're keeping and we're keeping them in this first budget, which I'm very proud of.

The member from Davenport suggested that there was no choice, that people don't have choice for child care, that there is no choice at all. But people are making choices every day, and one of the choices they made was that they voted us into power in this province and this is the child care plan that we ran on. Some people liked it, obviously. Some people thought this was a good child care plan. The most important thing is, we said we were going to do this and we are doing it. We're doing it, which is amazing. I think that's very good.

But there are other things that we ran on which are also in this budget. We ran on a \$5-billion commitment to transit in Toronto. Now, we've more than doubled that, but that's an important promise made, promise kept.

What about the dental plan for low-income seniors? I think that's an important promise made and a promise kept.

This child care plan, as I've said. What about the long-term-care beds? They're in this budget. We've made that investment, another promise made and promise kept.

Finally, we're balancing the budget in the responsible way, the minister said, his Goldilocks approach: Promise made, promise kept.

Auto insurance reform: Promise made, promise kept.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I'll be rising today to join in the conversation, but also to do my inaugural speech.

Today, I'm filled with the thoughts of those who have come before me, who laid down the path that allows me to be before you. I think of my great grandfather, Sewa Singh Thirakwala. I never met him, but his legacy continues to inspire me today. He opposed colonialism and spoke truth to power and lost his life for it. His story teaches me that we must stand for justice, live by principles and fight for what's right, even at the cost of your own life.

1750

I recognize my mother and father, who had what seems to be endless amounts of courage, to be among the first to leave their ancestral land to sail toward unknown lands, filled with as much trepidation as they were with hope.

I recognize my brother, Jagmeet Singh, who had to grow up faster than anyone should have to, who learned to be a father to me when he should only had to have been my brother, who took me in when I was just a kid, cooked for me, taught me how to tie my turban and showed me the vast difference between those who covet leadership and those who are true leaders.

I am here because of them and many more. I come to you not as a singular person who is self-made. Admittedly, I come to you as the product of thousands of hours of support and dedication from friends, families, volunteers and, most importantly, my wife, Satvir Kaur, for her endless support. I would not be here today without her. I come to you as the result of generations before me, men and women who had survived countless horrors and oppressions, from genocides to crimes against humanity. I recognize their sacrifice and honour the work they did in fighting for a better world.

Further, I recognize that we're all here because of those who have come before us, that the collective support and love of others is why we're here today, even if we don't know it. Though we often get caught up in our differences, the reality is that our stories, our lives, our histories and who we are is all connected because, ultimately, we are all one. And I rise today to speak about oneness.

Growing up, I was taught that we're all one; that, despite the fact that we have the limits of our body, that is, in and of itself, an illusion. In reality, we're all connected. We're all but pieces of a greater whole, that the universe is contained within us, that we are large and we contain multitudes. That's a great concept to hear, but it's a much harder concept to apply.

I grew up in a town that had very few Sikhs and very few people in my school who looked as different as I did. We're talking about a young brown kid with long hair and a funny-sounding name that no one could really pronounce. My fellow classmates didn't understand my differences. They were ignorant of it. And what we are ignorant of, we often fear; and what we fear, we often hate. The result is that I was bullied a lot growing up.

As a young kid, my natural reaction to bullies was to dislike them. Generally, I would be warranted in harbouring this dislike. They were mean, they were rough and they were tough. So, imagine, to my utter dismay and confusion, that after coming home one day from school, having faced a particularly difficult day of being picked on, I rushed to my mother to vent my frustrations, to express the anger that I felt towards those who treated me as the other, to hear my mother say to me that my anger was misplaced, that I was mistaken to hate, not only because it's wrong but more so because I was one with those who bullied me.

To be clear, she condemned the bullying, but in that moment she was trying to teach me that hate consumes and hurts us; that to hate is to drink poison yourself and expect the subject of your hate to feel pain; that to hate another is to hate yourself. Accepting that we're all one is a hard concept in and of itself, but to accept that I was one with those who were hurting me was unthinkable. It's a lot

easier to believe that we are one with someone who looks like you and who thinks like you.

The real challenge is thinking that we are one with someone who thinks the complete opposite of you. It's hard to wrap our minds around this concept that even today as we speak in this House, where we are divided on so many different lines—ideological, regional, political, left and right—even when these differences result in real negativity—heckling, yelling, insults—that even here, despite everything that pushes us apart, we are one. Beyond just being one, we are more, because oneness is not passive. Oneness is not a superficial veneer, nor is it a platitude. Our oneness is predicated on a foundation of love. Our oneness is defined by love.

We know that love is active and love is alive. So to be one with the world is to be connected by a deep compassion and empathy that binds us together. That means that when we feel joy, we share it. That also means that when we feel pain, we share it as well. It gives a whole new light to the great words, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Because if we seek oneness, then no matter where this pain occurs, it impacts us, even if we think it doesn't.

The Grassy Narrows First Nations that does not have safe drinking water leaves us all parched. A young man struggling with his opioid addiction leaves us all tormented with pain. A family visiting a food bank for their daily meal leaves us all hungry. A people singled out—Sikh, Muslim or otherwise—and called terrorists leaves us all scared. This is the very reason why we, as Sikhs, end our daily meditations by asking the universe for oneness, for *sarbat da bhalla*—the betterment of all. It is for this reason that we must fight for a better world, because we all rise together and we all fall together.

It was this belief that led me to getting involved in politics. I believe that government can do so much more to alleviate the problems we face today. We can do so much good—good that is so necessary, especially in a world where times are getting increasingly tough. The gap between rich and poor is increasing, inequity in our society is becoming more rampant, and each progressive year sees life become more unaffordable than the year that passed. These are just some of the challenges that government must tackle. We must help those who are in difficult positions, not hurt them.

I still remember, years ago, as part of a mentorship program that I was involved with, meeting with a group of young people—bright-eyed, happy and hopeful. I sat with them and I asked them a simple question: What are some of the problems that you face today? I still remember hearing them list all the difficult issues that they were facing. Many of them were standard issues that you would expect from young folks: too much homework, parents that were too strict. But after we broke the ice, when we started to have some real conversations, this one young man turned to me. He must have been just 13 or 14. He said that the biggest problem that he was dealing with was that he didn't see his parents enough, that despite living in the same home with them, he missed them dearly. Both of his parents were new Canadians. They wanted to provide

the best life to their child. But his life, and life in general—we know that life is getting too expensive, so to make ends meet, both parents had to work really long hours. His father and mother both started work before he went to school, and they both arrived home just an hour or two before he went to sleep. They sometimes worked six days a week. All this young man wanted was to see his parents, to talk to them, to laugh with them, to be a family with them, but his parents, literally, could not afford to do that. I think about this conversation often. It reminds me of how we have failed him and so many others like him, because this young man's pain is my pain, and his loneliness is my loneliness as well.

More than anything, if we hope to build a better world, if we hope to commit to creating a government that works to empower us all and put in place the policies that keep life affordable, where parents can put food on the table and spend time with their kids, government must play a more active role. We can be a force of good in this world—a world where people have better health care, better education and affordable lives. We can create a community that gives people the resources they need so they can be their best selves, a society that lifts us up. This is the future that I want to see. This is the future that I'm committed to working for, because government must and should work for sarbat da bhalla: the betterment of all.

In this world, if we want to improve it, then we, ourselves, must become better. We must look deep inside of ourselves to find that energy, that positivity, to push forward so that we can really persevere in what sometimes seems a hopeless task. It's easy to feel defeated sometimes. It's easy to let this pressure get you down. Sometimes I feel like we live in a world where it's easy to be pessimistic. But I'm here to say that when we feel this pessimism, let us steel ourselves in positivity. Let us steel ourselves in the belief, in the idea, that we, who are fighting in the arena, are the ones who are truly putting it on the line, and that when we feel this sorrow and this pain, we can turn to something deeper within ourselves. We can turn to this idea that we must have a rising spirit in the face of adversity, we must have joy in our hearts, and we must be always strong and hold chardi kala as we face any sort of negativity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I will say to the member that you do have time left on the clock, and there will be an opportunity for you to finish your maiden speech at the appropriate time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): But in the meantime, pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Sudbury has given notice of dissatisfaction with an

answer to a question given by the Minister of Labour. The member from Sudbury has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister—but in this case, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour—may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: Last Monday, the member from Oshawa asked the Minister of Labour twice about comments the Premier had made regarding union leaders. As a reminder, the Premier called elected union representatives “thugs.” Both times, the minister failed to answer those questions, and so last Thursday I gave two more opportunities for the minister to clarify if she agreed with the Premier's name-calling, or if she would take the opportunity to distance herself from the Premier's comments.

In the response to my first question, the minister failed to answer the question. Instead, she chose to describe the role of the Ministry of Labour—which is important; I'll get back to it. During the supplemental question, the fourth opportunity, the minister referred it to the President of the Treasury Board. Instead of responding to the question about calling elected union leaders “thugs,” the President of the Treasury Board talked about wearing pink on Wednesday for anti-bullying and that he was looking forward to seeing the budget.

Speaker, aside from the clear fact that the same question was asked four times without an adequate response, I want to explain why I filed a late show, or a notice of dissatisfaction. Let me explain why I think it's important that the Premier apologize for the use of insulting language towards elected worker representatives, and if he can't do that, why it's even more important that the minister distance herself from that type of language.

As we all know as parliamentarians, there's no greater privilege than to have the opportunity to be the voice of families in our communities. I've had the privilege of representing workers and working people for the past 17 years in Sudbury. I spent the last eight years of my career at the smelters as an elected union official with the Steelworkers, on the Ontario division. I was co-chair of operations for the safety, health and environment executive committee, and I was president of our labour council for the past five years. Speaker, I am not a thug, and neither are my colleagues.

As an elected union leader, I know that union leaders are nominated and elected from the rank and file of the workers they represent. As such, they are the collective voice of those workers. Any insult towards them is an insult towards the good men and women who chose those workers to be their collective voice. It's important to recognize that when the government calls union leaders “thugs,” it's reminiscent of a time when it was illegal to belong to a union and it's dismissive of the good work that unions have done on behalf of the working people of Ontario.

As a parliamentarian, I feel like the use of “thug” is undignified and embarrassing to the high standards we should hold for each other. Frankly, unions are good, and they have fundamental rights. We would not accept that

term, “thug,” to describe any other leader of a workplace or any other organization, and it has no place in this House to describe the hard-working labour leaders of our province. It is insulting, it is offensive and it embarrasses me that the Premier of this province doesn’t recognize this. I hope that he reconsiders, Speaker.

Getting back to the Minister of Labour: From Hansard, here’s what the minister said when she described the role of the Ministry of Labour. “It’s required by law to act as a neutral overseer for the labour relations process in the province of Ontario.

“We, as the Ministry of Labour, provide neutral conciliation and mediation services, with the aim of helping bargaining parties to conclude collective agreements without work disruptions.”

It’s important that I highlight the word “neutral,” because the minister used it twice. The word “neutral” is why I believe it’s important for the Minister of Labour to distance herself from the comments that the Premier had, of calling union leaders “thugs.” It’s the role of the Minister of Labour and her ministry to facilitate discussion, to level the playing field and to interpret the laws within their ministry. As the Minister of Labour stated herself, the ministry is “required by law to act as a neutral overseer for the labour relations process in the province of Ontario.” It’s essential to the process that the minister and the Ministry of Labour remain neutral at all times.

Honestly, Speaker, I do not believe that the minister can give the appearance of neutrality when she refuses to distance herself from offensive comments from the Premier that described elected union officials as thugs. And so, today I’m offering a fifth opportunity for the minister. Does the minister, who is responsible for labour relations—through you, Speaker—in the province of Ontario, the minister of the ministry which is required by law to act as a neutral overseer for the labour relations process in the province of Ontario, agree with the Premier that labour leaders are thugs, or will she take this fifth opportunity to distance herself from the Premier’s comments?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour may reply for up to five minutes.

I now refer to the parliamentary assistant, the member from Burlington.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite: I would like to say that I’m grateful for the question and the opportunity to address the Minister of Labour’s approach to labour relations in Ontario.

Since we were elected in June, the Ministry of Labour has been proactively engaging with stakeholders, union representatives, business owners, ministry staff, workplace health and safety advocates and many others. In fact, I personally have been on a tour of the province, attending several round tables totalling over 100 people, including meeting a group of inspectors at the Ministry of Labour office in North York. At these round tables, I have invited feedback, input and suggestions on ways we can improve and modernize the minister’s inspections and investiga-

tions process. We are proud to have conducted this outreach and built these connections, and we will continue to do so.

We are for the people, and that means all people, including union members. We will continue to consult with a wide range of stakeholders on their needs, wants and ideas, and we will use the information we gather to help shape and inform the changes our ministry is making—that means union members and representatives, management at union and non-union shops, ministry employees, business owners and everyone involved in workplaces everywhere.

Let me share an example of how we have already done this. Our government introduced Bill 66 in December. We spent three months listening and consulting with stakeholders on all sides. Our consultations were serious and meaningful. Representatives of the government at various levels met with stakeholders and interested parties and worked to understand and address their concerns. As a direct result of these consultations, we drafted amendments to Bill 66 that were approved in committee. The bottom line is that our government has proved it will listen to all sides of an issue.

Ministry of Labour mediators are consummate professionals, bringing fair, neutral and unbiased skills whenever asked to assist at collective bargaining tables across the province. Our staff is so accomplished that the province of Ontario can point to an amazing record of collective bargaining: 98% of the discussions are completed with the two parties at the table. That means that 98 times out of 100, we avoid strikes, we avoid lockouts, we keep people going to work, and we keep businesses functioning. We are proud of that record, and we trust that our record—and the professionalism of Ministry of Labour staff—speaks for itself.

Under Premier Ford, Ontario is proudly open for business and open for jobs—all jobs, including good union jobs. Under our government, Ontario is truly a place to grow.

EDUCATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Brampton Centre has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Premier. The member for Brampton Centre has up to five minutes to debate, and the Premier or the parliamentary assistant to the Premier may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Brampton Centre, please.

Ms. Sara Singh: We’re here, of course, for another one of these late shows because this government routinely refuses to answer questions of importance to Ontarians.

This morning, I asked the Premier about the loss of 369 teachers in the region of Peel, and the Premier thought it was an appropriate response to brag about the election of a friend in another province and completely dodge this important question for families, parents and voters in this province.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Shame.

1810

Ms. Sara Singh: It's shameful, Speaker.

So I'll ask it again. Parents, students, teachers and school boards have been raising concerns about the Premier's plan to cut educators in our classrooms. Yesterday, the Premier made it clear they should also plan for chaos in September. The Premier accused teachers of being underworked, overpaid, and then described the relationship between teachers and government as being in a state of war. Does the Premier think that this sets a good tone for collective bargaining?

Speaker, part two of my question went as follows: There hasn't even been a single day of negotiations and the Premier is already talking about a strike. He's declaring war on the people who teach our students, and our students will ultimately pay the price. We're already seeing the results. In my community, 369 teachers with the Peel District School Board learned yesterday they will no longer have permanent positions heading into the new year—teachers like the visual arts teacher from Brampton who wrote an email to say that she is one of the 369 teachers in Peel who have been told they no longer have a job. This teacher goes on to write:

"I am very upset. Ford said there will be no layoffs. He said 'hundreds' of educators are happy with his choices but we are not. I have worked with love to build up the arts program at my former high school and now that is taken away. These layoffs and cuts affect my amazing students, the arts courses, and my colleagues and admin staff who are like my family."

Of course, we've already heard from the Minister of Education that she expects members of the community interested in arts and music to fill the gaps this government creates through its devastating cuts by offering to form clubs where a year-round education used to be.

In my question that the Premier ignored, I reference the chaos this government's cuts to education are creating—and, of course, that's exactly what it is, Speaker: It's chaos. Now we can only conclude that when the Premier sows chaos with his rhetoric and non-answers, that chaos is to justify his deep cuts. Of course, it was a previous Conservative Minister of Education that spoke of his own desire to "create a crisis in education"—chaos, in other words, Speaker. He wanted to pick a fight with teachers then, as the Premier does now when he warns teachers not to strike and that his government and teachers are in a state of war.

Speaker, 369 teachers—the Premier and his education minister keep saying that these redundancy slips are routine and that there will be no involuntary job losses. But I have heard from educators that the scale of these layoffs is anything but routine. The last time they saw these redundancy notices go out in Peel was in 2014, under the Liberals, and I was told there was only 40 of them. Now, under the Doug Ford Conservatives, teachers are being laid off in the hundreds. How could this not impact the education of our future generations?

Speaker, 111 teachers in Lambton-Kent; 69 expected at the Avon Maitland District School Board; as many as 300

in Ottawa-Carleton; dozens in Hamilton; and of course, as I've mentioned, 369 out of work in Peel region due to this government's cuts to education.

Grade 8 students in Brampton Centre have actually written to me. I will read some of their letters.

"I am a student currently attending Earnscliffe Sr. Public School and I am not happy with the changes that are being made. I am in grade 8 and was looking forward to attending the arts program at Mayfield Secondary School. I wanted my high school experience to be one to remember, but I want positive memories, not memories of a crowded, distracted, anxious four years. Class sizes being increased to 40+ is insane! Teachers are being fired and forced out of jobs that they have worked for for years...."

So I'll ask again, and hopefully, this time, the parliamentary assistant can answer the question: What does this government have to say to the dedicated professionals, the parents and the students of Peel that could justify—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Now the parliamentary assistant to the Premier may respond for up to five minutes.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that. I extend my gratitude to the member from Brampton Centre. It's always a pleasure to dialogue on education initiatives close to the heart of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I think when we look at the metric of success for any government, irrespective of political party, it is to identify that as young people go through the apprenticeship of learning, at the end of that journey they actually get access to a good-paying job. That is the very central focus of this government. It is at the heart of what we are doing across the line, across the ministry. I understand the basis of the question, and I will answer substantively to the question, but I do want to speak about just culturally what we are trying to do, the impetus behind our reforms, for Education that Works for You, the new vision for education for the province of Ontario.

We came into power after 15 years with a great sense of energy to change and improve the education system in the province. I think the one thing that unites both parties, ironically, in the chamber is the fact that the system that was inherited was not meeting the needs of young people in the province of Ontario. We accept the premise that we have to do more, and by doing so, by accepting that premise, we put action—we live out those words in demonstrable actions.

In the budget we unveiled less than a week ago, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Education, the caucus and the cabinet unveiled a plan that adds an additional net investment of \$700 million into public and Catholic schools, francophone schools in the province of Ontario—in every region of this province, and that includes in Peel region, a high-growth area in the GTA.

At a time when we see governments domestically and internationally doing the opposite, we're adding \$200 million in new investments to strengthen our world-class teachers to have greater capacities when it comes to math and financial literacy and how they educate our young

people; a \$200-million investment to get our teachers to continue to improve their ability to teach math in the classroom.

We are adding a net allocation of 13 billion new dollars over 10 years to rebuild, to refurbish and to build new capital projects, schools in the province of Ontario. Now, that's quite the contrast from the former government—as you will know, Mr. Speaker, hailing proudly from a rural community—that closed 600 schools in the province of Ontario. That is the contrast before this House: a party that is investing in education, but a party that also understands, beyond the monetary investment in our schoolings, which we are doing, the net of \$700 million that—at the end of the day, spending more under the former government did not lead to better math outcomes for these students. For us, the measurement of success needs to be if they're able to go from the journey of learning into the workforce, a seamless transition, and that's what the Premier is focused on.

With great respect to all members of this House, we have a youth unemployment rate that is twice the national average and twice the provincial average. I find it bizarre that we cannot find a unity of purpose focused on the employment of our young people, the application of that knowledge in the workforce. We are resolved to get these young people working. This is a budget that is very much predicated on getting young people working.

The fact is, let the numbers speak for themselves. We now have a net 100,000 overwhelmingly full-time, overwhelmingly private-sector jobs being created in the province of Ontario. Now, we did not create these jobs. Job creators, risk-takers, entrepreneurs, moms and dads, parents across the province took risks and created jobs, but we cleared the conditions for private-sector job growth, and that's vital. So for young people in the province of

Ontario who have anxiety about owning a home and, God forbid, owning a home in the community they were once raised in, that is an aspiration that could be attained through a better job that is linked to their knowledge. We have a skills gap where we have jobs without people and, conversely, people without jobs. Our plan is about bridging that gap, getting young people the best education in the world, investing in our teachers whom we support every step of the way.

Virtually all of my aunts are public and Catholic teachers in the province. I'm proud of them. We're proud of their craft, but the fact of the matter is, when we've added \$700 million—I know that the number seven is a number of mutual interest because there was a \$7-billion gap in their budget some months ago when they presented it, but the fact is, there was a \$700-million investment.

Speaker, I will conclude with the notation that when it comes to the focus, it's on getting more science, technology, engineering and math in the classroom. When it comes to ensuring that teachers remain doing what they do best, we have provided over \$1 billion—\$1.5 billion to be precise—of attrition protection to ensure school boards are prepared to best manage yearly challenges that manifest every year, from the Bob Rae government to the Harris government to the McGuinty-Wynne government to this government.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to invest in public education—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to have been made.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1820.

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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, Michael Gravelle
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stephen Crawford
Doug Downey, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Kaleed Rasheed
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Dave Smith
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: 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**

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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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Lorne Coe, Michael Coteau
Mike Harris, Faisal Hassan
Jane McKenna, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Toby Barrett, Catherine Fife
Goldie Ghamari, Jim McDonell
Norman Miller, Suze Morrison
Michael Parsa, Peggy Sattler
Kinga Surma
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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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

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Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
John Fraser, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie