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Jeudi
2 mai 2019

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 2 May 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 2 mai 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS MOST
ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2019

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 29, 2019, on the motion for 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House passed May 1, 2019, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Fedeli has moved second reading of Bill 100, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members—no, it's automatically deferred until after question period. I apologize. Thank you.

Second reading vote deferred.

FIXING THE HYDRO MESS ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 POUR RÉPARER LE GÂCHIS
DANS LE SECTEUR DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 1, 2019, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand that when we last debated this bill, the member for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte had given his presentation. We now go to questions and comments related to the presentation that was given by the member for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte.

Questions and comments? The member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's give a little history first on why we have a need for Bill 87. Back on August 14, 2003, we had a blackout that took in most of Ontario and the northeastern and midwestern United States, and that was leading up into an election. The election was in October of that year. There was also a promise to close the coal-fired power plants, election promises by both the Liberals and the Conservatives at the time.

Interestingly enough, it was the Liberals who ended up adopting the Conservatives' plan and closed them at the timeline that the Conservatives had said. Then the Green Energy Act came in in 2009, where we were paying 81 cents per kilowatt hour for electrical generation done green. The global adjustment fee in 2016—interestingly enough, the global adjustment fee, GAF: a gaffe. Growing up, I always thought that a gaffe was a mistake, so it's very well, aptly named. In 2016, it was 7.9 cents per kilowatt hour that the average residential homeowner was paying to fix that mistake that the Liberals had made.

Then the Liberals went ahead and decided they were going to try and bury those costs. They borrowed the money through Ontario Power Generation. It's going to cost Ontarians billions of dollars to try and fix that mistake. We're left with all of that history now, and we need to fix it.

We've started that process with Bill 87, fixing the electrical mess, because it is a mess that the Liberals left to us. It's going to take us some time but we're starting on that path right now. We're making the right moves. We're going to be seeing that kind of relief for the people of Ontario, and I'm proud to support the bill.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I represent the good people in Nickel Belt, 33 little communities. Most of us do not have access to natural gas. For many communities in my riding, they don't have access to propane or oil delivery. We live in northern Ontario; the winters are long, are dark. We need heat and we need light, and that means electricity. Many of my constituents were hoping to decrease their electrical costs by making changes, such as finally being able to purchase new windows for their homes, or putting in a heat pump, or being able to reinsulate some of their homes, so that they would save on their electrical bills, because the cheapest electricity is the one that you don't use. Unfortunately, the government pulled the plug on this after many of my constituents had already signed deals.

I have the story of Catherine and Richard Gagne, who are from my riding. They wrote to Minister Phillips and the Minister of Energy, and explained to them the hardship

when you live in a small community of northern Ontario. They were not on the priority list to get as many jobs done as possible, so they never got their windows installed on time. They are out \$5,000 that they do not have. The same thing happened with Julie and Ronald Denomme from Hanmer in my riding. They've also written to explain the hardship—and Sheila Renton and Yvonne St. Denis. The list goes on and on.

People need help to lower their hydro bills. This bill will do nothing for my constituents.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: The member opposite is partially right, because this bill isn't designed to lower hydro rates. What this bill is designed to do is to disentangle the mess that was brought about by the Liberal-NDP coalition of the last 15 years that brought in a scheme—the Auditor General called it a scheme—to hide the cost of the green energy plan. That's basically what this is about, Madam Speaker. We're disentangling it. We're doing what the FAO asked us to do. We're doing what the Auditor General asked us to do. We're doing what the opposition, at one point, when they were the third party, asked the previous members of their coalition government to do. That was to make it accountable, so that people could see it—transparent. That's what this bill does.

That's why I guess I'm now starting to learn more and more why the NDP are voting against it: because they don't understand what the bill is really about. They're advocating for a 25% increase in hydro rates. That's what they're advocating for. They want homeowners and small, medium and large job creators to pay more immediately. They're against the transparency, because they voted against every single clause in this bill that would have made the Fair Hydro Plan transparent. They voted against that.

I can appreciate that some of the parts of the bill they might not have agreed with, and they could vote against those aspects of the bill in committee. But they voted against transparency. They voted against a reduction of \$4 billion for taxpayers. That's also what this bill does: It reduces the cost of the Fair Hydro Plan by \$4 billion. They voted against that. Instead, they advocate to continue to hide the true cost. And now we're hearing that they're advocating for a 25% increase across the board in hydro rates. I don't think that's affordable.

It is part of our next steps. We'll bring rates down, and I hope the members will—

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to start off by saying that this topic, fixing the hydro mess, is something each one of us can agree on. It is a mess. And we can relate because all of us pay hydro bills. We're all affected when prices rise. It's something that needs to be reformed.

When Ontarians are forced to use Hydro One or its distributors, we need to ensure we're doing our best to control the prices we pay. We are trying to move into a greener society, pushing for electric vehicles and greener energy

overall. Well, that means that energy needs to be affordable for everyone. We need to implement rebates to entice Ontarians to want to switch over.

Speaker, this government is simply adopting 14 years of the Liberals' ideologies and their previous hydro plan—absolutely zero consultation with Ontarians. Just like the Liberals, in my opinion, this government is so far gone and so out in left field when it comes to connecting with the people, knowing what they want and analyzing the issues they face day to day when it comes to hydro. How does their new plan even differ from the past? How is it going to work to make changes, make even a slight difference in people's lives?

0910

I don't believe that this government has any intention to please people. It's about pleasing their own agenda and getting this bill approved as soon as possible to avoid any public backlash.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte.

Mr. Doug Downey: I want to thank the members from Peterborough–Kawartha, Markham–Stouffville, Nickel Belt and St. Catharines.

I was trying to figure out how I can explain what we're dealing with to some of my friends who don't follow politics as closely, and it dawned on me this morning as I was leaving my place. I often listen to a podcast, and I grabbed my headphones. My headphones were all wrapped up in themselves. It took me a couple of minutes; you dangle it, and you try to untangle it, and you feed the earpiece through that. It happens every morning. As I was doing that, I was thinking about this file, and I was thinking about the mess that we were left and the options that we have. You either take a few moments and you untangle those headphones so that they work the way that you expect them to, or you get an extension and you just plug it into the end and pretend that that knot is not there. That's what the Liberals did—they put an extension on, and they kicked the problem down the road for somebody else to fix when they came along. They didn't actually get to the nub of the problem.

What we're doing in this bill is, we're stopping and we're untangling so that we can make the system work the way it was supposed to work. It will work better. It will last longer. The Ontario Energy Board reforms alone will cause a benefit to Ontarians. Sometimes you get a benefit from something that didn't happen, and so it's a little bit hard to measure that. But we've seen what's happening in the OEB on a number of files and we need to stop that. We need to stop some of the—to use somebody else's term—nonsense. We need to get back to basics. Businesses and consumers need things that are predictable and straightforward.

I look forward to supporting this bill when it comes to the vote.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand in the House today to talk about this bill. As

we're probably well aware, little has changed with this bill since second reading, frankly. The bill, the public consultation and the clause-by-clause were jammed through the Legislature with the usual haste by the government. The government accepted no amendments to the bill, listened to none of the suggestions made by people, who ranged from previous legal counsel to the Ontario Energy Board, the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, Toronto Region Board of Trade, regulatory specialists—all of those people who came in and said that there are substantial problems with the bill and things have to be addressed. They were ignored.

This bill continues the disastrous course set by the Liberals of borrowing money to keep hydro rates low, with no end in sight, no plan to phase out this borrowing, no plan to take this burden off the backs of those in Ontario who pay the bills, and instead continue the cover-up that the Liberals engaged in. To simply say that you're going to load \$2.5 billion a year onto the backs of people in Ontario who pay taxes and not actually get to the root problem for the hydro system is profoundly irresponsible. It sets us up for problems for decades to come.

The changes to the Ontario Energy Board don't envision any requirement that the adjudicators have the training or background in dealing with energy that are necessary to actually have intelligent, informed, critical assessment of rate applications by generators or distributors who come before that board. It does, however, mean that former Conservative candidates and operatives who suddenly find themselves unemployed, wandering in the wilderness, have the opportunity to be looked after. In the end, what this will mean is a gravy train packed with Conservative Muppets who have at last found a warm place in from the rain. That's what we're talking about here.

All the damage the Liberals did—and they did a lot of damage; let's be very clear on that—a hydro mess that was driven by privatization, is untouched by this bill. Not a word about either phasing out privatization in the future, renegotiating contracts, looking after the people of Ontario, looking at the need for fundamental reforms—not touched in this bill.

The Liberals approached the whole hydro system in a self-serving way. They were looking after themselves and their lobbyists; no doubt about it. They drove a self-serving political agenda with the hydro sector. They had a reluctance to use the lowest-cost source of electricity—that's conservation—something that the Conservatives have decided they will continue. They're going to continue everything the Liberals did: privatization; large-scale borrowing; setting aside conservation, which would be the cheapest way to provide Ontario with electrical support. They have replicated, with little change, what the Liberals put in place. In short, the Conservative government has done some tidying, they've rearranged some of the deck chairs on the hydro Titanic, they've made sure that the tumblers of gin were brought to the lip fully charged, and they've decided to plow full speed ahead into the iceberg. That is an extraordinary thing for a new government to do.

Many others on that side of the chamber might take exception to my words. In fact, I had a chance to look at

Mr. Calandra's comments from yesterday—always fascinating. But I will just—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt. Stop the clock. We refer to members by their ridings or their titles, please. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ah, my apologies. The parliamentary assistant—

Interjection: Markham–Stouffville.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: —from Markham–Stouffville.

I'm just going to quote the good old Toronto board of trade, not noted as a bastion of left-wing thought, not even as a bastion of centrist thought—much more on the conservative side. I'll just quote them:

“Unwinding the Fair Hydro Plan in the 2017 energy playbook, the board acknowledged that the Fair Hydro Plan lowered prices for current customers,” which is true, “but at a significant cost to future ratepayers,” which is also true, and which the Conservatives knew when the Liberals brought this bill forward in 2017. “Bill 87 continues with this rate reduction structure but funds the cost from the tax base instead of future ratepayers....” So the burden is just moved around; those people who were paying higher rates before will pay higher taxes in the future or get less services, one or the other. “[I]t may undermine the board's other main priorities of sustainability and reliability. The government has stated its intention to reduce costs in the electricity sector.... At this time, however, system costs are forecast to increase by more than the rate of inflation, particularly with the need to renew important energy infrastructure. If bill increases are held to inflation for the foreseeable future, this could increase the amount the government spends on electricity cost relief programs (already more than \$4 billion per year), prevent needed infrastructure from being built”—blackouts, anyone?—“or lead to sharp price increases in the future. To avoid future price shocks, the board urges the government to update the long-term energy plan price forecasts for at least the next 10 years, including expected government spending on rate subsidy programs.” The Toronto board of trade recognizes that it is not sustainable to be borrowing billions of dollars a year to reduce hydro rates.

What needs to be done is a reform of the structure of the hydro system, an end to privatization, a ramping up of conservation and a search for lowest-cost, environmentally sustainable energy production. That's what is needed. That is not what is happening with this government and not what is happening with this bill.

We tried to amend this bill. We brought forward more than 20 amendments. Now, I know that politicians have to atone for their sins, but this morning I'm not going to make that atonement fully play out, because I'm not going to go through every amendment we brought forward. But I want to touch on some of them because, in terms of transparency, in terms of the ability of Ontarians to understand what's going on in the system and to hold politicians and decision-makers to account, this bill is a step backwards.

0920

One of our first amendments was to have the Independent Electricity System Operator, the body that actually

oversees the operation of the system, publish an updated cost outlook showing expected annual payments to be funded with public money with respect to the amounts that this government will be subsidizing rates. Speaker, that was rejected by the government in committee.

Now, I have to tell you, Speaker, we couldn't even get the cost of the Premier's trip to New York City released publicly. What's that going to be? Half a million dollars? A million dollars? Since I don't know, I'm guessing. I would say, "Release the numbers then I'll stop speculating." I'll leave it at a million bucks for now. So we can't even get that cost. We can't even get the basis of calculation for the cuts to public health authorities throughout this province; it's not happening. A lot of spin, but none of the calculations.

So when you say the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, has to publish, on an annual basis, the amount of money that's going out to subsidize the system, that seems entirely reasonable to me. Now, this government is notoriously tight with figures and replicated that in their decision at committee. They decided that the people of Ontario don't deserve to get that information.

Another amendment we made was that, within a year of the day subsection 4 of the schedule comes into effect, the ministry should publish on a government website its plan for the repeal of this system, and plans should include expected impacts of the repeal on the monthly electricity bill of a typical household ratepayer. They have said before that they can reduce hydro bills by 12%. Well, bring it in. Bring it forward. Reduce the need to borrow \$2.5 billion a year. When I talk to people in my riding, I say, "You know, the government is borrowing \$2.5 billion a year to reduce your hydro rates." They're a bit taken aback. They sort of thought that structurally things had been dealt with.

Now, they don't follow it very closely. But the reality is that, right now, this government is making no commitments to actually phasing out this program. So what are the government plans? What are they going to do? Do they have any plans at all? That requirement to show a phase-out, to show the cost, was rejected.

One of the things that came up pretty regularly with those who deputed before us in the committee—the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario and vulnerable power users—they emphasized the need to protect intervenors coming before the board. The reality is that the OEB is not as tough as I think it needs to be when it comes to rate hearings, and intervenors—the citizens, the businesses of this province—have been pretty tough at OEB. They get a chance to intervene, produce evidence, question the witnesses and probe evidence to see whether or not increases are justified. They're worried that the tenor of this bill is going to undermine intervenors.

That, Speaker, is a huge problem and we decided to try to ensure there was protection for intervention. We moved "To enable the participation of intervenors representing the interests of consumers in proceedings before the board" to make that an important tenet of the whole process.

The reality is that the government rejected that. It says it wants to protect ratepayers against higher prices, but it

wouldn't protect one of the mechanisms that has been critical to fighting high rate increases; wouldn't support it. If, in future, intervenors are cut out and bills rise sharply as a result, this government will have to explain why it took away, or did not protect, one of the key mechanisms for protecting the public from high rates. Maybe this government thinks it's going to be in power forever.

Speaker, I've been around here for a while. I used to say to the Liberals, "You know, the stuff you're doing today you're going to hate when you're in opposition, because you won't be running things. You won't be able to see the things that you want to see done." They didn't believe that they would ever lose power.

I'll say to the Conservatives today: Assuming that you will be in government forever is not a thoughtful or reasonable assumption. It has no relationship to reality. You're doing things that will undermine the ability of you and future opposition, or the citizens of this province, from protecting themselves.

We also asked that "The appointment of the chief executive officer shall be subject to review by the Standing Committee on Government Agencies."

The Legislature has an important role in overseeing the behaviour and actions of government. It's critical. The standing committee on agencies has this opportunity to interview those who will be appointed. That is a vital transparency mechanism. This government had no interest in making sure that was there. They voted that down. So in the future, the ability for this Legislature to have any impact on that appointee, to have any impact on the government's thinking that someone being appointed might be hugely problematic when they're questioned, will be gone, not there.

We also moved that "The selection process for the appointment of commissioners shall be a competitive, merit-based process and the criteria to be applied in assessing candidates shall include the following:". Just to be clear to people, the commissioners are those who actually sit in on the rate hearings and adjudicate, who assess the evidence, who check the law, who make a balanced decision on how, in fact, rates should be set.

Fairly standard in this government of Ontario over the years have been a number of criteria. They're set out in the Adjudicative Tribunals Accountability, Governance and Appointments Act. So it's not something that we made up. It's something that is in existing legislation, put there to protect people from non-competent adjudicators. They have to have experience, knowledge or training in the subject matter and issues over which the board has jurisdiction. They have to have an aptitude for conducting impartial hearings and determinations. They have to have an aptitude for applying adjudicative practices and procedures that may be set out in the board's rules.

In other words, this is an anti-Muppet clause. We want people who sit on that commission who actually know what they're talking about, who actually are familiar with the issues and have the skill set necessary to do the work.

As you might guess, Speaker, that amendment was voted down. Who can guess why? Who knows what goes

through the minds of Conservatives in these committees? In any event, they were a no on that.

We also suggested that those commissioners go through the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, just as the CEO would go through—again, because we're talking about people who need a fairly high level of technical knowledge. It's an open-government move, and it was rejected.

There was another motion that we put forward. These were all good motions. I'm sure that this evening, you'll just go through them in your mind, thinking, "Man, that was good writing. I love wonderful legislation."

We moved that any person who meets all the applicable eligibility criteria—in other words, someone who actually has the skills set out in that previous motion—can transfer from the existing commission to the new commission. In fact, there are people on the existing commission who have none of those skills. A former staffer in the Premier's office, for instance, who was appointed to a \$197,000-a-year job, without any background in adjudication or energy, is on the commission now and, without a review, without these skills, will simply be moved over. We think it's reasonable that you actually have to have skill to sit on an adjudicative panel. I think most people would understand that that's a reasonable approach. I think it's a reasonable approach.

Next amendment—again, Speaker, I'm sparing you. There were so many amendments, and they were so good, but I just picked the best. One of the concerns from the board of trade, from the Association of Major Power Consumers and from George Vegh, previously legal counsel to the OEB—he said in his comments that the powers given to the CEO made him effectively an energy czar for Ontario. I don't know about you; I'm not a big fan of czars. I think that it's a good idea to have a system within which a CEO—

Interjection.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member from Markham–Stouffville, come to order again.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's pretty extraordinary—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. Sorry; just a moment, please.

We've been doing well. We're all appreciating the hour lead that the member has the opportunity to give. I would ask that we keep the tenor appropriate and parliamentary. We can all look forward to question period later. Thank you.

Please resume.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: One of the things that all those bodies had to say and all of those people had to say was that, before the approval of a rule that changed the energy system, the board should consider the risks, costs and benefits of the rule with respect to the interests of consumers, satisfy itself that the benefits will outweigh the costs, and analyze any alternatives to the proposed rules. That was at the recommendation of the business-oriented presenters at committee.

I want to point out, Speaker, that if these rules had been in place, it would have been very difficult for the Liberals to justify smart meters, because they didn't do a business plan; they just jammed it through, at a cost to Ontarians of about \$2 billion. That was a lot of money. If there had been a cost-benefit analysis done, a business case done, then we would have had a very different approach on this matter. But we didn't have that.

The Conservatives are setting things up so that in future, once again, the smart meter approach can be part of government policy.

The same thing with the sale of Hydro One: A cost-benefit analysis was not done, the impact on Ontarians is substantial, and the reality is, this government doesn't want to have a cost-benefit analysis—something that, typically, businesses like. One of the members of the committee said, "We just assume that it will be there." I have to tell you, I've watched governments in this place. Assuming that a cost-benefit analysis will be done and not simply a self-serving political agenda imposed is a real stretch. I think it's reasonable to say, "You have to do an analysis. You have to show the public the basis for your decision"—extraordinary. Anyway, you won't be shocked to hear that that one lost, even though it was a great motion.

It was also recommended by the NDP that the cost-benefit analysis be posted on the website of the OEB so the people of Ontario could look at the basis for the decisions. I don't think that's terribly wild; I think that's pretty conventional. I would say that the Conservatives, prior to the last election, would have voted in favour of that. Why? Because they understood that transparency was an aid to the people of Ontario and an aid to openness and democracy. But this is a different breed, and they shut it down—no doubt about it. That's pretty extraordinary to me.

Speaker, we also brought forward a motion to put in place—what can I say—regulation of sub-metering companies. These are companies that install and run meters on individual units—something that the Liberals failed to do. They brought in legislation and never proclaimed it. There's an opportunity with this bill to actually get at this problem.

You're well aware, Speaker, and others are well aware, of a situation that came up recently in Oshawa where a sub-metering company was charging people in an apartment building sub-metering charges—the cost for the meter, delivery charges and administration charges—when the meters hadn't been installed at all. They didn't exist. People were somewhat upset, as you can imagine. If, in fact, sub-metering companies had to go to the Ontario Energy Board and provide evidence of the existence of sub-meters and evidence of the cost of providing them, those people would have been protected.

At Brock University, students in student housing, living four to a shared apartment, were being charged four times the cost of the power in that unit. Instead of dividing the cost of power by four, it was multiplied by four. You know, I think regulation would be a good thing, but this government was not interested in regulating that, not interested in protecting tenants. not interested in protecting

power consumers. So when it says that it's here to protect people from high hydro rates, what about unit sub-meters? What about tenants—a big part of Ontario's population? No—thrown to the side; irrelevant; a waste of their time.

We also moved that Ontario Power Generation—which is running the now-truncated Fair Hydro Plan, or Fair Hydro Trust—should actually have to publish statements about what's going on there. I heard from one member on the government side, “Well, of course it's going to be in the notes appended to the financial statements.” I've read a lot of financial statements around here over the years, particularly related to energy. Openness is not a given with this; it is not a given at all. Requiring openness is to the advantage of the people of Ontario, and the people in Ontario who are paying hydro bills. That was rejected by this government.

Two other amendments: that “Every year the minister shall publish on a government website,

“(a) the planned amounts of financial assistance ... with respect to relevant classes of consumers”—because there's not just homeowners; there are apartment buildings, there are industrial, there are commercial; there are very-large-volume consumers and very-small-volume consumers, so how much money is going to each class;

“(b) information about how long relevant classes of consumers will continue to receive the financial assistance ... and

“(c) an updated long-term cost outlook showing the expected impact of the financial assistance ... on the financial position of the province of Ontario.”

These are reasonable amendments. We're not talking about \$100, or the Premier's trip to New York City. We're talking about multi-billion dollars per year of consequence, and a lot of sins can be hidden in a one-line statement. What you need, actually, is a full explanation of what's going on, where the money is going to, where it's going to come from, and what its impact is going to be in the future. It's a reasonable thing to ask, and as with all reasonable things, it was rejected.

The last amendment was that there should be no partisan messages on hydro bills. Now, Speaker, I raised that in part because I was here for the Liberals and their partisan messaging. I was here as well when Conservative members in the opposition opposed partisan messaging on utility bills, as they were right to do. As I said at committee the other day, “You spoke against partisan messaging on utility bills when you were in opposition. Now that you're in power, you can make sure it doesn't happen in the future. Are you going to do it?”

Doughnuts to dollars, you can win a bet by trying to determine how they voted on this one, because I suspect, Speaker, that you too would have thought, “No, they're not going to support this.” And you would have been right: They didn't support it. They liked the idea that the door is left open to partisan messaging on hydro bills in the future. That is a profound problem for us in Ontario, a profound problem.

So, Speaker, I've reviewed the amendments and I've given you some high-level stuff, but I want to talk about why, in some greater detail, we're in this mess that we're

in with regard to hydro. What's the context? I canvassed some of this when I gave my speech in second reading, but the notes hold up well.

First of all, we did have a good hydro system in this province. Prior to Mike Harris, we had one that, overall, was affordable and made a difference to us. At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a huge move, at the centre of which were the industrialists of Ontario, to set up public renewable power—hydro power—as opposed to the coal barons who were trying to flog their power. The coal barons had a really big setback in 1905, when we had the great coal famine in Ontario. There was a big strike in Pennsylvania, the source of coal for Ontario's electricity plants, and that was a signal that not only did we need cheap, renewable power, but we needed to have power that we controlled within Ontario. We needed to be free from the hands of those in other jurisdictions. That's really the heart of what became, initially, a non-profit co-operative, the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, to provide Ontario industry with the power that would allow it to compete with industry in the United States. That is why we became an industrial power, because we had access to this low-cost renewable power. Those industrialists were not lefties. They weren't even Liberals. They were Tories. But they understood that buying wholesale was a lot cheaper than buying retail, and they drove that agenda.

0940

Now, the parliamentary assistant, the member for Markham–Stouffville, when we were discussing this at second reading, talked about our stable, solid electricity system. Well, we did have one until Mike Harris decided to break it up, privatize it and start selling it off. That was a huge problem for Ontario. That was the beginning of the great instability. He decided that the market was the best approach. He took all of the debt out of the nuclear power plants, because he was going to sell those, but he knew that they wouldn't be competitive if they had to pay for their debt as well. He took the debt away. People remember the stranded debt on their bills, the debt retirement fund. That was a gift from Mike Harris. That was us paying down that debt.

People were furious at that debt retirement charge. I used to have people come to me and say, “Why am I paying for someone else's retirement?” And I would say, “No, this is the nuclear debt that Mike Harris put on your bills.” That's the reality. He privatized Bruce nuclear and turned over the ownership of the Bruce plant to a private company.

Those changes put us into a very difficult position. Don't forget: Ernie Eves tried to privatize Hydro One. He lost in court on that. He realized it was too close to an election to go ahead, and then we had Dalton McGuinty elected. McGuinty was elected on a platform of stopping privatization, because people understood what had been going on. They understood that this was bad news. But the reality is—and no one in this chamber will be surprised—that Dalton McGuinty took that Mike Harris agenda and just ran with it. Virtually everything new that was built from 2003—all the gas plants, except for one, the Portlands Energy Center, which is co-owned by Ontario Power Generation—was privately owned.

So we had this ramp-up of profits being sucked out of the system by private companies and a ramp-up of private interest in building more electricity generation than we needed because there were profits to be made. That's the core of the heart of the hydro mess here in Ontario. But the government doesn't address any of that, not one iota. If you don't address those root causes, then you can't in the end contain the increase in costs.

You know, Speaker, there were a lot of lobbyists in this building during the time when all the gas plants were being built. I can imagine now that in the next few years we'll see a lot more lobbyists coming back for a lot more construction—no doubt about it, because, again, this government has decided not to actually deal with the fundamental problems that we have with the system.

Dalton McGuinty was followed by Kathleen Wynne, and Wynne made very strong statements that she would never privatize Hydro One. I think Charles Sousa, her finance minister, said that they were going to “sweat” the assets—whatever that means. But the reality was, they set in process the privatization of Hydro One. I remember Andrea Horwath asking Kathleen Wynne, “Are you going to privatize Hydro One?” “No, no. You're foolish. You don't know what you're talking about.” And then—

M^{me} France Gélinas: “Fearmongering.”

Mr. Peter Tabuns: “Fearmongering”—exactly. And that was followed by the sale. I have to say, Speaker, that led to her political demise. It changed people's sense of who she was. It changed people's sense as to whether or not her word could be taken as accurate, as true. It changed their sense of what her political orientation was, because she had just decided to continue the Mike Harris-Dalton McGuinty trajectory of turning the whole system over to private hands. Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne just put their foot on the gas when it came to privatization.

So that's the situation we're in. Has the government addressed it? Does this government, does the Premier, plan to take Hydro One back into public ownership? No indication of that with this bill, and no indication of that from any speeches that have been made.

When private power contracts come up, will the government be buying them out, saying, “We're going to take it over so that in future we don't have to pay profit as part of our hydro bills, and we don't have to be subjected to lobbyists constantly trying to build more and more generation”? No, no indication of that.

Does this government plan to use conservation to drive down the need for new transmission and distribution lines or generation, the cheapest form of power? No, just like the Liberals, they want to keep conservation on the side. Because the Liberals understood that the more you conserve, the less demand there is for those private power stations. They didn't want to see a drop in demand. Well, we need to see that drop if we're going to have affordable prices.

Did this government do a cold business case analysis of the refurbishments at Darlington and Bruce? Did they say that this power will be the least expensive, the most sustainable? They didn't do those analyses. They relied on the Liberal analysis. I have to tell you, Speaker, I wouldn't

rely on a Liberal analysis of the power system. I don't know why they do, but I certainly wouldn't. I certainly didn't when they were in government, and I'm not going to take it for granted that they were accurate now.

Is the government going to look at importing power from Quebec? I've heard rumours that there are some discussions going on between the government and Quebec. We will see if, in the end, they can actually negotiate a deal that's to our advantage.

But in the end, Speaker, almost all the substantial things that you need to do to bring hydro prices under control are not being done. We're continuing multi-billion-dollar borrowing with no plan to get out of it, one that is necessary. If you're actually going to phase out that borrowing, you have to phase in those changes so that people don't see their bills go up. That's critical. This government doesn't seem to understand that.

The Liberals buried their plan, or tried to bury their plan, by putting all of the operations under the balance sheet of Ontario Power Generation. That was very expensive. We opposed that. We opposed that because of the \$4 billion extra in cost, in interest, that came from all of that financial shenanigan that they've put together. But this plan leaves us on the hook for far more than \$4 billion. We're talking tens of billions of extra costs. That is hugely problematic.

It's one thing, Speaker, to observe someone who steals from your wallet silently; but then there are people who are brazen and say, “I'm going to steal from your wallet,” and then steal from your wallet. Those who are silent and sneaky are bad, but those who are brazenly stealing from your wallet are equally bad. I don't think one's better than the other. I think they're both grim and they both are a problem.

We've got a government that has a short-term focus, is not thinking about where we need to go with hydro, what needs to be done, how we deal with this mess. It's just playing around the edges. As I said at the beginning, they're tidying up, they're topping up all the glasses of gin, they're driving that Titanic straight toward the iceberg, because there are huge costs involved if you don't actually come to grips with the issue.

Speaker, because the government has mentioned it many times, I want to mention it as well. The government's only analysis of what's happened with hydro prices is that green energy drove up the cost. The reality is, Speaker, when you look at bills, about 15% of our bills is related to green energy. Hydro prices, from 2006 to 2016, went up 100%. Speaker, having bills go up 85% or 90% outside of the green energy program would have provoked a crisis in Ontario.

0950

There are a lot of things going on. We have a huge number of gas-powered electricity plants that produce very little power. They're being held back for the day when the nuclear reactors are undergoing refurbishment, so we've got this huge reserve sitting there. It's very expensive to keep thousands of megawatts of power largely sitting there. We have power plants just for peaking whose use

could be reduced or eliminated if we were to invest enough in conservation. This is not a direction this government wants to go in.

All of these fundamental costs that are there, that are driving up the bills—the privatization, the oversupply of generators—are not being addressed in this bill or, as far as I can tell, in any plan that this government is talking about. This government is not looking for the most cost-effective way of providing electricity to the people of Ontario.

On March 21, the Minister of Energy put out a media release saying that he was going to be cutting—I think his term actually was “refocusing and uploading electricity conservation programs to the Independent Electricity System Operator,” which is a long way of saying “cutting the operations of conservation in this province.”

The Toronto board of trade also spoke out about that. Again, not particularly lefty, not particularly centrist, but in terms of cold, hard numbers, they looked at the attacks on the conservation programs. They wrote:

“Conservation programs

“Bill 87 enables the government to fund conservation programs out of the tax base.... However, the bill’s announcement was accompanied by the cancellation of the Conservation First Framework, with the” Independent Electricity System Operator “taking responsibility for all programs until December 31, 2020. While this provides ... opportunity for increased efficiency in program delivery, it will incur costs and complications in changing the delivery approach. The decision to cut conservation funding in half is also of significant concern. Conservation is an important resource to meet Ontario’s energy needs and help customers reduce their electricity bills. The board supports efforts to ensure strong value-for-money across all conservation programs, and appreciates a continued focus on serving business customers. However, it is discouraging to see programs that have benefited both customers and the system be eliminated. The board asks the government to publish additional details on the programs that were maintained and those that were eliminated, including cost-benefit ratios.”

Ah, yes, cost-benefit: something that the government said would be done automatically when it came to the Ontario Energy Board. If, in fact, it was done, no numbers have been put out and no assessment has been made public, if one was actually done. So the ability for the public to tell whether or not this was to people’s advantage or not is an open question. The government says it will save many hundreds of millions of dollars over a number of years. The question would be, Speaker, how much will it lose? How much extra cost will be incurred by not doing these conservation programs? There is a cost, and there is a benefit. If one analysis was done, it has not been made public, which is one of the reasons we tried to amend this act so that an analysis would be done and the public would have an opportunity to see what that analysis was.

The board of trade understands that conservation is vital to containing costs for the system and for individual rate-payers, and this government has recklessly cut those programs. It is a bad move. It makes the mess in hydro worse, not better. It doesn’t fix it.

What’s also of interest is that most of the programs that were cut were those that served middle-class people: programs that helped reduce the cost to install high-efficiency cooling equipment and high-efficiency heating—those things that would reduce people’s energy bills in the long term, help with climate change and reduce demand for new generation, which is always going to be very expensive. Those were the programs that were cut.

One of the things that was also cut was the Business Refrigeration Incentive. That was to help small businesses with refrigeration. In the 1990s, when I was on Toronto city council, I started something called the Better Buildings Partnership. It’s the city of Toronto’s program to provide energy conservation support for commercial buildings. One of the things we looked at was small businesses, corner stores, because their energy costs are really high. The thing that was striking to us when we actually talked to those people was, they were cash-strapped to the max, so they bought the cheapest refrigeration equipment they could get because that’s all they could afford. They had to have refrigeration to run a store, so that’s what they bought, but they were mortgaged up to the hilt. They could not put in high-efficiency refrigeration equipment. We weren’t in a position to give them a subsidy. What I learned from that was that if you’re going to help all those small mom-and-pop outfits, you better be prepared to put cash in—which was a program that existed and has now been cancelled.

So if you’re in fact trying to help small businesses with their operating costs, reduce their environmental footprint, reduce the push to burn more gas, which increases climate impacts, you should have been helping them, and yet this program was cut.

The cost of peaking power—the cost of power needed when there’s maximum demand—from gas plants is about 31 cents a kilowatt hour. That’s really pricey. The Independent Electricity System Operator says that you can provide energy efficiency to cut those cooling demands by two to six cents a kilowatt hour. Take your pick. Do you want to pay two to six cents or 31 cents? In terms of businesses and in terms of the system, it’s much better to invest in conservation. That was cut.

They cut back on help for new construction to make new construction more energy efficient. The cheapest point to make a building energy efficient is when it’s under construction. Going back later to fix it up after it has been built is much more expensive. It’s still less expensive than building new generation, but it’s a lot cheaper to help new construction be energy efficient. That was cut.

Speaker, if you avoid making investments in the lowest-cost energy infrastructure, then you are doomed to have to pay the highest cost. That’s the simple reality. So don’t be surprised if prices continue to go up. Don’t be surprised if the \$2.5 billion the government is borrowing today goes to \$3 billion, to \$4 billion, to \$5 billion if they continue on without an exit plan that allows a smooth transition to keep people’s bills affordable and end this large-scale borrowing. That is a huge issue.

When you look at the cost of power, you need to look at figures put out by the Independent Electricity System

Operator. Most people aren't familiar with it. It's a body within Ontario that runs the whole system. They're the ones who buy power, allocate power, make sure the power gets to all our communities. They're a critical operation. They looked at the cost of different forms of power. New conservation: two cents a kilowatt hour—really cheap. New wind power: seven cents a kilowatt hour. New natural gas: eight cents a kilowatt hour. New nuclear: 12 cents a kilowatt hour. That's the system operator for Ontario.

I had the opportunity to look at the remarks from the member for Markham–Stouffville, the parliamentary assistant, after my last speech: “He talks about nuclear. Nuclear is at 6.8 cents. He keeps bringing this phantom 12 cents—17 cents.... Wrong.” Well, I suggest he turn to the Auditor General's report on the Darlington nuclear refurbishment project, page 130. We were both in public accounts a few weeks ago when the Auditor General made her presentation. In her document that was on our desks she noted that the rate for power from Darlington in 2019, as approved by the Ontario Energy Board, is 7.7 cents per kilowatt hour. She further noted that Ontario Power Generation has estimated the cost of their power from Darlington at 17.2 cents per kilowatt hour in 2024-25.

Mr. Paul Calandra: What else did she say? Keep going.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, that was a very large lump for a python to eat—a very large lump.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order.
1000

Mr. Peter Tabuns: So if he has evidence showing that the Auditor General was wrong, then produce the evidence. If he doesn't have it, then he should follow the numbers for the Auditor General, because, Speaker, when power hits 17 cents a kilowatt hour, how much are we going to be subsidizing power in Ontario? How much? If he doesn't read the Auditor General—

Interjections.

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

All members have the opportunity to present their arguments, and all members have the opportunity to make questions and comments at the end of that presentation. I look forward to that discussion at that time.

For now, I will return to the member from Toronto–Danforth. The member from Markham–Stouffville will do his best to come to order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'll just take this opportunity now, Speaker, because I can predict what the member is going to say later, and that is that, very simply, the OPG thinks that their price is going to come down from 17 cents after that. I don't believe it.

Mr. Paul Calandra: That's what she said.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I don't believe it. In any event—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member from Markham–Stouffville is warned.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: —the whole approach of conservation cuts is not only going to raise hydro prices in future; it's also going to result in more system privatization. Right

now, local utility companies—the Peterborough utility commission; Alectra; Oshawa's public utility commission; Waterloo's, Hydro Ottawa, Windsor's and St. Catharines's—those utilities have people now delivering conservation programs. What this means is, those people are going to be laid off, and many of them have gotten their layoff notices. The system operator, the IESO, doesn't staff this sort of work; they contract it out. So you can be sure that American companies like CLEARResult and Nexant, who are contracted to the IESO, will have more work, but the people in Peterborough, Windsor, Kitchener–Waterloo and Oshawa will have less. They will be laid off. That's the simple reality.

Speaker, on top of all that, in the past, the IESO would assess the work of the local utilities to see if it actually met the government's needs. They were the supervisor. IESO won't have that supervisor in future. That's a problem. Whether or not they're delivering on what we need is still an open question, but eliminating a system where you have local people delivering programs supervised by the system operator is a mistake. It's a further privatization of the system. I'm sure that's entirely consistent with their approach, with their ideology, but it's bad for the people of Ontario.

What could the government have done to clear up this mess? What could it have done rather than borrowing \$2.5 billion a year? In 2017, the NDP came forward with a plan to reduce hydro prices called Pay Less. Own More. A useful plan—it didn't require borrowing billions of dollars a year. It didn't have a plan that would have cramped the financial room for the province of Ontario. It was opposed to the Liberal strategy—which is now the Conservative strategy—of borrowing presumably tens and tens of billions of dollars to deal with the mess, because they won't go and look at the fundamentals. This government could have phased out this borrowing and brought in its own plan to reduce hydro costs, and we would be further ahead. But there's none of that in this bill. None of this is in the bill at all.

We pointed out the opportunity to end mandatory time-of-use billing because, when you look at the IESO and the OEB and their assessment, most people on time-of-use billing would see their bills drop by 10%. And we say: Make it voluntary rather than mandatory because there are a lot of people who work long hours who aren't home in those peak periods. I leave home early in the morning; I come home late at night. I miss the peak periods. Most of my power is overnight. I'm happy to stay with time-of-use, but a lot of people—seniors at home all day, people at home because of illness, moms home with young children and occasionally dads home with young children—are using a lot more power in the day and paying a lot more. We said: Bring an end to that mandatory time-of-use.

Start to bring Hydro One back into public hands. At the rate the government is going with undermining the credibility of Hydro One, I'm sure it will be really cheap in a while. Bring it back. Use the profits from Hydro One to pay for the acquisition and ensure that we have a utility that works in our interest, cuts our costs, and isn't pressing for constantly rising prices to make its investors happy.

We said we would re-establish the transparent, independent public oversight of Hydro One by bringing back the authority of the Auditor General, the Financial Accountability Officer, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Ombudsman, the Integrity Commissioner—and we even said the French-language commissioner, which was here until two days ago.

A lot of things have changed, but the reality is, if you're going to control the system, you have to have substantial public control. This government is not interested. It's continuing on the Liberal course, making sure that the Liberal agenda of borrowing, privatization and high-cost power is preserved. That is their whole strategy.

I'll note that with the privatization of Hydro One, Hydro One is now paying federal taxes. That wasn't the case before. All that money stayed with Ontario. Why on earth would you keep a system where we're paying the federal government taxes out of people's hydro bills? Either reduce hydro bills or put the money into public coffers. But because they're not willing to restore public ownership of Hydro One, we are in a situation that will require us to pay the feds for years to come instead of having the money for our own uses.

Speaker, we propose to cap profit margins. Companies that want to increase rates to cover costs for new investments get to claim the cost of borrowing plus a 5.5% return on equity. In Manitoba, it's 3%, not 5.5%. I don't see any of that in this bill. There's nothing about limiting the profits that can be taken on the system.

There's no regulation of new generation. That is an opportunity that the government has missed.

Speaker, we had presentations by a communications regulator looking at situations around the world where, in fact, governments had renegotiated private power contracts to reduce costs. And it is not without difficulties, it is not a fast process, but it is a doable process. There's not a word of that from the government. That was in our party's energy platform, that renegotiation, so that we got a deal that made sense for Ontarians. It's not something they want to do.

There is one other thing I want to speak about, and that's the \$2.6-billion tax break that Hydro One was given by the Liberals when the company was privatized—\$2.6 billion. The Ontario Energy Board has said, "Oh, a portion of that should go back to the customers." No, Speaker, 100% of that should go back to the customers. It's our money. It's the money of the people of Ontario who pay taxes. Why should it stay with the investors? It should be going back to the people of Ontario.

This government could give direction to the Ontario Energy Board and say very simply, "Tax breaks go to the customers; they don't go to the investors." That is not part of this bill. We calculated that having that \$2.6 billion put back into the hands of customers would reduce rates by about 3% for four years. That's consequential. People would appreciate that, but it's not part of what's before us.

Speaker, what the Liberals tried to do was bury a political problem in a mound of \$20 bills. It was a crazy strategy. It didn't work for them in the last election. The Conservatives who opposed the Fair Hydro Plan in opposition

simply took it on as their own child in the last election, and are perpetuating it now. It is a good thing to be borrowing the money directly rather than through Ontario Power Generation because there is a savings in interest, but there is still a bill that will compound into the tens of billions. That is the critical question, and not one being addressed by this government, not one being addressed by this bill.

1010

Speaker, it's clear from this legislation that this government is not prepared to take on the issue and not prepared to protect Ontarians in the long run, but is prepared to look after itself in the short run. It was interesting that in the questions and comments after my second reading speech, the member for Kitchener–Conestoga talked about how he thought this bill was wonderful and how it was terrible that the Liberals were going to borrow billions of dollars just to protect themselves politically in the next election, tens of billions of dollars that would be on the backs of their children. I don't think the member from Kitchener–Conestoga read his party's platform, because effectively, this government simply has done the same thing. They've decided to borrow tens of billions of dollars in an effort to look good politically and to put off a day when they actually have to deal with hydro system reform not happening.

The other thing that's really important—and I only have a few minutes—is that the whole of the landscape for electricity is changing. I had an opportunity to speak about a month ago with some local distribution utilities, and they're working on their rate filings. Typically, they amortize; they spread the cost of things like hydro poles over 40 years. But they said, "The technology is changing so quickly, we're not sure if we're going to have hydro poles in 15 or 20 years." The reality is that the cost of solar and storage, the cost of energy efficiency, is dropping to the point where there's a real risk that large numbers of people will drop out of the system. It's certainly a concern that the head of Quebec hydro has voiced, certainly a concern that senior hydro people have said is in the northeastern United States.

Speaker, the northeastern United States and Quebec don't have the best solar regime. It is a huge issue in places like Arizona and Hawaii, where there's a lot of sunshine. Increasingly, utility companies are finding that people just say, "Bills are too high, I'm bailing, and I can afford to do it in my own home." Government is showing no evidence that they understand where things are going. I remember, in the early 1980s in the *Globe and Mail*, stories about these new cellular phones that were coming along and a lot of questions as to whether or not cellular phones would catch on or whether it was just a fad. I notice that, in fact, those who invested heavily in land lines in the 1980s probably didn't get the return that they were expecting, and those who invested in cellphones did get a great return. Here in Ontario, if we don't understand that the electricity landscape is changing fundamentally, we are going to be locked into high-priced power that we subsidize at the price of our hospitals, our schools, our child care centres, our infrastructure. This government has decided that's their agenda; that's where they're headed.

I'm sure in questions and comments you will hear all kinds of marvellous and amazing things. For a government

that's not willing to deal with the fundamental problems with electricity, one can fluff off those comments, because they don't actually speak to the heart of the issue.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Chris Glover: It's my pleasure today to welcome to the House Norm Di Pasquale, the Catholic school trustee from my area; Domenico Paglia from CUPE 3155—he's the president—and the vice-president of CUPE 3155, Mirella DiPonio.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the great privilege of welcoming to the Legislature today a few constituents: Ian Barrett, Sarah Holmes, and their daughter, Taylor. Welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to giving you a tour after question period.

Ms. Jill Andrew: It's my pleasure to welcome all educators, education workers and trustees from the Toronto Catholic District School Board. I would like to give a special shout-out to the trustee from Ward 9, Norm Di Pasquale. Thank you so much for everything you do for students in Toronto—St. Paul's.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It gives me great pleasure to introduce two good friends of mine from the municipality of Chatham-Kent: the director of economic development services, Mr. Stuart McFadden, and the general manager for the municipality of Chatham-Kent, Mr. John Norton. They're in the east members' lobby. Congratulations. Thank you for being here.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning. I'm pleased to share a warm welcome to the students, language instructors, CUPE representatives and trustees from the Toronto Catholic District School Board, including board chair Maria Rizzo, as well as Annalisa Crudo-Perri, president of the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education.

I'm going to list off all of the trustees: Teresa Luiz; Joe Martino; Teresa Lubinski; Ida Li Preti; Norm Di Pasquale; Garry Tanuan; Caroline Morgan Di Giovanni, who's a former chair of the Toronto Catholic District School Board; and Luca Buiani, chair of the international languages extended day program for the York Catholic board.

Thank you so much for being here. They're here to see us at work and to promote the important international languages program at the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'd like to highlight and thank my friend and my colleague, my constituency assistant Duncan McDonald, who has joined us here at Queen's Park today.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome back, once again, Michau van Speyk, Amanda Mooyer, Amy Moledzki and Faith Munoz. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm honoured today to have the privilege of introducing seven members of the Royal Canadian Navy. From Her Majesty's Canadian Ship York, we have

Commander Walter Moniz, Chief Petty Officer Second Class Robert Shirran, Petty Officer Second Class Joan Emode, Sub-Lieutenant Ciara Murphy, Sub-Lieutenant Kevin Vuong, Master Seaman Diego Ortiz and Leading Seaman Angus Ho. Thank you for coming today.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like this afternoon to welcome students from St. Bernard in my great riding of York South–Weston, and also the school trustees of the Toronto Catholic school board, headed by the chair of the board, Maria Rizzo. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Rod Phillips: It's my pleasure to welcome the family of Trenyce De Gannes. She is the page captain today. Her mother, Martha, and her aunt, Shae, are joining us today. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm proud to welcome students, instructors and educators from Venerable John Merlini and St. Wilfrid's, as well as all the trustees named who are here in the chamber today. Welcome.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I would like to welcome my friend the Catholic school board trustee for ward 8, Garry Tanuan. He is also joined by international language instructors from St. Ignatius of Loyola, Hannah Li and Maria Regala; also students James Regala, Andrew Sabarello, Jhastine Villafuerte and Sherrise Funclara. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome Jennifer Krische and Brenda Holland, who have travelled to Queen's Park today from London for the debate this afternoon on my private member's bill. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'd like to welcome my former law colleague Éliane Lachaine. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm delighted to welcome Sheryn and Donald Gummer, who are the grandparents of page Caleah, today to question period. Welcome.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislature Mr. Harry Shea, who is vice-president of the Bronte Village Residents Association, from ward 1 in Oakville. Welcome to Queen's Park, Harry.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to welcome Toronto Catholic school board trustee for ward 4, Parkdale–High Park, Teresa Lubinski. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Municipal leaders across Ontario have been speaking out against the Ford government's cuts to everything from child care to public health to flood management. Ministers in the Ford government, meanwhile, insist that they want to have a respectful dialogue, but they also state that the cuts will proceed, no matter how reckless and poorly planned they are.

How can the government claim to be having a discussion when it appears that all the decisions have already been made?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Premier.

I will talk about the municipal issues but I want to pick up on what the member said about a respectful dialogue. We need to address what happened on the lawn yesterday—quite an event took place. The NDP had at least two members at a protest, the member from Davenport and the member from Windsor West. At the same time, mass protesters brought a bloodied guillotine to the grounds of Queen's Park, and do you know what they did? They beheaded an effigy of the Premier. This is disgusting and it is a sick act that has been condoned by the opposition.

I am asking the members opposite to condemn yesterday's protests and apologize for their attendance at yesterday's event. But it's important to know that this is the real NDP. We have seen it in the attacks against the Minister of Labour's office and the accosting and attacking of me, resulting in OPP protection for members of our cabinet. They care more about activism and protesting—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. We all know we have free speech in this Legislature. We have certain privileges as members of the Legislature to participate in debates, but the language and the comments have to be considered to be parliamentary.

I'm going to caution the members at the outset that the language has to be parliamentary or we will quickly have to go to warnings and, following that, of course, the option of naming members is within the purview of the Speaker.

We're going to have a question period today and I hope we can have a reasonable dialogue on the issues facing the province.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Earlier this week, the mayors of Ontario's 28 largest municipalities pleaded with the province to reverse budget cuts to child care, public health, flood management and more.

Smaller municipalities are speaking up as well. The town of Prescott has called on the province to stop cuts to public health and library services. The mayor of Dryden said his community has been treated like "a financial punching bag for the province."

This doesn't sound like people or municipalities who feel respected. Will the government listen to municipal leaders, reverse these cuts and have an actual discussion about how Ontarians are being impacted?

1040

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to refer back to the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for her comments. You know, I normally don't get concerned too much about the activist protests outside on the front lawns of Queen's Park. We're here to represent the real people—the real people that can't afford to take the day off or can't afford to get paid to go protest, the people that are working in the back of the factories, the people that are working in offices across this

province, trying to make ends meet. Those are the people that we're here for.

But yesterday went a little too far. My friends, any time a politician, no matter what party it is, has a guillotine out there, I think that goes a little too far. As a matter of fact, it goes way overboard. The difference is, that's what the opposition believes in: supporting folks like that. We support the people that are out in the factories and the offices trying to make ends meet, paying their taxes and wanting services.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Final supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: The sad fact is, the Ford government doesn't want to hear anything from anyone other than obedience, whether it's the Acting Premier insisting that she's not even willing to consider pausing cuts to public health care or the Premier taking out his frustrations on the man who beat him in Toronto's mayoral elections.

The people of Ontario need different levels of government to work together. Instead, we have one side scrambling to provide everything from school breakfasts to flood protection, and a Premier who seems to ignore their complaints. How does that help the people of Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Do you know who got us in this position? The NDP put us in this position and the Liberals put us in this position with a \$15-billion deficit, with a \$347-billion debt, the largest sub-sovereign debt in the entire world. That's who put us in this position.

We're driving efficiencies. We're putting more money, \$700 million more, into education. The Minister of Education is doing an incredible job. The Minister of Health is doing an incredible job ending hallway health care by putting \$1.3 billion into health care, making sure that we have 15,000 long-term-care beds. We're well over 7,000 long-term-care beds.

They worry about jobs. Again, the people in the factories that I was speaking about earlier, these people are working 10, 12 hours a day—a day—trying to pay their taxes, trying to pay their mortgage, trying to put food on their table. That's what people are concerned about. They want the economy to get going, and that's what this government is doing by lowering taxes, making sure we create an environment for companies to thrive and prosper and—

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Next question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is for the Premier. Later today, the Ford government will be tabling legislation to begin their takeover of Toronto's transit system. The Premier has made it clear that his plan is going ahead no matter how much delay it causes or what anyone else in this province has to say about it. If the province has already

made up its mind, what are they hoping to accomplish with their negotiations with the city of Toronto, then?

Hon. Doug Ford: The great Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I thank the member opposite for that question. You know, last June, we won an election based on the fact that we would upload the TTC and expand service for all the people utilizing the TTC in the GTHA, creating a regional, integrated transportation network.

Mr. Speaker, in August we appointed Michael Lindsay as our chief special adviser to negotiate with the city of Toronto on bringing the upload into reality. In February we signed a terms of reference that set out provisions of how we will work together with the city through discussions and how the upload will go forward.

On April 11, we announced a \$28.5-billion expansion for the city of Toronto in their subway system. There are a lot of people excited about it. We need to make that happen. Mr. Speaker, the legislation we're tabling today will enable the government to take over the expansion and growth of the TTC network, and we're going to continue those talks with the city of Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Sara Singh: The city of Toronto has actually put forward 61 key questions about the Ford government's transit plans, including basic requests like how they arrived at their cost estimates and who was paid to prepare them. Has the province answered any of those questions, and if so, when do they intend to share this with the public?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: We are continuing our negotiations with the city of Toronto. Michael Lindsay meets on a regular basis. I have conversations with Mayor Tory. Everything has been positive.

I'm not sure what's going on with the opposition. They're a little inconsistent in their messaging. On one hand, they're saying, "Don't download things." On the next hand, they're saying, "Don't upload things." I don't know where they stand on any issue, Mr. Speaker, other than saying no, no, no to anything this government does towards balancing the budget and delivering great transit projects—historic transit projects—to the city of Toronto.

Mr. Speaker, we are in good conversations with the city of Toronto with regard to the expansions. Minister McNaughton and the Ministry of Infrastructure are in constant talks with the federal government. Hopefully they'll put the money forward to support our historic expansion of the transit system within this province.

We will continue the discussions with Mayor Tory and his staff, but at the end of the day, the system isn't working for the riders of the TTC, and we made a pledge to make it better. That's what we're going to do.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: The people of Toronto deserve transit solutions that get them out of gridlock. Instead, they have a government that is ripping up plans and is unwilling or unable to answer basic questions as they attempt a hostile takeover of the subway system. Instead of plowing ahead

with a scheme that will add costs and delay Toronto's transit system, why won't the Ford government stop dismissing the concerns that people are raising in this province and answer some key questions about their plan?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: On April 11, we announced the historic vision that we see for the city of Toronto as we move to expand transit opportunities. The people of Toronto have been waiting decades for the relief line to be built, but it only gets stopped, because there is continual bickering and returning to the table year after year with different councils. They just can't get it done. The system isn't working, Mr. Speaker.

What we're going to do is upload that responsibility to the province, and we're going to get this job done. We're going to make the Ontario Line all the way from Ontario Place up to the Ontario Science Centre. We're going to build subways into Scarborough for the first time ever. Those people have been waiting decades themselves for a subway—not just one stop, three stops. That's what the people deserve.

We're going to extend the Eglinton West. We're going to take it out, underground, into Etobicoke and hopefully join it up with the airport. Finally, we are going to connect Richmond Hill and Newmarket to our subway system. We're going to get the economy going by getting people moving in this province.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jessica Bell: Today the Conservative government is introducing its bill to begin the takeover of the TTC, despite the fact that the province is still in negotiations with the city of Toronto regarding the upload. There are numerous outstanding questions that the Premier has refused to answer.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier claim to be negotiating with the city in good faith when he is going behind their back to push through this hostile takeover?

Hon. Doug Ford: She didn't say who it was for.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is someone going to respond on behalf of the government?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I'll do it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can reiterate what I just answered previously. We've been working with the city of Toronto since November, with our special adviser appointed in August, on working towards creating a new partnership between the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario. We both know the current system isn't working to get subways built in the city, and we're stuck at gridlock. People aren't utilizing the transit system like they should because it's not offering the opportunities for them to go from point A to point B, to get from home to work and back home and be with friends and families. That's just not happening.

It's unfortunate that the opposition party is pushing back so hard on this when the people of Toronto, the people of the GTHA, want proper transit. It's not getting built,

unfortunately, and we are able to do it. That's why we're working with the city of Toronto through our negotiations, through our terms of reference that we put forward to build and grow the TTC and create the integrated, regional network that the people of Toronto and the GTHA deserve.

It's going to be great news for the people of Toronto when this is done.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Premier: Yesterday, the Minister of Transportation admitted that some of the work the city has already completed for the downtown relief line is no longer usable. That means millions of dollars and months of work that went into the planning and developing of that line are essentially being thrown out and replaced with a back-of-the-napkin plan cooked up by the Premier.

1050

We all know what happens when transit plans are ripped up. There are more delays, there's more uncertainty and it makes it even less likely that transit will be built. How can the Premier justify throwing out the city's work on the downtown relief line and the delays and additional expenses that are going to result?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: To the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the local member from Rosedale: What an insult you just gave to all the bright minds at Infrastructure Ontario—some of the smartest people in the world—saying “back-of-the-napkin.” They came up with the plan. Leading the charge was the Minister of Transportation and MTO—insulting all MTO; insulting everyone at Metrolinx, who could, honestly, Mr. Speaker, run circles around anyone in the opposition when they talk about transit.

They know what they're talking about. They know what a world-class subway system is. They came up with an incredible plan, and the crown jewel is the Ontario Line, running from Ontario Place up to the Ontario Science Centre, and actually running through a lot of the NDP ridings. I'm sure their constituents would be more than happy to utilize the new subway system that the Minister of Transportation is putting in the GTA.

FLOODING

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the Premier of Ontario. For over a week now, we have been experiencing floods in many parts of the province, including my city of Ottawa. Our hard-working first responders have been hard at work to prevent damage to communities and homes in coordination with our emergency management partners. Our government understands the impact and severity of the flooding and we take the safety of our communities seriously.

I know that people in my riding of Carleton were reassured to see the Premier visit several of the municipalities currently under a state of emergency, in order to see the conditions first-hand and to assist our hard-working first responders with relief efforts. Through you, Mr. Speaker:

Can the Premier please update the House on what measures the province is taking to respond to this ongoing situation?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the great MPP from Carleton, an absolute champion. I was up in Carleton. You want to talk about a popular MPP? When I was up there, I went and visited a seniors' home, and they love the MPP from Carleton. Incredible job.

Do you know who we love as well, Mr. Speaker? We love the first responders and the military folks. Look at those champions up there—absolute champions. I absolutely love you. You're one of the best things in the world.

When I was in Ottawa, it was like the cavalry coming over the mountain when we saw the military. They came in. They were sandbagging, helping people, because people in Ottawa were exhausted. I just got off the phone with Mayor Watson, making sure and reassuring him that he has the province's—

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the Premier for that response, and thank you for your kind words and for visiting the care centre.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, while our government is hard at work responding to floods, the opposition continues to fearmonger about the ability of Ontario's conservation authorities to respond to flood events.

I'd like to read them a quote from Rhonda Bateman, the general manager of the Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority: “We are not going to cut the maintenance and flood control program. That can't be done.” Perhaps the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan was not aware that managing water-related hazards is part of the programs and services conservation authorities are mandated to provide.

Can the Premier please clarify our government's proposal to make conservation authorities more efficient and effective?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, I want to thank the MPP from Carleton. We went up—

Mr. Paul Miller: Another all-star.

Hon. Doug Ford: They're all all-stars; you're right. Unfortunately, you don't have any.

Anyway, through you, Mr. Speaker: As I mentioned, I talked to the mayor of Ottawa. He appreciates the help from the Solicitor General, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Natural Resources. It's all hands on deck, no matter if it's Ottawa. I'm speaking to the mayor of Huntsville—I'm going to be heading up to Huntsville and Bracebridge. I spoke to the mayor of Muskoka Lakes. They're so grateful for our support.

We're sparing no expense. As a matter of fact, we're putting in five million additional dollars to protect the watershed up in Muskoka. Again, I'm travelling up there tomorrow to see first-hand how we're progressing.

Once again, the first responders and the great military are up in Muskoka working their backs off. We want to thank them. Thank you, thank you, thank you—absolute champions.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to start by again acknowledging all the amazing education workers and students and parents and trustees from the Toronto Catholic District School Board who are here today.

My question is to the Minister of Education. Mr. Speaker, educational assistants, custodians, clerical workers, library staff and language instructors all play a crucial role in supporting Ontario students and keeping our community schools safe. Yet so far, we have at least 2,500 education worker positions in jeopardy because of this government's cuts to our schools—and that's just the beginning.

Will the minister set aside her talking points and admit that the government's radical changes to class sizes and cuts to programs will mean lost jobs and less support for our students?

Interjections.

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

The question is to the Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Well, first of all, I would like to stand in this House and sincerely request the member opposite to absolutely condemn the actions of the protesters yesterday afternoon here at Queen's Park that she was with.

Interjection: Show some leadership.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I ask her to stand up, show some leadership, show some respect for the institution known as Queen's Park and show respect for the elected officials in this House.

Her actions have been absolutely disgusting. I feel very strongly that we need to see leadership from this member opposite. She needs to condemn yesterday's actions, that she was actually out observing and possibly participating in, and quite frankly, she needs to stand up and take responsibility for inciting this type of activity.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I can see that the minister doesn't want to answer the question, but I'm going to go back at her again—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order.

The member for Davenport has the floor.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is about more than numbers on a balance sheet; this is about the programs and the people who make our schools the absolute heart of our communities. This is about the services and the supports that help our children learn and thrive. But this government's actions will remove thousands and thousands of caring adults from schools, shutter programs and courses, and leave kids with a bare minimum.

Some of these students and workers are here in the gallery with us today because their international languages program is at risk. They deserve to know, Minister: Will

the minister reverse her education cuts and start investing in our kids?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member for Mississauga East–Cooksville must come to order. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence must come to order. The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services must come to order.

Start the clock. The Minister of Education to reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm sure this is your House. I am sure you were devastated to see what different types of personalities have brought to this institution. To the students who are here in the public galleries today, I hope you understand that this is not the norm. This is not the way it has been in the last eight years that I have been in this House. It is unacceptable—

Interjections.

1100

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: —of behaviour that has been happening. But trust that I am going to lead by example. I say this to all of you, because we care about—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the minister to make her comments through the Chair. I'm going to ask the member for Niagara Centre to come to order.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Through you, Speaker, to the people in the audience today in the public galleries and everyone watching: We're going to get education back on track. We know education is absolutely imperative to enhancing the learning environment in every single classroom in Ontario. We are going to stand by them and make sure that not only the GSN will be appropriately applied to enhance the learning environment in the classroom for teachers and students, we're going to make sure—

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

Interjections.

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

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is for the Minister of Finance. In our budget, we made it clear that we're putting people first. From day one, our government has put the people at the centre of every decision we make. Whether we're putting more money in people's pockets by reducing licensing fees, providing relief for child care expenses or giving a tax break to low-income earners, we will always focus on directly improving the lives of the people of Ontario.

Our proposed changes to the estate administration tax reflect this commitment once again. Could the minister please explain how our proposed changes to the estate administration tax put people first and provide support and compassion to Ontario families and individuals?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill. Last week, we were pleased to join the Minister of Municipal Affairs and

Housing in Brockville to highlight the changes we're proposing to the estate administration tax.

Our plan to make life easier and more affordable for the people of Ontario starts with giving people relief, particularly in times of worry and grief, when they need it the most. That is why our legislation, if passed, would eliminate the estate tax on estates under \$50,000 and provide a tax cut of \$250 on all larger estates.

Our proposed changes are about compassion and respect for families and putting people first during a very difficult period in their lives. We intend to provide relief for families during their greatest time of need. Their government should be working for them, especially at this time, not against them.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you to the minister for his response. It's clear that this is the compassionate thing to do, and the right thing to do. I could not be more proud of a government that is supporting people in their most difficult times.

As part of our plan to put people first, we're also making it easier for people to interact and work with the government. The current requirements for filing the estate tax are burdensome and unfair. Our government has put forward another step to support families dealing with the death of a loved one. Could the minister please explain how our government intends to make it easier to file the estate tax?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We intend to make it easier to file estate tax returns by extending the filing deadlines. If passed, our legislation would extend the filing deadline from 90 days to 180 days, so that grieving families will have more time to respond to the death of a loved one. The deadline for filing amendments to the returns would also be extended from 30 days to 60 days.

The last thing a family should worry about after losing a family member is red tape and taxes. Unfortunately, that is something the previous government, backed by the NDP, just did not understand when they changed that. Our proposed changes back would offer compassionate support to families during these very difficult times. We're also exploring options to include tax relief for charitable donations.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday, we learned that 44 municipalities out of 47 will have their general allocation funds for child care cut in 2019. General allocation funds pay for the day-to-day operating costs of child care centres and for subsidies to low-income families.

With child care costs spiralling to as much as \$20,000 a year for some families, parents are at a breaking point trying to find affordable child care. So why is this government choosing to make cuts to child care that will make life more expensive for families and parents?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I absolutely reject the premise that came from the member across the floor

because, quite frankly, we're making life more affordable for parents across this province.

We have to make sure that people watching—through you, Speaker, to everyone watching and listening today: What the member opposite was talking about was one-time funding to clean up a knee-jerk mistake that the former Liberal government made. They increased the minimum wage by 20%. They realized the disastrous impact that that would have on daycares across Ontario, so they had to put a Band-Aid on the gouge they made in daycare through this \$50-million fund.

I want to share with you, Speaker, a quote from the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario: "From what we can tell, the \$50 million in fee stabilization support was simply handed to municipal governments, which then were left to develop their own systems for administering it. Not only was the funding stream poorly designed by" the Liberal government, "in many cases, it was extremely poorly delivered by the municipalities involved. So much so"—

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

Interjection.

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

Supplementary question. Restart the clock.

Ms. Doly Begum: Back to the minister. Minister, through the Speaker, I think we agree on one thing: The Liberals did have a lot of band-aid solutions. But you're making it even worse. You're taking it back even more and making it worse for families and definitely not making it affordable.

The government is also changing cost-sharing requirements for municipalities and eliminating fee stabilization funding. All of these cuts actually add up to \$90 million taken from our child care system this year. This government promised parents a tax credit that doesn't even come close to covering the cost of child care. Then, they eliminate the funding that controls child care fees. Parents deserve so much better than this shell game.

Will the minister commit right now to reversing these cuts and instead choose to invest in our child care for our future?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to share a little bit of advice to the member opposite: Stop the fearmongering because you are losing credibility within the sector. Because the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario actually said, "It's important to put this news in the context of the recent provincial budget announcement about the CARE tax credit," which is going to help 300,000 families. "The CARE tax credit is great news for families. It's a simpler, more child-centred approach to funding that helps almost every family with young children. It gives parents more choices, with very little added administrative cost, and no municipal red tape."

People like what we've done. Accept it.

HOSPICE CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I want to begin by thanking the minister, the Premier, the finance minister and the government

for the support of both the Alliston and Collingwood hospitals in the recent budget. It's fantastic. Notwithstanding the two questions I'm about to ask you, we are grateful.

Minister, as you know, Hospice Georgian Triangle in Collingwood continues to wait for operational funding for four of their 10 beds. These four beds have been sitting idle, at the direction of the LHIN, and are not allowed to be used even if the hospice wants to fund the beds themselves. Minister, does the government have any plans to fund these empty beds? If not, can you please explain to my constituents why that can't be done at this time?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. I want to assure the member and all Ontarians that our government is committed to supporting high-quality palliative and end-of-life care services for anyone in Ontario who needs it.

These services are provided by people across the province in hospitals, hospices, home and community care settings, long-term care and other places. That is why we were very proud to announce last year that our government is investing \$33.6 million to move forward with 193 new hospice beds across the province, which includes over \$20 million annually for annual nursing support and other support services that are required.

1110

The specific question that you've asked me about, I understand, is still under discussion with the ministry. We will continue those discussions and we will have an answer for the people of your riding very shortly.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you very much to the minister.

Minister, Matthews House Hospice in Alliston sent you a cost-saving analysis back in January to show the overall savings that investments in hospice care can have, particularly with respect to community services. Matthews House Hospice not only provides residential care, as you know, for people at the end stages of life; they also provide community programs to help those who are not able to go to hospice. This can include things like pain and symptom management and expanded pediatric and mental health supports.

The hospice wants to do more. Will the government provide the additional funding so that the hospice can provide more community services?

Hon. Christine Elliott: There is no question that hospice care or home care that can be provided in a home for palliative and end-of-life services is certainly more cost-effective than a stay in hospital. It's also more patient-centred. That's what we're doing with our transformation, with our modernization of our health care service—to make sure that we centre care around the patients, families and caregivers. That's what we want for people who are ending their last days—to be able to be in a non-clinical-care setting, a home-like setting as much as possible, if not in their own home with their family and friends around them.

I want to really thank everyone who works in our hospices and the many wonderful volunteers who come forward to help them for their exemplary care. They go to

great lengths to make sure that people can spend their last days in comfort with the things that are most familiar surrounding them, including especially, of course, their families.

We will continue those discussions with respect to those additional hospice beds in your community.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Honourable Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

We inherited a broken Ontario Autism Program that left 23,000 children languishing on a wait-list. A further 2,400 children were waiting for a diagnostic assessment through Ontario's five diagnostic hubs. Throughout it all, we have listened to families who asked for additional enhancements, and we will continue to listen, as our motivation has always been to ensure that every child with autism receives support from their Ontario government.

Can the minister please tell the House how our government is listening and acting to better support all children with autism?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to say thank you to the member opposite from our party, who has been a strong advocate for the people of his community, particularly for children with autism.

Speaker, as you're aware, my primary motivation has been and always will be to clear the 23,000 children who are languishing on a wait-list and get that cleared so that they can get support from their Ontario government.

Three out of four children were not receiving support. That's why we doubled our investment into the diagnostic hubs and we provided choice for what parents want to use in terms of supports for their children.

Last night, over 400 people participated in a telephone town hall to tell us how we can best approach a needs-based system with an additional \$300 million that was provided to us through the treasury and by our Premier. We have also over 600 people who have already applied to our online survey at ontario.ca/autism. And next week I'll be appointing an expert panel who will work directly with me and provide advice on how we can have the best Ontario Autism Program in the province's history.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you, Minister, for affirming your commitment to listening and taking action to support families of children with autism.

Minister, since day one, you have been working tirelessly to support all families of children and youth with autism. Your work has reformed the Ontario Autism Program to provide funding directly to parents to choose the services that are right for them. I am pleased to know that a full list of eligible services is now available online and has been expanded to include speech-language and occupational therapies.

I will continue to seek input from families in my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills to help inform additional enhancements to the Ontario Autism Program.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain why the government launched those consultations, starting off yesterday?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I'm very proud that we were able to not only increase the investment from \$256 million to \$321 million but then add an additional \$300 million so that we could go to a needs-based system and consult with the people who matter most. That's moms and dads, clinicians and those who work in the field. That's why next week I'll be appointing the expert panel. I'll continue to work with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health as we leverage a whole-of-government approach to support those with autism in the province of Ontario.

Last week, I was in Saskatoon with provincial, federal and territorial ministers of social services and children, and I added my voice to a call for a national autism strategy. But I'm really looking forward to additional town halls. We do have one coming up for northern and rural communities as well as for francophone communities. I encourage all parents who have children on the spectrum to participate in these telephone town halls, and I invite all MPPs, regardless of political affiliation, to participate as well with their own round tables.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Earlier this week, the Premier and Minister of Finance took their partisan entourage down to New York City, all expenses paid by the public. When pressed about this issue, both the Premier and the minister refused to reveal who exactly went on the trip and how much it actually cost the people of Ontario.

If the Premier is so sure that his expenses on this trip are above board, why does he continue to stonewall the actual media and hide the costs from this Legislature?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Premier, and thank you very much for representing Ontario so very, very well in New York City this week. It was an absolute honour to join you in New York. I know the investors and the companies that are hoping to move to Ontario heard the positive message that you delivered at all of the meetings that we had: that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs.

In fact, over the course of the last two weeks, Ontario, which has our bonds out in the marketplace, brought in \$4.6 billion of the \$36 billion that we need in our bonds. Fascinatingly, half of that money was in US dollars. This is a huge success for the province of Ontario. They are thrilled with the fact that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs. They told the Premier and I, "We haven't heard a solid message like that from Ontario in 15 years."

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Those investors also value a strong public education system and a strong health care system, which you are currently undermining.

The yet untold costs of this trip are just the latest in a pattern from this Premier of using public dollars for his

personal priorities, all while claiming that the province can't afford to provide essential services to Ontarians in need. The Premier claims that we don't have enough money to fund flood prevention in the midst of record flooding, that we can't keep teachers in classrooms and that we have to start charging people for health care coverage. But when he spends public money on himself, he thinks Ontarians don't deserve transparency or accountability. If the Liberals did this, you would be crying out loud.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Listen, you owe the people of this province the facts on these issues.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Response?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We are borrowing \$36 billion this year so that we can have the money to put into health care and have that money to put into education. That's why we need to continue. Between 20% and 30% of all of that money has to come from outside of Canada, Speaker. I can tell you that they heard a message that we are transforming. We are modernizing. We are digitizing government. They heard the story of how you can go online now and get your driver's licence and get your health card. They saw that we're saving \$33.5 million by doing that. They heard that we're saving four cents on every dollar—and, as it turns out, we're saving almost eight cents on every dollar. They absolutely love the fact that we're returning \$26 billion in relief to families, through child care programs and through low-income tax incentives. They said to us the situation is better now in Ontario than it was 10 months ago.

1120

Interjections.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Show us the money.

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

Restart the clock. Next question, the member for Niagara West.

TAXATION

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Speaker, despite the people of Canada making it clear in multiple provincial elections that they can't afford more new taxes, the federal government moved ahead with their Trudeau carbon tax, a tax that's going to raise the cost of everything. The Trudeau Liberals may claim that their new tax will, in turn, put more money back in people's pockets. Well, Speaker, let's be very frank: Anyone who tries to say that taking a tax will put more money in your pocket should have you thinking twice.

It's been a full month since the imposition of the Trudeau carbon tax. I'm wondering if the minister can tell the House what the true cost of the Trudeau carbon tax is?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Niagara West, thank you for the question

and thank you for the great work you do representing your constituents.

The federal Liberals have gone to a great extent to say two things and to try to convince Ontarians of two things. One is that the only way to fight climate change is with a carbon tax, and we know that our made-in-Ontario climate plan proves that is not true. The second is that a carbon tax will make people better off financially. Mr. Speaker, we learned some more about that this week. The federal Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that the Trudeau carbon tax will take \$6.2 billion out of the pockets of the people of Canada and confirmed that 90% of that is going to come from individuals, from families, not from big polluters.

The PBO's findings—the PBO in his interview, when asked how we know that money will go back to the people Ontario, to the people of the provinces, said, “We just have to trust the Liberals.”

Mr. Speaker, this is a party in Ottawa that promised the budget would be balanced by this year. There are 18 billion reasons not to—

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you to the minister for his answer.

Listen, Speaker: Many of my constituents already struggle day to day with the cost of living, even before this tax came into effect. Now it's going to be even harder for them to make ends meet. This tax jeopardizes the future of our economy and our families' prosperity. I am happy to be part of a team that puts the people of Ontario first with every decision that we make.

Speaker, my question to the minister is whether or not this tax is going to hit our families where it hurts the most. We see already the cost of gas is rising, the cost of home heating, the cost of food. Can you explain to the people of Ontario how much this carbon tax will really cost them?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member for his question. Let's be clear: The carbon tax will raise the cost of everything. The Parliamentary Budget Officer—and I'm quoting him here and I want to get it right—confirmed that a lot of the burden is going to fall on final consumers and households, 90% of the burden. Families and seniors on fixed incomes will have to pay more to heat their homes. We've already talked about \$27 million of costs for hospitals, \$20 million for colleges and universities, \$3.4 million for security services like the OPP and the people who support us.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario doesn't need the Trudeau carbon tax. We have a made-in-Ontario plan that will make sure we hit the targets the Prime Minister set. We're at a 22% reduction in emissions now. We'll get to 30% and we'll get there without Justin Trudeau's carbon tax.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, this week the minister said that when her government removes out-of-country OHIP coverage, Ontarians should simply get their

own insurance. She stated that this can be purchased very inexpensively to cover medical needs.

Well, Speaker, Cathy Du Val lives in London West and contacted me to say that she can't get private insurance. She has renal failure and, like many people with chronic kidney disease, she requires hemodialysis three days a week. She said there are no insurance companies in Ontario that provide coverage for hemodialysis because of a pre-existing condition.

Why is the minister forcing Cathy and others like her to pay entirely out of pocket for health care services if they must travel out of country?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I am certainly very sorry to hear about Cathy's situation. However, I think it's also important to be honest with the people of Ontario about what this program, first of all, costs and the level of coverage they would be getting. This is a program where a third of the cost of the program was spent on administration. That's not good value for taxpayers. That's not good value for anybody in Ontario.

The other issue to be considered here is that this poor woman has a significant condition and she would only receive, under the existing program, \$400 in coverage. If she had a significant issue while she was out of the country, she would have thousands more in costs that would not be covered.

It is really important that we speak honestly to people of Ontario about what would have been covered and what would not have been covered. That \$400 is nothing compared to the costs that this woman could receive if she were having to be treated outside of the country.

Interjection.

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

Supplementary question.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Refusing to reimburse out-of-country dialysis creates yet another hardship for people with kidney disease who are struggling to maintain some semblance of normal life. The Kidney Foundation of Canada says that eliminating out-of-country OHIP claims will literally handcuff dialysis patients to their machines, preventing them from travelling for personal, professional or emergency reasons.

The Canada Health Act guarantees that every Ontarian should have access to publicly funded health care, whether they are at home or temporarily outside of Canada. Will the minister abandon her callous plan to deny OHIP coverage to Ontarians when they travel out of country?

Interjections.

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

To the minister to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, through you, I would say to the member opposite that we need to be realistic about this situation. If someone has a dialysis issue, they need to receive dialysis treatment several times a week. It's difficult for them to travel in any event, and the coverage they would receive under this existing

program would be nothing compared to the cost it would actually cost them.

We have to be honest with the people of Ontario and not give them false hope that when they travel, they're going to have every single cost covered, when it's only \$400. To someone with significant renal problems needing dialysis, there's a real concern that there might be something that goes wrong when they're travelling. It's difficult to travel and do dialysis. I acknowledge that. But to suggest that \$400 is going to make a difference and allow them to travel—that is giving people absolutely false hope, and I am not going to do that. I have a responsibility as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and I'm going to fulfill my responsibility to the people of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mrs. Amy Fee: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. This past Tuesday, the minister announced our government's digital plan for simpler, faster, better services. The goal of this plan, he explained, is to modernize government services to improve service delivery. I know that the constituents in my riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler are very happy to hear this. Many of my constituents have had to deal with delays in birth certificate processing or have complained about how few services are available online.

Our government is dedicated to putting people back at the centre of everything we do, and I know that this act will do just that. Could the minister update this House on how this plan will improve service delivery for all Ontarians?

Hon. Bill Walker: I want to thank my honourable colleague the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler, Amy Fee, for her great work on behalf of her constituents and for this question.

Ontarians are used to banking and shopping online, making restaurant reservations and buying movie tickets on our phones. We're used to this because business recognized long ago that bringing services online better meets customer needs.

Unfortunately, this is not the case for Ontario. For far too long, out-of-date, overly bureaucratic processes reduced the quality of service delivered to the people of Ontario. As part of our 2019 budget, our government introduced the Simpler, Faster, Better Services Act, which, if passed, would significantly improve how government works, its digital outlook and the services it delivers to the people and business of Ontario.

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Digital First does not, however, mean digital-only. What we're doing is expanding access to meet people's expectations for service delivery across the province. Mr. Speaker, Ontarians have been living in the digital age for a while now. It's about time our government did the same.

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

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you to the minister. I'm certainly looking forward to voting in favour of the Simpler, Faster, Better Services Act, and I know my constituents

are very excited to see that provincial government services will actually enter the 21st century. As the minister rightly said, far too many Ontarians are inconvenienced by the lack of online services. I know many of my constituents find it hard to travel in person to ServiceOntario locations when they need to renew a driver's licence or health card, or register a new business.

I'm sure the minister would agree that by modernizing the way government delivers these necessary services, Ontario will not only make life easier but make better use of government resources and talent, as well as strengthening our commitment to making Ontario open for business. Mr. Speaker, could the minister provide the Legislature with more details about the plan?

Hon. Bill Walker: The member and I are in strong agreement on this topic. The legislation introduced would, if passed, promote becoming Digital First in three ways. First, it would enable adoption of digital practices across government, improving all digital platforms to increase online use for ServiceOntario's top 10 transactions.

It would eliminate outdated processes that prevent the delivery of people-centred services. This includes the badly outdated processes within ServiceOntario.

Finally, this legislation will allow us to unlock high-value data, while protecting Ontarians' privacy, to increase economic growth and prosperity for the people and the businesses of Ontario.

To reassure those with poor Internet connections or who prefer visiting ServiceOntario in person, I want to say again that Digital First does not mean digital-only. Our plan would protect bricks-and-mortar locations and free up staff to focus their talents where they're needed most.

Mr. Speaker, there's no excuse for Ontario to be stuck with 20th-century processes in 2019. Our government, the Ford government, is bringing government into the 21st century.

TREE PLANTING

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: My question is to the Premier. Another day and another decision by this government to create business uncertainty: The 50 Million Tree Program was abruptly cancelled last month. The owner of Millson Forestry service in Timmins, Jenny Millson, wrote to us to say that the program's cancellation has hurt her business. It has caused her to lose orders for hundreds of thousands of trees. She has talked to some of the other growers and they're all in the same boat. Millions of trees will be dumped and businesses will lose significant revenue, not to mention the lost opportunity to grow our forests. Premier, why are you throwing Jenny and other business owners like her into chaos?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Talk about uncertainty. We're giving businesses certainty. We're giving the forest industry, the best stewards of the environment, the opportunity and the support to plant 67 million trees.

Do you know why we're doing this? I'm looking up to the stands, at all these young people here and behind me.

My friends, go back and ask your parents. They're working hard in an office. They're working hard in a factory. They're actually paying their taxes, trying to put food on their tables, trying to put their kids through education. Mr. Speaker, that's why we're doing it. We're doing it for the young people up there that want their parents to prosper. They want their parents to have more money in their pockets. We're protecting each and every single family that's up in the stands, here and behind me, so that they can have a better job, their parents can have—

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

Interjections.

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

I think it's a good time to remind all members to make your comments through the Chair.

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: This question is to the Premier. Premier, your decision to cancel the 50 Million Tree Program will result in businesses losing money and millions of tree seedlings going to waste. What the young people of this province need is an environment that will sustain them in the future.

The government continues to cause business uncertainty in spite of how much they pat themselves on the back. Will the Premier reverse this bad decision and stop hurting small businesses and the environment?

Interjections.

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

The Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Here we are once again—another question period. Almost every question that the NDP asks is a question defending the legacy of the Liberal government under Kathleen Wynne. It's quite astonishing, Mr. Speaker.

Let's be clear: The forestry industry in the province of Ontario plants 68 million trees every single year. I know this isn't an issue that the NDP cares about, but as the Premier said, we have lots of young children in the Legislature today, and you know what we care about? We care about their future. We care about cleaning up the financial mess left by the NDP and the Liberals. That's a \$15-billion deficit. We're not going to put the debt on the backs of the young people of this—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Agriculture plays a vital role in Ontario's economy, as well as in our neighbour Quebec's. In fact, Ontario and Quebec account for over one third, 36%, of Canada's gross farm income.

I was pleased to hear that Minister Hardeman and Quebec's Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Minister Lamontagne, met with SIAL Canada just this week to tour some of the vendors who produce the best food in our provinces.

SIAL is North America's largest food innovation trade show and provided an excellent venue to discuss the opportunities for enhanced collaboration between Ontario and Quebec's agriculture and food sectors. Could the minister please share with the House more details about the opportunities for innovation discussed at SIAL Canada?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry for that excellent question.

Through our government's Open for Business Action Plan and Quebec's own business action plan, both provinces have committed to reducing red tape. We are working hard to ensure that agri-food businesses aren't spending long hours navigating outdated, duplicated and unnecessary regulations.

We also recognize our shared responsibility for plant and animal health emergency management amidst many global concerns and threats. These are top priorities for both our governments.

We will also ensure that the federal government delivers on its promise of full and fair compensation to alleviate the impacts of the CUSMA on the supply-managed sectors.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Quebec minister to advance our shared interests and priorities for a successful and thriving agriculture sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you to the minister for the answer. I appreciate all the hard work that he's been doing on behalf of Ontario's farmers.

I'm pleased to be part of a government committed to working with neighbouring jurisdictions to advance our agriculture and food sectors. Strong agriculture and food sectors create jobs, increase investment and ensure our rural communities remain great places to live, work and raise a family in.

Working together as partners, we have a real opportunity to grow agriculture and food in Ontario and Quebec, both domestically and internationally. Can the minister please tell us what our government is doing to strengthen our relationships to create good-paying jobs in both provinces?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for the supplementary question. I will be meeting with Minister Lamontagne once again in Quebec this July for the annual federal-provincial-territorial agriculture ministers' meeting. This will provide an excellent opportunity to build on the success of our meetings at SIAL. We will work together on making sure the federal government and our counterparts across the country are aware of our shared priorities. Supporting our supply-managed industries, addressing agriculture's unique labour needs and creating a farmer-friendly business environment are all priorities we share and will continue to advocate for.

I am proud of the work our government has done so far, and we will continue to work with our provincial partners

to ensure agri-businesses remain viable, innovative and competitive on the world stage. Thank you very much for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for question period this morning. A number of members have informed me they wish to raise points of order.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll start with the member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, I would like to recognize the men and women from the Royal Canadian Navy who are here with us today at Queen's Park. In six days, May 8 marks the 74th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic, which was a major part of our naval history of the Second World War.

Thank you for all you do. Thank you for being here.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Earlier this week, during question period in the Legislature, I referenced a letter I received from a highly credible source concerning interlibrary loans, which I have since learned may not have originated from the office of the member for Niagara West. I want this House to know that, although I profoundly disagree with this government's policy decisions and their heinous cuts to libraries, I would never knowingly resort to fallacious information as the basis for question period, Mr. Speaker. I work from a place of truth and integrity. It's the only way I know how. Thank you very much.

LEGISLATIVE PROTECTIVE SERVICE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have the Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Sergeant-at-Arms and her team for chasing down the individual who chose to deface this amazing institution that Ontario calls their home: Queen's Park. Thank you, publicly, to you, Sergeant-at-Arms, and your team.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to invite all of the members to join our navy officers on the staircase for a photo—

Hon. Bill Walker: Following the vote.

Mr. Dave Smith: Sorry, following question period.

Hon. Bill Walker: Following the vote.

Mr. Dave Smith: Following the vote.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Davenport has given notice of

her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Education concerning cuts to education and increased class sizes. This matter will be debated Tuesday, May 7, 2019, at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for University–Rosedale has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Transportation concerning changing transit plans. This matter will be debated Tuesday, May 7, 2019, at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier concerning cuts to the tree planting program. This matter will also be debated Tuesday, May 7, 2019, at 6 p.m.

We're going to be busy.

DEFERRED VOTES

PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS MOST ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2019

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

Deferred vote on the motion for 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please take your seats. On April 17, 2019, Mr. Fedeli moved second reading of Bill 100.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Shaw, Sandy
Begum, Doly	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Gurratan
Bell, Jessica	Karpoche, Bhutula	Singh, Sara
Berns-McGown, Rima	Lindo, Laura Mae	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Burch, Jeff	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Paul	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Morrison, Suze	Yarde, Kevin
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 64; the nays are 35.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 1, 2019, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1153 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, I want to introduce to you and through you to the members of the assembly four members of my minister's office staff who are here as part of the introduction of the More Homes, More Choice Act. I want to introduce Alex Beduz, my chief of staff; Doug Brewer, my director of policy; Michael Jiggins, my senior communications assistant; and somewhere over there—right there, Hannah Anderson, who looks after many things, including issues management in my office. Welcome to the chamber.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce Elliott Silverstein from the Canadian Automobile Association, and Brian Patterson from the Ontario Safety League. It's also great to have Whitney McWilliam here today.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to correct my record from this morning. I referred to Sub-Lieutenant Ciara Murphy as "Chara" Murphy. It is "Kee-ah-ra", with the Gaelic spelling.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's the month of May, and May is Lyme awareness month. I look around the Legislature

right now and I see that there's a lime that has reached your desk, Speaker, and also the Clerks' table and down by the Sergeant-at-Arms. I don't know how they work, but they work in mysterious ways.

I'd like to call a couple of the pages up, please. I want to give you guys the Lyme task force report. It was established in 2018. There's a lot of good work that was done in there by a lot of members. I also have ribbons for each of the members in the House to pass along in order to raise awareness of Lyme disease.

The task force was comprised of Dr. Adalsteinn Brown from the University of Toronto; Dr. Beverley Bateman, Dr. Tim Cook, Lori Dennis, Greg Farrant, Dr. Elliot Jacobson, Ms. Linda Kelso, Catherine Kinsella, Dr. Gordon Ko, Dr. Angela Lee, Dr. Vett Lloyd, myself along with Dr. Mary Matheson, Dr. Piotr Oglaza, Lacey Phillips, Scott Weese, Dr. Melanie Wills and a whole lot of other individuals who had been brought together to bring awareness to Lyme disease.

We don't have all the answers, but this is a good point that we can start with. The point of Lyme disease—and I challenge everybody. Lyme disease is something you can do—raises awareness, what you do is, you grab a piece of lime and bite into it. You post your picture and put up lime fact. "Take a Bite out of Lyme," folks. Yum.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to advise the member that he's not allowed to use props in the House, but we'll have to study the matter as to whether or not fruit qualifies as a prop on Lyme Disease Awareness Day.

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to quote Frank Curry, a sailor on a Canadian corvette:

"What a miserable, rotten hopeless life ... an Atlantic so rough it seems impossible that we can continue to take this unending pounding and still remain in one piece ... the crew in almost a stupor from the nightmarishness of it all ... and still we go on hour after hour."

The first weekend in May is set aside to remember those who served in the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Merchant Navy during the Battle of the Atlantic, the longest battle of the Second World War. It was the Royal Canadian Navy's defining moment, escorting large merchant navy convoys that carried vital supplies between Canada and the United Kingdom. The Battle of the Atlantic was a lifeline for democracy and a key to the ultimate victory.

Over 2,000 courageous members of the Royal Canadian Navy gave the ultimate sacrifice during the Battle of the Atlantic. For over six years, Canadian sailors protected Allied supply lines from German ships and U-boats, completing over 25,000 merchant voyages, transporting over 165 million tonnes of cargo, as well as personnel.

Beginning with only 13 ships and 3,500 sailors, by the end of World War II, the Royal Canadian Navy consisted of 375 fighting ships and more than 110,000 sailors and officers.

Her Majesty's Canadian Ship York, Toronto's navy reserve division, the largest in Canada with over 320 sailors,

is with us in the members' gallery and will be parading from Yonge-Dundas Square to Nathan Phillips Square for a special commemorative ceremony this Sunday, May 5, at 11 a.m.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Doly Begum: We've talked a lot about Ontario's health care system here recently, with different opinions about its future and its impact on Ontario families. I, like many of my colleagues, believe that our health care system is a sacred pillar of our Canadian society. We're immensely proud of the work that our health care professionals do every single day.

At some point in our lives, all of us here and all Ontarians will come into contact with our public health care system. Universal health care is something we appreciate after the fact; it's not something we ever look forward to. But in our most vulnerable moments, our doctors, nurses, support staff and the tireless front-line workers are there for us when we need them—free of charge.

Over the last couple of months, I have spent a lot of time in hospitals in Toronto with my husband as he battled a life-threatening illness. The care he received was remarkable. While the patients slept, doctors and nurses worked tirelessly to care for them with the same diligence and compassion that one would give to their own family members. Because of their care, I was able to bring my husband home, after a life-saving operation, to continue his recovery.

Our health care workers deserve the very best. We need to support our care providers by hiring more, providing the best technology and repairing and building new hospitals. I urge each and every member in this House to recommit to investing in public health care. If you have doubts, spend a day at the hospital with the front-line staff and, trust me, you will know what I mean.

PEEL LEARNING FOUNDATION

Mr. Deepak Anand: Once, I was approached by a principal, who asked me a question: "There are two brothers. One comes on Monday; the other one comes on Tuesday. They follow the pattern. Why?" The answer was, "They only had one winter suit." One in five students in the region of Peel face barriers related to poverty. Coming to school hungry and lacking basic necessities, such as winter clothes and school supplies, prevent them from fully participating in the school and classroom.

Thankfully, there is an amazing organization that is able to help these students in need. It is an honour to rise today to spread the word about Peel Learning Foundation, a community-based, charitable, not-for-profit organization that raises funds to enable students within the Peel District School Board by providing resources to help overcome various barriers. Currently, it is focused on two main programs: the Student Emergency Needs Program and the Student Backpack Program. I was fortunate enough to be able to join the launch in February.

In my riding of Mississauga–Malton, we are working closely with the Peel Learning Foundation with our Fueling Healthy Minds program, which aims to connect community corporate donors and schools. The program aims to provide a nutritious breakfast to the students. In the early stages of this program, they're only working with two schools. Hopefully, we aim to expand the program to all schools in Mississauga–Malton. Our end goal is to make the program as self-sustainable as possible.

I encourage every school board to observe and follow the steps of the Peel Learning Foundation for the success of their communities. Please visit peellarningfoundation.org to directly donate and learn more ways to get involved. I wish the Peel Learning Foundation prosperity and success so more students can develop and flourish.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: On March 8, almost eight weeks ago today, 86 Windsor-Essex health unit nurses, members of Ontario Nurses' Association Local 8, were forced out on strike. All 86 of these nurses are women, and all they are asking for is equity, to be paid the same 2% wage increase that has been given to male-dominated municipal professions.

1310

The nurses have my support and my community's support, and they have the support of nurses across the country as well. In a great act of solidarity, nurses from the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, the United Nurses of Alberta and the Prince Edward Island Nurses' Union have all sent donations to ONA Local 8 encouraging them to stay strong in their fight.

I've spoken in this House before about the need to get the employer back to the table to negotiate with the nurses, but I think it's important to raise this issue again, because next week is Nursing Week here in Ontario. We in this House and across the province will spend the next week honouring and congratulating our local nurses, whose hard work and dedication keeps us, our families and friends safe and healthy.

As we offer those messages of support next week, this Conservative government needs to ask itself whether it truly supports nurses and the life-saving services that they provide. They continue to cut funding to public health programs, and that impacts not only the livelihoods of our nurses but also the safety of our communities.

My wish for this upcoming Nursing Week is for a swift and fair resolution to the strike in Windsor-Essex so that ONA Local 8 can get back to work providing vital care, which is exactly where they want to be.

HATE CRIMES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Over the past few weeks our world has experienced a wave of violence and hatred. People have been targeted at their places of worship while surrounded by loved ones and at their most vulnerable. In New Zealand, two mosques in Christchurch were attacked.

In Sri Lanka two weekends ago, over Easter, hundreds lost their life in another attack of hatred and fear. Just this last weekend, at Chabad of Poway synagogue outside of San Diego, a woman lost her life as she ran to protect the rabbi from a lone gunman.

After the tragedy in Sri Lanka, I attended two vigils in my riding. It was moving to see the Sri Lankan community of Scarborough–Guildwood unite in this time of grief and sadness. Tragedy is no less felt as time goes on, as today we remember the Holocaust and the six million Jews who lost their lives and experienced horror. This past weekend I joined those in my community who gathered to remember the terrible tragedy of the Armenian genocide at the end of World War I.

Each vigil and memorial serves as a reminder of our need for resilience and a demonstration of strength. May we all find some light, which dispels hatred and fear and anger. Our communities must come together to be stronger and work together so that we can be more prepared for our province's future. It is our duty as elected representatives to uphold the values of inclusion, diversity and acceptance as we put forward legislation in this House that strengthens all in our communities.

TORONTO BLOCKCHAIN WEEK

Mr. Doug Downey: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize Toronto Blockchain Week. It's more than cryptocurrency and it's something that every business should be paying attention to.

Last week, over 1,200 developers, entrepreneurs, dignitaries, investors and innovators from 20 countries around the world gathered at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre for the inaugural Blockchain Revolution Global Conference.

This global conference kicked off the first-ever Toronto Blockchain Week to promote and celebrate innovation, featuring over 40 events showcasing this innovative community, including hackathons, open houses and workshops.

The Toronto-Kitchener-Waterloo corridor is one of the fastest-growing fintech hubs on the planet, with over 190 fintech start-ups located in the region. It's groundbreaking events like these that send a clear signal to the world that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Miss Monique Taylor: This government is making it harder for the people of Ontario to access justice. Earlier this month the government announced shocking and cruel cuts to Legal Aid Ontario that will hurt the most vulnerable.

Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, which is part of Legal Aid Ontario, serves the residents of my riding of Hamilton Mountain. HCLC does a lot of important work that is now threatened by these cuts. HCLC helps people access ODSP and OW. It helps tenants fight illegal evictions. It helps precarious workers who are treated

unfairly by their employers. It helps newcomers and refugees wade through the complex immigration system. It helps workers who are injured on the job and denied compensation.

On top of the cuts to legal aid, this government is changing how and when a government can be held liable and taken to court. These changes could apply retroactively. There are cases that are before the court right now that will be impacted. If this government truly believed in its actions, it would not be reducing access to justice for Ontarians and leaving people to fend for themselves. Access to justice is fundamental to our democracy. This government should be empowering its citizens and improving access, not diminishing it.

ED'S HOUSE

Mr. David Piccini: On April 24, I was honoured to attend the official groundbreaking for Ed's House, Northumberland's hospice. Mr. Speaker, this was an incredible groundbreaking that was born out of the fruits of so many in our community who have come together to make sure that compassionate end-of-life hospice care is a reality in our community. I was honoured to stand there to announce our government's \$1.2-million investment into the capital construction, and of course our \$630,000 ongoing operating funding.

So many in our community have come together to make this project a reality, and it spans multiple governments. It spans so many in our community who have linked arms to make this a reality. I'd like to especially thank Gord and Patti Ley, campaign co-chairs and early volunteers with a vision; Stewart Richardson, who is also chair of the building committee; Selena Forsyth; Ray Lobban, chair of the board of Community Care Northumberland; Sherry Gibson, the project lead; Lynda Kay, campaign director; Trish Baird, executive director; key donors Ed and Diane Lorenz; Brian and Kym Reid; and, of course, members of our building committee, executive members and all directors involved who have made compassionate end-of-life care in Northumberland–Peterborough South a reality.

PETER TINSLEY

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Colleagues on all sides of this House, we work in a partisan environment, but we should never, ever forget the necessity of respect and humanity in our political processes. As such, today I offer my sincere condolences to the family of the late Peter Tinsley, who passed away recently on April 26.

Peter was an accomplished professional. He had a 28-year career in the Canadian Armed Forces as a prosecutor, he practised law in Belleville, he sat on many local commissions and boards, and he served as the head of the military police complaints tribunal for Canada.

I should also note that Peter was a federal Liberal candidate for the riding of Prince Edward–Hastings who ran against me in 2011. I recall we had many interesting conversations. I remember when we both made submissions to the electoral boundaries commission for changes

that came up. Just to show you there was no partisanship in it whatsoever, neither one of our suggestions were accepted.

While we did have some differing perspectives as to the direction, the roles and responsibilities of government, we did share a common appreciation for the democratic institutions and the positive role that an elected official, like each one of us here today, can play in helping shape our province and our country.

I trust that Peter's legacy and his accomplishments will remind us that humanity and politics can be shared and celebrated and not be lost in partisan discourse. Peter, rest in peace. God bless.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill has informed me he has a point of order.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd just like to welcome to the House Brian Patterson, president and CEO of the Ontario Safety League. Welcome to Queen's Park.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GETTING ONTARIO MOVING ACT (TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT), 2019

LOI DE 2019 POUR UN ONTARIO EN MOUVEMENT (MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE TRANSPORT)

Mr. Yurek moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and various other statutes in respect of transportation-related matters / Projet de loi 107, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et diverses autres lois à l'égard de questions relatives au transport.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1320 to 1326.

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

Mr. Yurek has moved that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and various other statutes in respect of transportation-related matters, and that it now be read for the first time.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be acknowledged by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak
Baber, Roman
Babikian, Aris

Ghamari, Goldie
Gill, Parm
Hardeman, Ernie

Parsa, Michael
Pettapiece, Randy
Phillips, Rod

Bailey, Robert	Hogarth, Christine	Piccini, David
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kanapathi, Logan	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Karahalios, Belinda	Roberts, Jeremy
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Romano, Ross
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Khanjin, Andrea	Sabawy, Sheref
Clark, Steve	Kramp, Daryl	Sandhu, Amarjot
Coe, Lorne	Kusendova, Natalia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Crawford, Stephen	MacLeod, Lisa	Skelly, Donna
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Downey, Doug	Martow, Gila	Surma, Kinga
Dunlop, Jill	McDonell, Jim	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fedeli, Victor	Mulroney, Caroline	Wai, Daisy
Fee, Amy	Nicholls, Rick	Walker, Bill
Fullerton, Merrilee	Oosterhoff, Sam	Yurek, Jeff

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Hassan, Faisal	Singh, Gurratan
Bell, Jessica	Hunter, Mitzie	Singh, Sara
Berns-McGown, Rima	Karpoche, Bhutila	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Burch, Jeff	Morrison, Suze	Taylor, Monique

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 57; the nays are 18.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will ask the Minister of Transportation to give a brief explanation of his bill.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and various other statutes in respect of transportation-related matters is an order to:

—introduce an administrative monetary penalty regime for improperly passing a school bus;

—increase fines for driving too slowly and requiring slow-moving vehicles to travel in the right-hand lane;

—amend Highway Traffic Act references to reflect changes to the Criminal Code of Canada references that were recently made;

—introduce a new offence for violating a zero blood-alcohol or drug presence requirement for driving instructors;

—introduce stronger fines for driving carelessly around maintenance and construction workers, tow truck personnel and recovery workers;

—allow temporary changes to special-use lanes within designated construction zones to reduce costs and improve construction time;

—update the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to require the issuing of permits for both above-ground and below-ground structures;

—update the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act regarding the issuing of permits for the grading phase of a construction project;

- update and simplify the rules for off-road vehicles;
- create a fine for defacing or removing traffic signs;
- amend Ontario's Shortline Railways Act, 1995, to reduce the burden on the shortline industry and to better manage performance;
- eliminate the enhanced driver's licence used by Ontarians for land and water transfer between Ontario and the United States;
- amend the Insurance Act to limit the financial risk to vehicle financing companies that result from leased vehicles being used for ride-sharing services; and
- amend the Metrolinx Act that would enable the up-load of responsibility for new subway projects, including new lines and extensions for existing lines.

I look forward to the debate, Mr. Speaker, and I really look forward to the opposition actually reading the piece of legislation before voting against it.

MORE HOMES, MORE CHOICE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 POUR PLUS DE LOGEMENTS ET PLUS DE CHOIX

Mr. Clark moved first reading of the following bill:

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

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing care to explain this bill?

Hon. Steve Clark: The proposed bill, the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019, includes legislative changes that would, if passed, help Ontario build more housing more quickly, to make housing more affordable and to help taxpayers keep more of their hard-earned dollars. It is a responsible and sustainable plan that will reduce red tape and increase housing supply.

JENNIFER'S LAW (RETAIL SALES TAX AMENDMENT ACT RESPECTING HST REBATES FOR MEDICAL SUPPLIES), 2019

LOI JENNIFER DE 2019 (LOI MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA TAXE DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL CONCERNANT LE REMBOURSEMENT DE LA TVH SUR LES FOURNITURES MÉDICALES)

Ms. Karpoche moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide for a rebate of the Ontario portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax in respect of certain medical supplies / *Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la taxe*

de vente au détail pour prévoir le remboursement de la portion ontarienne de la taxe de vente harmonisée à l'égard de certaines fournitures médicales.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member for Parkdale–High Park to explain her bill.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: The bill amends the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide for a rebate in respect of the Ontario portion of the harmonized sales tax for medical supplies. The Lieutenant Governor in Council can make regulations prescribing rules relating to the rebate. The bill provides that the rebate is available only if the Comprehensive Integrated Tax Coordination Agreement between Ontario and Canada is amended accordingly.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Bill Walker: I move that on the Standing Committee on Estimates, Mr. Hillier replaces Mr. Gravelle, and that on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Miss Mitas and Mr. Gravelle are added.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Walker has moved that, on the Standing Committee on Estimates, Mr. Hillier replaces Mr. Gravelle, and on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Ms. Mitas and Mr. Gravelle are added.

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

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MUSEUM MONTH MOIS DES MUSÉES

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: It is a great honour for me to rise today and encourage the members of this House and the people of Ontario to take part in May Is Museum Month.

Since the year 2000, the province-wide celebration of May Is Museum Month has been organized by the Ontario Museum Association on behalf of its more than 300 member institutions. Depuis l'an 2000, la célébration provinciale qu'est « Mai, Mois des musées » est organisée par l'Association des musées de l'Ontario au nom de ses quelque 300 établissements membres.

It is also during this special month, on May 18, that a day of worldwide celebration of museums takes place. Organized by the International Council of Museums, the theme of International Museum Day 2019 is "Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition." The focus this

year is on the new role of museums as an active force in their communities.

We're proud that in every region of Ontario, museums, galleries and heritage sites enrich our lives and create better communities. Nous sommes fiers que, dans chaque région de l'Ontario, les musées, galeries et sites patrimoniaux enrichissent nos vies et créent de meilleures collectivités.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario museums have taken great strides to reinvent themselves in recent years. More creative and interactive than ever before, Ontario museums, galleries and heritage sites are attracting almost 10 million residents and tourists, students and educators in person, and over 30 million online visits each year. They have accomplished this by striving to be more interactive, audience-focused, community-oriented, flexible, adaptable and mobile.

One good example, Mr. Speaker, is the Zuul exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum, which uses computer animation and interactive games as part of a fun way to tell the life story of a newly identified species of dinosaur. It's that kind of programming that makes the Royal Ontario Museum the most visited museum in Canada. Over the past year, 1.34 million visitors came through the ROM's doors.

I just found out, as part of the Dutch heritage days celebration here at Queen's Park, that in June we'll also have an exhibit that will highlight our Dutch heritage right here in the province of Ontario, so I hope we'll all go out and visit that as well.

Then there's Markham Museum's "Geared for Growing"—recipient of the 2018 Ontario Museum Association Award of Excellence in Exhibitions. This museum's entertaining and interactive family-friendly exhibition gives people of all ages a chance to step into the role of a Markham farmer and explores Markham's rich agricultural history through the machines used in farming.

Mr. Speaker, our museums have always been an integral component of the cultural, social and economic fabric of this province. Monsieur le Président, nos musées ont toujours fait partie intégrante du tissu culturel, social et économique de cette province.

The majority of Ontario's museums focus on local community and history, bringing our many vibrant and varied stories to life. For example, until the end of 2020, the Oakville Museum hosts "The Underground Railroad: Next Stop, Freedom!" This moving multimedia presentation features the ghost of Deborah Brown, who tells visitors of her journey out of slavery in the southern United States to freedom in 19th-century Toronto.

The Dryden and District Museum's exhibit "Making a Home: Early Women of Dryden" is on until the 10th of May, sharing stories about settler women who helped build Dryden and district's sense of community.

These are just a few of the many inspiring and educational exhibits on display in Ontario communities during May Is Museum Month and every month of the year.

Mr. Speaker, our museums are improving the quality of life for all Ontarians. They safeguard our heritage,

enhance the education and growth of our young people, promote lifelong learning and strengthen our innovative economy. Ils protègent notre patrimoine, améliorent l'éducation et la croissance de nos jeunes personnes, font la promotion d'un apprentissage tout au long de la vie et renforcent notre économie innovante.

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Mr. Speaker, I also would like to further this thought and remind everyone that we all talk about physical fitness; we all talk about the importance of going to a gym. Well, our minds need to have exercise as well, and museums are the gyms of the mind. They provide us the opportunity to exercise our minds, to dream, to look at our history, to look at our present circumstances and inspire our children for the future. They are extremely important for those and many other reasons.

I would like to thank the Ontario Museum Association for leading the May Is Museum Month celebrations of our shared cultural and natural history through architecture, archaeology, and the wonderful collections hosted by all our museums. I would also like to recognize Ontario's many museum volunteers and thank them for their dedication to the collections and exhibits, and to the community they love. Their love, their passion and their dedication are much appreciated, and we should all be thankful for the incredible work that they do for us.

I would also like to encourage, again, the many members of the House, their friends, their families, along with all Ontarians watching us today, to participate in this special month of celebration of our shared heritage and collective knowledge.

Thank you very much. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you, Minister Tibollo, for your words on May as Museum Month and May 18 as International Museum Day. Ontario's over 700 museums, galleries and heritage sites are important cultural resources. They preserve history, and preserve and promote local stories. They are living, dynamic spaces that are sites of learning, discovery and memory for many Ontarians, from large cultural institutions like the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, to the locally specific ones like the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre, to culturally relevant spaces like the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford and the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto.

I am proud to say that in my own riding of Toronto—St. Paul's there are a number of museums, such as the Reuben and Helene Dennis Museum at the Beth Tzedec Congregation, the Tollkeeper's Cottage museum, the Spadina Museum, the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Regimental Museum, and we have the Canadian Friends of the Israel Museum.

The theme of this International Museum Day is "Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition."

Museums do more than provide objects and exhibits to view. They help create a sense of place and contribute to vibrant and vital communities. They're interactive, audience-focused, accessible spaces of creativity and cultural exchange. They spark awe and wonder. They engage and educate. They powerfully shape narratives of

history. They make connections and respond to current social and political issues in the world, promoting dialogue and provoking debate. They enhance feelings of belonging, bringing people from diverse backgrounds together.

They help support social participation for Ontario seniors, and skill-building employment and learning opportunities for young people. They inspire dreams, Speaker. They contribute over 11,000 jobs to the province's economy and engage over 35,000 volunteers. They host over 38,000 school visits, offering programs that are often linked to supporting the provincial curriculum. They attract cultural tourists; as many as 7.5 million and more visit annually. Museum visits in Ontario have grown 15% in five years and play a significant role in developing Ontario's rural tourism. Cultural tourism contributes \$7.7 billion in visitor spending to the economy every year.

I want to congratulate the Ontario Museum Association in particular for their research in this area, amplifying the impact of museums and leading the development of museum networks to allow museums across the province to connect with each other and share resources and best practices.

Like libraries, museums are truly community hubs. Like libraries, they are also spaces where the world comes to you. And like libraries, museums need sustainable public sources of funding to keep them and the communities they support surviving and thriving. Many of the challenges that the museum sector faces are related to having sustainable, continued sources of funding. For example, the Museum + Arts pass by the Toronto Public Library provides free admission to Toronto museums. This removes financial barriers for low-income families and individuals to access museums and cultural institutions. This is a hugely impactful program, and yet it was in jeopardy in 2017 after a major financial sponsor withdrew its funding.

Programs like these should not have to depend on individual niceness. They should be able to depend on a province that's there to protect them and save them. In fact, in response to this uncertainty in the program, in our 2018 platform, I'm proud to say that the NDP proposed to save the Museum + Arts access pass and extend it to more communities across Ontario, with a \$3-million annual investment. The bottom line is, this government needs to materially acknowledge and support the important role that culture plays in the lives of the province. Museums are a significant part of this.

I want to make it very clear to Minister Tibollo that this government's ongoing attempts to undermine and dismantle Ontario's vibrant culture sector will not happen without a fight. Arts educators, arts administrators, community members, artists, arts volunteers, librarians, curators, choreographers, musicians, writers—everyone across the arts disciplines is voicing their disagreement. They're making their voices heard, and we are standing here to support them because, as the PC government knows, their budget has said nothing specifically about museums—or about culture, at that—and we really need to know, because Ontarians are asking. They want to know. I'm here to fight for them, and I'm going to listen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A reminder to all members: We refer to all members of the House by their title, their ministry or their riding.

Further responses?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: May Is Museum Month across the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto. Ontario is home to over 700 museums, galleries and heritage sites. Museum Month is an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of museums to their communities and to kick off the summer tourism season. I highly recommend a visit to the Scarborough Museum, which is nested right in the centre of Thomson park.

In partnership with Toronto Public Library, nine Toronto history museums offer free admission on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays during the entire month of May. Free admission will be granted to everyone who shows their library card. Initiatives like these serve to bring together our communities and allow those who don't always have the opportunity to access rich culture and heritage that opportunity to get that access in this city, province and country.

Madam Speaker, I want to speak to how I find it ironic that this government is choosing to recognize Museum Month but has only shown a commitment to cutting cultural funding right across the board. Is the Premier's plan to continue to hack away at this province's cultural heritage by these cuts? Budget cuts keep adding up. Both the province's library services as well as the Ontario Music Fund are being slashed by more than half—not to mention what is being done to our Indigenous services.

First off, let's talk about libraries. The Premier has shown that he has no regard for the ability of small towns in rural areas to access free resources through education through their local libraries. If you look at the cover of this year's budget, you'll see what looks like a library in the background. But ironically, these are the very same services that this budget cuts. The Southern Ontario Library Service and the Ontario Library Service—North will see their budgets halved. The Ford government is cutting 50% from these library services, yet the minister is here today talking about Museum Month and not talking about the impact of these cuts to our culture and our heritage.

Libraries provide people with an opportunity to access knowledge and education that they wouldn't otherwise have, through socio-economic and other barriers. Education is a right, and limiting people's access to knowledge is an irresponsible act. We are waiting for the Premier to explain to us how he can justify taking away books from these important library services, particularly in northern and rural communities.

Aside from libraries, this government has also slashed the Ontario Music Fund by over half, from \$15 million to \$7 million, without a moment's hesitation. The OMF provides opportunities for Ontario's grassroots and up-and-coming musicians to invest in their skills and eventually gain international attention from larger companies like Sony Music, Universal Music and others. Through the OMF, musicians are able to create jobs by hiring producers, directors and other artists to contribute to their final product. So the return on investment of the OMF is clear.

This government is taking away this opportunity and really killing our local music industry at its root.

1350

This government is also slashing funding for Indigenous affairs by 50%. Cutting to the Indigenous Culture Fund has also hurt our cultural industries, and the lack of commitment to our first stewards of this land is absolutely appalling.

A commitment to culture is a commitment to honouring the past and building for the future of this province.

I remember visiting the Toronto archives and seeing an exhibit on public housing. It was surprising to me that our history of public housing is actually embedded in public health. It was a result of public health concerns—people living in squalor in our city—that a policy emerged to build and to support public housing.

These types of archives and museums offer an important lesson of the past and can inform good policies for the future.

It's time for the government to get cultured and to show that they are here to support our rich heritage in Ontario and its diverse communities. This government needs to put their money where their mouth is and stop cutting cultural funding.

PETITIONS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thanks to the folks from York South–Weston who have given me this petition about affordable housing.

“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 fully support this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Thomas to deliver to the table.

GUIDE AND SERVICE ANIMALS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to very quickly introduce my cousin who is here from Israel, Eyal Bar Sever. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature. He didn't expect to

be here today. He said he's sorry he isn't wearing a tie—Israeli style, they call it.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Regulation 429/07 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 indicates, ‘If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, the provider of goods or services shall ensure that the person is permitted to enter the premises with the animal and to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises;’ and

“Whereas the Ontario Human Rights Code speaks to the ‘duty to accommodate persons with disabilities ... in a manner that most respects the dignity of the person;’ and

“Whereas, despite these provisions, many who require, have been medically recommended for and own professional, trained service dogs, including children with autism, PTSD sufferers and others, continue to be denied access to public places; and

“Whereas service dogs perform a series of vital tasks to support those living with disabilities, including serving in guidance, seizure response, mobility assistance, autism and PTSD support, among other medically acknowledged services; and

“Whereas there are cases where children who rely on a service dog are not allowed to bring them to school; and

“Whereas ongoing denial of access means those requiring service dogs are continuing to face further hurdles beyond the impacts of disability to be allowed the public accommodations they deserve;

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

“Open access to registered service dogs and owners:

“Reintroduce the Ontario Service Dog Act, to end continued discrimination and ensure those requiring service dogs are no longer denied the essential public access they should already be guaranteed.”

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Sarah, who is my friend's daughter.

LEGAL AID

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Ensure that Low-Income Ontarians Have Access to Justice.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario has cut the funding for Legal Aid Ontario by almost one third;

“Whereas provincial funding for the immigration and refugee law program at Legal Aid Ontario has been completely cut;

“Whereas access to legal aid is essential to low-income Ontarians who are facing legal proceedings such as in immigration ... family, mental health, poverty law and child protection cases;

“Whereas vulnerable populations like refugees will be left to represent themselves in a complex and already overburdened legal system, where a negative decision leads to deportation to countries where lives may be at risk;

“Whereas the cuts will lead to backlogs and delays throughout the justice system, causing chaos in the courts and costing taxpayers more, not less;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario that have already begun to impact the most vulnerable people in Ontario, including immigrants and refugees.”

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature to it as well.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My petition is entitled “Stop the TTC Subway Upload.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the TTC has owned, operated and maintained Toronto’s public transit system since 1921; and

“Whereas the people of Toronto have paid for the TTC at the fare box and through their property taxes; and

“Whereas uploading the subway will mean higher fares, reduced service and less say for transit riders; and

“Whereas the TTC is accountable to the people of Toronto because elected Toronto city councillors sit on its board;

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

“Reject legislation that uploads any aspect of the TTC to the province of Ontario, and reject the privatization or contracting out of any part of the TTC; and

“Match the city of Toronto’s financial contribution to the TTC so transit riders can have improved service and affordable fares.”

I completely agree with this petition, will be affixing my name to it and passing it to page Rishi to take to the Clerk.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’m getting so many of these petitions. Just recently, I received thousands of petition signatures from the Family Council Network 4 Advocacy. They read as follows:

“Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas quality care for the 78,000 residents of” long-term-care “homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a

legislated minimum care standard to provide an average of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Sara Singh: I’m proud to present this petition entitled “Save Our Health Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford government is currently proposing massive restructuring to the entire health system without any public consultation;

“Whereas the proposal eliminates local planning and control of health care;

“Whereas the proposal will open the door for unprecedented levels of for-profit providers in our health care system;

“Whereas the last Conservative government privatized home care services, creating a system that fails” far “too many families;

“Whereas the current hallway medicine crisis is a direct result of inadequate home care, long-term care and community care services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the government to abandon Bill 74, The People’s Health Care Act, and focus on improving our province’s not-for-profit delivery of universal health care.”

I’m proud to affix my signature to this and I’ll send it off with page Emily.

1400

LEGAL AID

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This petition is entitled “Ensure that Low-Income Ontarians Have Access to Justice.

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario has cut the funding for Legal Aid Ontario by almost one third;

“Whereas provincial funding for the immigration and refugee law program at Legal Aid Ontario has been completely cut;

“Whereas access to legal aid is essential to low-income Ontarians who are facing legal proceedings such as in immigration, criminal, family, mental health, poverty law and child protection cases;

“Whereas vulnerable populations like refugees will be left to represent themselves in a complex and already overburdened legal system, where a negative decision leads to deportation to countries where lives may be at risk;

“Whereas the cuts will lead to backlogs and delays throughout the justice system, causing chaos in the courts and costing taxpayers more, not less;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario that

have already begun to impact the most vulnerable people in Ontario, including immigrants and refugees.”

I'm proud to support this and will be affixing my signature and giving it to page Zoe.

LEGAL AID

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition called “Ensure that Low-Income Ontarians Have Access to Justice.

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario has cut the funding for Legal Aid Ontario by almost one third;

“Whereas provincial funding for the immigration and refugee law program at Legal Aid Ontario has been completely cut;

“Whereas access to legal aid is essential to low-income Ontarians who are facing legal proceedings such as in immigration, criminal, family, mental health, poverty law and child protection cases;

“Whereas vulnerable populations like refugees will be left to represent themselves in a complex and already overburdened legal system, where a negative decision leads to deportation to countries where lives may be at risk;

“Whereas the cuts will lead to backlogs and delays throughout the justice system, causing chaos in the courts and costing taxpayers more, not less;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario that have already begun to impact the most vulnerable people in Ontario, including immigrants and refugees.”

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

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Stop the TTC Subway Upload.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the TTC has owned, operated and maintained Toronto’s public transit system since 1921; and

“Whereas the people of Toronto have paid for the TTC at the fare box and through their property taxes; and

“Whereas uploading the subway will mean higher fares, reduced service and less say for transit riders; and

“Whereas the TTC is accountable to the people of Toronto because elected Toronto city councillors sit on its board;

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

“Reject ... the privatization or contracting out of any part of the TTC; and

“Match the city of Toronto’s financial contribution to the TTC so transit riders can have improved service and affordable fares.”

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

LEGAL AID

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My petition is entitled “Ensure that Low-Income Ontarians Have Access to Justice.

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario has cut the funding for Legal Aid Ontario by almost one third;

“Whereas provincial funding for the immigration and refugee law program at Legal Aid Ontario has been completely cut;

“Whereas access to legal aid is essential to low-income Ontarians who are facing legal proceedings such as in immigration, criminal, family, mental health, poverty law and child protection cases;

“Whereas vulnerable populations like refugees will be left to represent themselves in a complex and already overburdened legal system, where a negative decision leads to deportation to countries where lives may be at risk;

“Whereas the cuts will lead to backlogs and delays throughout the justice system, causing chaos in the courts and costing taxpayers more, not less;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario that have already begun to impact the most vulnerable people in Ontario, including immigrants and refugees.”

I completely agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Wolfgang to take to the Clerk.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Sara Singh: I’m happy to present this petition entitled “Support Ontario Families with Autism.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“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’m happy to sign my name and send it this off with page Helen.

STUDENT WORK EXPERIENCE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: My petition is entitled “Invest in Work-Integrated Learning.

“Whereas Ontario’s youth unemployment rate is consistently higher than the national average;

“Whereas it is increasingly common for even entry-level positions to require relevant work experience;

“Whereas work-integrated learning serves to develop the practical skills and professional networks that young people need to transition into the workforce;

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

“That the government of Ontario should create 27,000 new, paid work opportunities for students, recent graduates and unemployed youth in the public and private sector and the skilled trades so they can move into the workforce with real-world experience and a path to full-time employment.”

I fully support this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Leo to deliver to the table.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “Workers’ Comp Is a Right.

“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:

“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.”

Speaker, I fully support this petition and give it to page Caleah to deliver to the table.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Point of order.

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

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Merci, madame la Présidente. I’m seeking unanimous consent to be able to share my time with the member from Scarborough–Guildwood to intervene on the private member’s bill this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member from Ottawa–Vanier is seeking unanimous consent to split her time with the member from Scarborough–Guildwood. Is it agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (RIGHT TO REPAIR ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS), 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR (DROIT DE RÉPARER LES PRODUITS ÉLECTRONIQUES)

Mr. Coteau moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 72, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 respecting the repair of electronic products / Projet de loi 72, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur concernant la réparation des produits électroniques.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 72. Madam Speaker, we’ve seen such technological advancements over the last few decades, especially over the last 10 years, here in Ontario and around the world. We’ve seen things like blockchain technology, which was mentioned earlier today. We’ve heard about things like metal-based 3D printing, incredible advancements in artificial intelligence, in automation. I read today about the Babel-fish earbuds; that’s real-time translation between languages. We’ve seen so much technology advancement over the last few years. I’m really excited to see what’s to come in the next two decades.

1410

But Madam Speaker, we know that with this advancement in technology we’ve also seen some pieces come out of technology that raise concern. When we talk about our privacy, we need to ensure that it is protected. When we think about how much time young people are actually spending on their digital devices, it has become a conversation item.

One of the pieces that doesn’t get a lot of attention is the right to repair. Madam Speaker, the right to repair is a pretty simple concept. It says that if a manufacturer makes a product, an electronic product, any electronic product—it could be a dishwasher, could be a phone, could be a

stereo, could be a toaster, could be anything—if they make that product, they should do three things: (1) provide parts and tools in order to repair that product; (2) provide the manuals so anyone can go and actually understand how it works so they can fix it; and (3) provide diagnostic software. Now more than ever, we're seeing that there's software that is needed to understand how an actual product works.

The right-to-repair movement is a movement that has been around for quite some time. In fact, right now, currently, in 18 states in America there are Legislatures like ours having these types of debates around the right to repair. But the right to repair has been something that's been here for many decades.

Madam Speaker, could you imagine pulling up to your garage, your mechanic's garage, and actually being told by the mechanic that they couldn't fix that car because they didn't have access to the parts, or they couldn't do a diagnostic to figure out what was actually wrong with that car? Well, the fact is that there is legislation in place in many parts of North America that ensures that anyone who is fixing a car must have access to the tools necessary to fix it. Could you imagine a world where we couldn't even fix our own cars, where we wanted to access a certain part but we were told that the only way you could get that part is to go to the actual manufacturer?

There was a time when people debated this. There was a big debate about this, and we made a conscious decision that if you need a part for your car, you should have access to it. That's something that we do. But now we're finding, more than ever, that manufacturers are creating products and not providing the consumers with the actual parts to fix those products. So we have a bit of a problem as we move forward. Especially as we embrace more technology in our world, we really need to ensure that we are protected as consumers, that we can have access and understand how those products work.

There was a time when people like Steve Jobs and Bill Gates would be able to take computers apart and repurpose parts and add new software and make tweaks and actually develop products. That's how Apple, for example, started. People actually took things apart and tweaked current software and took other pieces of software and adapted them and changed them, and we're fortunate today to live in a world where we have such incredible technology.

There are a lot of people out there who will say there are reasons we shouldn't do this. In fact, I have some correspondence here that I received—one from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce that I received yesterday. They urged the minister responsible for consumer protection not to support Bill 72. This is our chamber of commerce. This is the chamber of commerce in Ontario, which supports small businesses, that says we shouldn't be supporting Bill 72. One of the reasons they say is—it says here that it's easier for criminals to carry out cyber attacks by supporting this bill.

Let me just restate what my bill does. My bill says that if you create a product, if you're a manufacturer, (1) you provide the parts and the tools to the consumers if they

need them so they can fix it; (2) you provide the manuals, which I think is a very fair thing to ask for; (3) the diagnostic software. That's all this bill is actually asking the Legislature to do. But the chamber of commerce says that Bill 72 raises security concerns because it can allow for cyber attacks.

Electronics Product Stewardship Canada wrote a letter to me, and they bring up their concerns, as well. They say it is an issue around intellectual property. That's an easy argument to make and, actually, if you really think about it, at the beginning it may seem reasonable. You don't want to give away too much information. Well, I'm not asking for any company in Ontario or anywhere around the world to give away their intellectual property; I'm saying, provide the part—so if you have a washing machine and a part breaks, that you can actually get that part. I'm not asking for the codes behind the security, the software embedded in that, the algorithms used within a product. I'm not asking for the design manuals. All I'm asking for is the manuals, the schematics, of that particular product and how the parts fit into each other. That's all I'm asking for. So I thought that Electronics Product Stewardship Canada's point may seem reasonable, but it's not an actual, valid concern.

This goes way beyond just cellphones, and it goes way beyond simple products we find in our homes. In fact, there's a growing movement in North America, in the agricultural sector, today to support the right to repair, because we're finding that farmers are finding it very difficult to take their tractors and get them repaired locally. The reason for that is because they have to put that product on a truck and ship it hundreds of kilometres, in some cases, to get it fixed, because they are not allowed to open up those products and actually fix them themselves or it voids the warranty, and they're not allowed—and this is embedded in law—to adjust any of the software, so running diagnostics tests, that kind of stuff. What happens in these types of settings is, you have farmers who will have to wait weeks to get products like their tractors fixed. So it does affect more than just the regular consumer; it actually is playing a role in our agricultural sector, as well.

Recently, my daughter dropped my Samsung S8 and the screen cracked. I'm not going to say which daughter, but one of them did it. I called Samsung and asked them how much it would cost to repair that product. It was \$330 plus tax. It was easier for me to replace that product than to have it repaired. It was easier just to get a new phone. I phoned Fido. They said, "Extend your warranty for two years. We'll send you a new iPhone." So I did that. But I thought to myself: The phone was perfect; it was working. There was a crack in the corner, and every time I put it up to my ear it scratched me. I couldn't keep using it. So now I have this phone that has gone to waste.

The right to repair does something in regard to the environment that I think is so important. Did you know, Madam Speaker, that in Canada we throw away 638,000 tonnes of e-waste each year? In fact, by 2025, there will be almost 10 million metric tonnes of e-waste in North America. My bill would actually force us to reuse our

products, to fix them so they last a bit longer. We know that when we have products that last longer, we can share them with people. There are organizations that take old laptops and fix them and give them to schools. It increases digital literacy levels by creating more access and it reduces e-waste. We know that these products that come out of these smart phones—the materials that are found in smart phones and other electronic products—actually have a negative impact in our environment. There are some people who would argue that the rise and spike in cancer levels is because of e-waste and what's going into the ground not being disposed of properly. So my bill would actually allow people to repair their products.

Recently, I went on a school field trip to Apple. It was interesting; I was with a parent, and I was talking about her experience fixing her tablet. She said to me that she went to a local fix-it stores and got the tablet screen fixed. Two days later, it popped back off. The reason she chose the store was because it was half the price of Apple, and Apple was suggesting that she just replace the product. So she got it fixed. Two days later, the screen popped off. She went back into the store that fixed it, the third-party repair person, and she asked why this happened. They said, “Well, the glue we used is glue that's a third-party manufactured glue. We can't actually have access to Apple's glue that is being used because Apple will not release their products to third parties like this particular store.”

1420

Again, I have nothing against Apple. I think it's an innovative company. I'm using this as an example to talk about what's happening in the electronics sector in Ontario. We know that tools are being developed now that are not being shared, that only allow the manufacturer to have access to opening those devices; glues that are being used to prevent people from opening those devices; and I do think it actually harms our future growth in technology and how it's embraced in our lives.

My bill will tackle some of those challenges and better prepare Ontario to take on some of the big problems we have facing us in the future. We know that technology is changing rapidly. We know that our economy is changing. We know there's going to be some big challenges in front of us when it comes to the smart economy, the new economy, the embrace of AI and automation. We know we're going to see the displacement of workers, and we're going to see massive privacy issues that we're going to have to tackle, but we also have to better understand this piece within that puzzle.

For the products we own, we should have the ability to have access to the parts, the diagnostic software and the tools necessary to fix them. They're our products, and as consumers, this government needs to protect them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member for Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be sharing my time on this with the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville. I'm happy to share my thoughts on Bill 72, and thank the member from Don Valley East for his interesting consumer advocacy.

However, I know that for many of us, when we first heard about the bill presented by the member from Don Valley East, it certainly sparked a little bit of an interest. It seemed like an interesting idea. I think when examined more closely, however, it becomes clear that a bill like this could have unintended harmful consequences that would not have the desired impact. Why? Because this would require drastic changes from companies who are selling their products in the province of Ontario. This would mean companies would choose not to sell their products in this province.

In an age of ever-increasing competition, margins for companies are becoming smaller and smaller while the amount of research and development invested in new product development is ever-increasing. Companies need to be able to offer products and services to consumers that meet their needs, and thankfully, this is the case now.

Today, Ontario consumers have choice. Consumers get to choose between a Samsung phone, a BlackBerry or an iPhone when they're choosing to buy a phone. Companies already offer different levels of warranties for their devices and products that we, as consumers, use to make a choice on those products when we decide to purchase.

Car companies are a great example of an industry that uses their product's warranty as a primary selling feature of the vehicle. Red tape and excessive regulation adds cost and makes Ontario less competitive. This means that companies may choose not to offer their products to consumers here in Ontario. We want Ontario to be open for business, not closed. It has been closed for well over a decade, and we have seen foreign investment in this province dry up over the last decade.

I'm also concerned with the matter surrounding the legal right for companies to own their intellectual property. If Ontario wants to remain a place where companies want to do business, and where they can attract investment and high-tech employees, then we need to be able to know that the intellectual property, which can be vulnerable to foreign entities, will be safe and respected when they open up shop in Ontario or begin to sell their products here.

To add to all of this, intellectual property is actually a federal issue. While the province has jurisdiction over the perceived consumer protections aspect that this bill may offer, it does not have the ability to freely override intellectual property rights. If this bill did move forward, then we would all be very worried for local companies and consumers here in Ontario.

Because of the intellectual property implications of this bill, our small business owners and the purchasers of their products and services could be opening themselves to legal action by the original manufacturer of their device. And I know the member opposite would not want Ontario's businesses and consumers to be sued for billions of dollars by multinationals.

When taken together all these seem like good reasons why we should not support this bill.

Our government is acting to protect consumers and is also working hard to increase access to goods for the residents of Ontario. We know Ontarians like having

access to global trade and the new products and services they have access to. But, again, this bill is short-sighted in that many of the free trade agreements that Ontarians have access to for foreign goods also have provisions that this bill would contravene.

This bill is also written with no absolute limits. While the member for Don Valley East has been saying the intention is to make electronics easier and cheaper to repair, the language in the bill affects everything from cars, electronic vehicles, farm equipment, appliances and power tools to name a few. Madam Speaker, the broad language affects all of these entities. These items will become more expensive for consumers. Just like the carbon tax, this makes everything more expensive for consumers and, clearly, this is not what the people of Ontario want. They want to be able to have access to these goods at a better price.

We know that companies want a business-friendly environment. We know that this bill will have unintended consequences for everyone. The Ontario government is taking a responsible approach to ensuring that we are in alignment with the provinces and other international jurisdictions.

So my question is, why was this particular bill even introduced? I think that's a very good question we need to ask. Why did the government not support this when they were in power with a majority government for 15 years? Many other states, I know you mentioned, had considered implementing something like that during this time, so it wouldn't have been unheard of. I think we have the answer to those questions. I think the reason this bill was introduced now rather than when they had a majority government was that the independent member knows the unintended consequences related to intellectual property rights and consumer choice. Introducing this now, as the member from Don Valley is doing—it's trying to show the government doesn't care about consumers. But this is disingenuous to the public and it's contrary to our mandate of increasing choice and making life more affordable—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I interrupt the member. Stop the clock. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Withdraw.

To summarize just some of the key points on why the bill is flawed:

(1) It limits consumer choice by making electronics harder to access.

(2) It worsens Ontario's business climate by driving away innovation.

(3) Intellectual property is the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government.

(4) If this bill becomes law, the jurisdictional issues would immediately open Ontario's consumers and businesses up to countless court challenges—challenges that would likely make it unenforceable.

(5) The bill is also very broadly written. The language in the bill affects everything from cars and electric vehicles to coffee makers, toys, televisions, home appliances and power tools, to name a few.

(6) By passing this bill, we're saying that Ontario is closed for business, and that we do not respect intellectual property rights in this province.

(7) It's more likely that companies would refuse to sell their products here in Ontario knowing that these are not respected in Ontario.

(8) The bill could have a ripple effect across numerous international trade agreements and treaties signed by the federal government. That would obviously be disastrous for all Canadians.

While I respect the member from Don Valley East, I do suggest that he do a little bit more homework before introducing a bill that is, in my view, very problematic in so many ways. For that reason and the reasons I stated previously, I will not be supporting this bill.

I will now pass it over to the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you to the member for introducing the legislation. The right to repair is an international consumer rights movement. But I will agree with what was just said. There are unintended consequences for this bill, and an unintended consequence I want to talk about is irony. This government is saying this will take away choice when in fact this would increase choice and allow people to go to third parties to be able to fix software.

This government talks about fearmongering, but their response to this amounts to fearmongering—as though these large international companies will not want a piece of the pie in Ontario and to do business here. This government talks about federal jurisdictional issues, but they have no qualms about forcing gas stations to put carbon taxing stickers and suing the government. They talk about lawsuits; ironically, this might be a government that, in its first year, has elicited more lawsuits than anybody. In fact, they're being moved to bring in legislation to stop them from being sued whatsoever. That's ironic.

Finally, my own private member's bill that would have actually reduced auto insurance premiums and put drivers back in the driver's seat when it comes to negotiating with companies—they're introducing legislation in auto insurance that's going to allow even new gouging tools, like charging you based on your credit rating if it's not perfect.

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But let's get back to the backdrop of what's being discussed here. These days, we're becoming more reliant upon electronic technology, whether it's our smart phones, laptops, tablets, TVs, computers or even electronic farm equipment. We are simply unable to properly conduct our business without them. So when our electronic devices break down, we need to be able to have them repaired, and at a reasonable price.

Too often, consumers are being gouged by manufacturers who do everything they can to deny everyone, outside of a select few authorized service centres, access to parts, software manuals and service information required to

conduct repairs. Some companies have even gone so far as to install software security locks to prevent unauthorized people from repairing things that they have legally purchased.

A recent CBC news report used a hidden camera to uncover that Apple will often mislead customers by telling them the cost of their laptop repair will be so expensive that they might as well buy a new laptop. These companies don't want you to repair things. They want you to buy new stuff, because they'll come out, maybe, with a screen that's 0.1 inch bigger next year. The marketing will tell you you're not good enough because you don't have the new phone; throw out your old one.

Well, look what happens here: In one case, a consumer was told that it would cost them more than \$1,200 to repair their MacBook Pro. When the laptop was taken to an independent technician, it was found that the very same repair would cost between 75 bucks and \$150 to fix an issue that caused the screen to malfunction. It was nothing more than a pin that had to be bent back into place. So get it fixed for 50 bucks or go to Mac and pay \$1,200.

In another case, a consumer was told by the manufacturer that for their broken washing machine, not only would they have to wait a week for a technician to come by and look at it, but it would cost \$99 just for the visit, over and above any cost of repair. The company refused to do any troubleshooting over the phone. When this person looked it up on a site called iFixit, a popular website that posts information on how to repair electronic devices and has been subject to multiple threats of legal action from electronics manufacturers for posting their diagnostic repair manuals, he discovered the problem was likely caused by a loose ribbon cable and could be fixed by simply reattaching the cable.

The Minister of Government and Consumer Services stood up and said this would limit consumer choice. This is fearmongering. Maybe Apple called, and then they bit the apple. That's what happened: They ate the apple. Does the minister think that forcing companies to give consumers choice by selling parts to independent repair shops, creating more jobs, creating more entrepreneurial opportunities outside of working for these super large multinational corporations—they don't want that. That's not "open for business" for them—ironic.

One of the things that is really, really worth mentioning here, along the right-to-repair movement, is that it's not just about consumer protection; it's about protecting our health and the environment. Electronic waste is the fastest-growing waste stream in the world. When companies essentially force people to buy new products that could be easily repaired, it contributes to the more than 50 million tonnes of electronic waste that the World Economic Forum's Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy has estimated was disposed of in 2018. A large portion of this ends up in places like Nigeria, Hong Kong—a lot of different places. Toxic components contained within many of these products have been known to cause serious health problems and environmental damage. What's worse, PACE estimates that the value of disposed electronic waste is about \$60 billion a year.

This, in many ways, is forward-thinking. Do a little bit of a media search and you find out that the EU is actually bringing in right-to-repair laws around appliances, and this is being considered over there. In the States, we've got something like 18 jurisdictions that are contemplating doing this. In fact, look here: This is an article in a publication called Motherboard. It's entitled "In Ground-breaking Decision, Feds Say Hacking DRM to Fix Your Electronics Is Legal."

"The move is a landmark win for the 'right to repair' movement; essentially, the federal government has ruled that consumers and repair professionals have the right to legally hack the firmware of 'lawfully acquired' devices" for maintenance and repair purposes.

What's happening is, there is a movement. It's occurring internationally. We're eventually going there. Why not bring this bill to committee and talk about it? If you want to poke holes in it, don't just kill it on the floor right now. Why not have the discussion? Why not be open-minded and have a proper discussion in committee? Bring in people on other sides, and let's find a way to move into the future.

I thank the member for bringing this to us today. I will be supporting it.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: The proposed bill contradicts our government's promise. Instead of making Ontario open for business, it will make it "Ontario is closed for business."

Even in opposition, the Liberals continue to create messes. They are still doing what they did in government: propose horrible legislation that sounds good in theory but is completely unenforceable in practice and threatens the people of Ontario. It will produce more red tape. That contradicts our government's promise to reduce red tape.

The ability to repair electronics more cheaply and easily is certainly a concept we support, but the implications of this bill were clearly not thought out. This bill would do the exact opposite of what it is intended to do. This bill will limit consumer choice by making electronics harder to access, as businesses could choose not to bring new products to market in Ontario. I have spoken to so many Ontarians and have received several emails from constituents and business owners. They have all said, "Do not support Bill 72."

Bill 72 will worsen Ontario's business climate, driving away innovation and jobs. This just goes against the promise our government was elected on. Our government shouldn't create roadblocks for consumer choice. They should be building bridges for consumers.

The bill would require businesses—at the request of the consumer—to provide the most recent version of documents, replacement parts, software and other tools that businesses use to diagnose, maintain, repair or reset the device. If this bill becomes law, these issues would immediately open Ontario's consumers and businesses up to countless court challenges—challenges that would likely make it impossible to enforce the bill.

Madam Speaker, this bill is also very broadly written. The language in the bill affects everything from cars and electric vehicles to coffee makers, toys, televisions, home appliances and power tools, just to name a few, which can lead to a grave security risk that foreign actors with malintent can utilize codes to harm our country and provincial security.

This bill will hurt companies from continuing to invest in their products and will force them to leave the province—to jurisdictions where there are no such terrible laws like this one.

By passing this bill, we would be telling the world that Ontario is not a government that respects intellectual property, consumer choice or, frankly, business innovation. Companies will think twice before opening businesses or selling their products here.

This piece of legislation could have ripple effects across numerous international trade agreements and treaties signed by the federal government. It looks like members opposite are trying to create messes for their current federal counterparts.

Madam Speaker, I can agree with the member opposite that products should be easier and cheaper to repair, but this bill is not the right way to do that. As someone who comes from the technology sector, I know that this is never a good way to go.

This bill closes Ontario for business, closes Ontario for jobs and closes Ontario consumers to the right to choose. Supporting such a bill would be an affront to businesses and the people of Ontario.

As I mentioned, I come from a technology background. I used to work for an organization called BlackBerry, a proud Canadian organization. One of the things that I can say for sure is that when we were making devices or software—BlackBerry or companies like Samsung, Apple, other manufacturers, would never give their intellectual property rights, their codes, to a third party because that's a huge, huge security risk. With all due respect to my colleague on the opposite side, your bill is asking these organizations to give up their codes—their security stuff—which I'm sure you will agree is not fair and also is not safe for our country and our province.

For all these reasons, Madam Speaker, I will not be supporting this bill at all today.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member for Brampton West.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Brampton East, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Thank you, Speaker. I rise today to speak in support of this bill because at the core and crux of this bill is actually the idea that we have to curb our consumption as a society and we have to stop thinking about this fast technology which has gripped us as a society, as a country and as a world, really.

Every year—we know the story of electronics. We purchase a device and initially we love it. We think it's

amazing; it's great. After a year or two, we know what happens: It becomes obsolete, becomes outdated and often it gets thrown away. But the result of this upon the world is not sustainable. The result of this upon the world is actually devastating. We're literally poisoning the world with mountains of electronic waste.

They say that in Canada alone, we're close to almost a million tonnes of electronic waste that is created every single year because we have an unsustainable system which is gripping us, with respect to our consumer habits. When we look at it and the impacts it could have if we don't recycle these products properly, the impact of it can be that this kind of electronic waste can end up in our earth, end up in our land, end up in our water and, ultimately, end up in ourselves.

Let's look at the lifetime of a product. Let's look at how it generally goes from resource or raw material to in our hands and, ultimately, into the land dump. We will often extract non-renewable resources through mining and through other forms of extractive means, to get the raw materials we need to create electronic devices. These electronic devices then are often manufactured and are applied with a whole variety of different harmful chemicals, from flame retardants to other sorts of aspects that need to be put on to it to make it usable. We then use it for a couple of years and then it's thrown away. And when it's thrown away, it's because it's so expensive to recycle and it's so expensive to process and to get the actual usable parts of it back out.

The result, often, is that a lot of this pre-manufacturing of it, the extraction of it or the recycling of it is actually not done here locally. It's often done in different parts of the world where there are a lot of weaker forms of regulation upon how these materials are either extracted or how they're recycled. The result is that in those parts of the world, because of the lack of regulation, we expose workers to harm on that end as well.

Ultimately, if you look at the life cycle of these products, it's placing harm upon workers, individuals, consumers and the environment on every aspect of its life cycle from when it's created or from when it's extracted, to when it's manufactured, to when it's used and to when it's thrown away. Ultimately, this impact that it's having is a huge negative upon us as a world.

The problem actually lies on these companies. The problem lies on the manufacturers of these products, because they're designing products for the dump. They're designed for the dump because it's cheaper in respect to the overall profitability of these products. It's actually more profitable for these companies to design products for the dump, because it ultimately results in us having to buy more. It feeds into this consumer lifestyle where we are encouraged, instead of fixing devices, instead of repairing things, just to throw it away and buy again. This unsustainable kind of consumption that's gripping this world right now is having an impact on our earth and it's actually having an impact on us as well, as people.

In a world where we define our self-worth based on what we own and not who we are, in a world where our

success is determined by the amount of material things that we own, studies are being very, very clear in showing that this actually has a negative impact on our mental health because as a society we're putting more value on external objects, on materialism, as opposed to the intrinsic value of a human being. That has an impact where people can't keep up, and every year, or every two years, they're forced to keep on purchasing and buying, and they define their success based on these things that they own.

The pressure of this kind of consumptive lifestyle is having a burden upon people. That's why we need to move forward legislation. As government, we have a duty to put forth legislation. We have a duty to put forth guidelines and rules to ensure that companies are creating products that are made in a way such that consumers don't have to throw things away, that they can repair them—effectively, that we're putting in place legislation that is encouraging sustainability in our province and across the world. But we're not seeing that.

With the right to repair, that is one step in the right direction. It's a step in the right direction when we're saying, let's ensure that people, from an affordability standpoint, from an environmental standpoint, from a standpoint of curbing our unsustainable consumption—we're saying, let's regulate this kind of consumption. Let's ensure that people have opportunities and options, so they don't have to just throw away a phone because the screen is slightly cracked, or we're not encouraging this kind of behaviour, but instead, we're thinking about what we can do to ensure that we're preserving this earth today and for tomorrow.

That's why I think this is a step in the right direction. We should be having the right to repair and other kinds of legislation to ensure that, ultimately, we are preserving this earth.

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

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I think it is very important for Ontario to join the right-to-repair movement around the world. This is the future of consumer protection, and we should be part of it.

When I hear the government side expressing some concerns but not a complete dismissal of the objective of the act, I say, why don't we put it to second reading and have the possibility of discussing it further and providing amendments if necessary, to reassure the concerns that have been raised?

Let me explain why it is important to have a consumer protection movement that is connected to the modern world.

When we had old technology, when we started having cars, every time we wanted to create a new consumer protection, there was always someone that said, "Oh, don't do consumer protection. Maybe the producers, the manufacturers, won't like it and will not sell any more cars in Ontario." That did not happen, because the range of consumer protection enhances the ability of consumers to want to buy new products. They are reassured in their ability to continue to buy new products.

This bill, indeed, I thought, was pro-business. It empowers local businesses to develop, to create the ability of creating small repair shops that will continue to be part of Ontario.

It also creates the ability to know how it works. That's how innovation begins. It empowers all of us to spend the time to know: "How does that work? Can I repair it before throwing it in the garbage?"

I also want to refer to our duty as a society to reuse, recycle and use all of our products longer.

Overall, this bill, I think, is well balanced. It should go to second reading, because I think it will help us all understand what the future of consumer protection is in this new economy. Let's be there. Let's be ahead of the wave and not behind it.

I implore the government side to consider going to second reading and trying to hear whether we can improve on the bill, but to not kill it today. I think consumer protection is our duty to all, and we have to have a consumer protection movement that is linked internationally and is geared toward the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Don Valley East has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank all of the members for their comments today. We have to remind ourselves once in a while why we're here and what we're fighting for and who we're fighting for. I think one of our jobs is to anticipate what the future is going to look like in this province, and really prepare the province to take on some of those challenges in the future. I heard many comments, and I'd like to thank the members that are supportive of this bill. Thank you for your comments.

But in regard to the Conservative position on this, both members, the member from Brampton West and the member from Oakville, talked about intellectual property. I just want to make it clear that this bill is not asking any company to release intellectual property. It's releasing manuals, parts and tools, and diagnostic software—nothing more.

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The member from Brampton West says so many people have come to his office to talk about this issue because it's a big concern to them. Invite them to come over and speak to me, because I have not met one single person in Ontario, outside of people who are part of the industry, who is opposed to this bill. So I'm very baffled why things are so different in Brampton West.

The most important thing is that we need to remind each other what we're actually debating here. We're not debating the merit of the bill—yes or no; is it a good thing or bad thing?—we're debating if it should go to second reading to open up a conversation a bit further. That's what we're debating here. Will it go to second reading and allow for a real debate with experts coming into committees to talk about this issue and really look into the future of Ontario and how we protect Ontarians when it comes to our electronic devices? That's all I'm asking for. I think it's important for Ontarians to know that the Conservative government does not want to have this conversation. It is

an important conversation. It may not happen today, but eventually it will happen in Ontario.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

CLOSING OVERSIGHT LOOPHOLES
FOR HOME CARE CLINICS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 VISANT À COMBLER
LES LACUNES DANS LA SURVEILLANCE
DES CLINIQUES DE SOINS À DOMICILE

Ms. Sattler moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994 and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act/ Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé, la Loi de 1994 sur les services de soins à domicile et les services communautaires et la Loi sur le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is indeed a pleasure to rise today in this House on behalf of the people I represent in London West to speak to my private member's bill, the Closing Oversight Loopholes for Home Care Clinics Act. I want to begin by offering my sincere thanks to Jennifer Krische and Brenda Holland, who were directly affected by the lack of oversight and have travelled to Queen's Park from London to share their experiences and watch this debate. They are in the gallery here today because they have a personal stake in the outcome of today's vote. They want to ensure that no other Ontarian is forced to go through what they had to endure and believe that Bill 102 is critical to closing the loophole that excludes home care clinics from government oversight.

Speaker, to provide some context for this bill: Last August, 3,001 people in the London area, including Jennifer and Brenda, opened their mail one day to find notices advising them to be tested for HIV, hep B and hep C. They had all received nursing care at one of London's four ParaMed Flex Clinics at some point between 2008 and 2018. The letter notified them that the Middlesex-London Health Unit had investigated these clinics following a complaint about possible infection and had discovered that instruments were being improperly sterilized over that entire 10-year period.

The reason these dangerous practices had not been identified earlier was because health units do not have a mandate to inspect these clinics unless it is in response to a complaint. Imagine how that must have felt for patients like Jennifer and Brenda that sunny August afternoon. Imagine the shock, the worry, the fear, the distress. Brenda had attended the flex clinic in 2009, and it was 2018 when she received the letter. She was terrified about the possibility of having contracted HIV and passing it along to her spouse. She was heartsick thinking about people who could have been infected in 2008 and had already passed

away, or about pregnant mothers who could have passed the infection along to their babies.

But imagine also, Speaker, the anger and the disbelief that these 3,001 patients must have experienced, because the risk of exposure to illness and disease wasn't related to a choice that they had made; it was related to a referral from their doctor to a home care clinic, a place where they had a right to expect that their health would be protected and the safety of patients assured.

For 10 years, ParaMed home care clinics went without oversight or inspection to monitor infection prevention and control practices.

For 10 years, patients were put at risk of contracting serious, life-threatening blood-borne diseases at clinics that they assumed would be safe, as anyone would. Unfortunately, as Jennifer and Brenda were stunned to learn, facilities like the ParaMed Flex Clinics exist in a regulatory grey zone. They are not licensed by the government and subject to the Oversight of Health Facilities and Devices Act. While the health care professionals who staff these clinics are accountable to their regulatory colleges, there is no oversight whatsoever for the premises in which these professionals work.

ParaMed is just one of the many private, for-profit home care operators in the province of Ontario that have established home care clinics to deliver care that would ordinarily be provided in the home. These clinics provide services like wound care, IV treatment, PICC lines, urinary catheterization and post-hospitalization care. They are operated by both for-profit and non-profit home care agencies such as ParaMed, Bayshore, Saint Elizabeth, CarePartners and VON. These clinics are often promoted as offering more convenience for patients by saving them from having to wait at home for a visiting nurse. But the reality for many patients is that they are not given a choice. Both Jennifer and Brenda were told on discharge from the hospital that they would receive care at home. After just one home visit, ParaMed told Brenda that she would be required to go to the clinic instead. Jennifer learned that no home visits would be made and that her only option was to go to the clinic. Being forced to go to a home care clinic can in fact be much less convenient for patients if it requires them to drive long distances to access care, or to arrange to be driven to the clinic.

The other, more significant reality is that these clinics are a much less costly way for home care operators to deliver care, and ultimately it is the bottom line that privatized health care is all about. A 2015 Globe and Mail investigation noted that it costs half as much to treat a patient at a clinic as it would at home, since home care nurses can see many more patients in a day in a clinic setting than they would if they had to drive from house to house. The savings can be significant. A 2002 study estimated that using home care clinics versus home care at home translates into potential savings of \$10 million and the release of 146 FTE nurses based on six million home care visits a year in the province of Ontario. Using estimated savings reported by just three LHINs and a total of 51 clinics out of the 111 that were operating in 2015,

the Globe and Mail found that the clinics had saved the system a total of \$14 million.

Under the privatized model of home care that was introduced by the former Liberal government, home care clinics allow operators to greatly reduce their staffing costs and thereby maximize their profits. Doug Ford's cuts to health care funding in the face of an aging population and increasing demand for home care services will lead to even more of these clinics popping up across Ontario as a way to contain home care costs. It's no wonder that the number of clinics is continuing to grow. The 111 clinics that were in place in 2015 have grown to an estimated 134 clinics today.

What the Liberals failed to do when they privatized home care was to create an oversight mechanism for these clinics. As more and more clinics were being established, the Liberal government did nothing to protect Ontarians who were being treated at them. Even when legislation was introduced to govern other privately operated health care facilities, home care clinics were excluded.

My bill fixes this loophole by making the Minister of Health directly accountable for home care clinics. It gives the minister the duty to oversee and inspect home care clinics that provide professional services under the Home Care and Community Services Act, including nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, social work, speech-language pathology and dietetics.

My bill also gives public health units a mandate to conduct annual inspections of these clinics. Up to now, public health units only have the ability to inspect home care clinics when they receive a complaint.

Finally, my bill requires home care clinic operators to notify the health unit if complaints are made about infection prevention and control practices. It updates the home care bill of rights to ensure that patients understand their right to make complaints to the health unit, and it requires the posting of this information in an accessible and conspicuous place within the clinic.

1500

I want to thank the Middlesex-London board of health for their support of my bill, which they endorsed at their April 18 meeting. At a time when public health funding is under attack by the Doug Ford government, the ParaMed experience highlights the critical role that health units play in preventing infection outbreaks and protecting public health. Without the investigation conducted by the local health unit, the clinic would still be failing to properly sterilize wound care instruments and Londoners would still be at risk of contracting life-threatening diseases.

My bill calls for an expansion of health unit mandates, not a cutting-back, and it holds the minister responsible for providing the necessary resources.

Speaker, it's important for Ontarians to know that when they are accessing home care services, they have the right to expect that the clinic will meet the same standards as a hospital, a doctor's office or other medical facility. They are usually going to home care because it's the only option available for them to get the care that they need, and it is

often because of the care plan that their doctor has provided for them.

Unfortunately, the Doug Ford government has shown about—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member. Stop the clock. I'm sorry, but this is the third time—a reminder that we refer to all members by their riding or their title, not their name. Thank you.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Unfortunately, the current government has shown as much reluctance to protect Ontarians as the previous one did. When Jennifer received the notice about testing, she wondered how on earth was it possible for the clinic to have been improperly sterilizing instruments for 10 years without anyone noticing. She had been a patient at ParaMed in 2012 and had raised concerns with the company at the time about questionable procedures. She did not receive any response or acknowledgement of her concerns.

So last summer, she wrote to the health minister, asking where was the government accountability and oversight. The minister ignored Jennifer's question and instead referred her to me, her local MPP, which is how I learned the details of Jennifer's story and is why I am moving forward to create the oversight that has been missing for so long.

Speaker, it's time for Ontario to take responsibility for keeping the people who receive home care in clinics safe. Ontarians deserve to know that wherever they're sent for health care, whether it's a hospital, a doctor's office, their own home or a clinic, they are safe. They deserve to know that the Ministry of Health is properly protecting them and adequately overseeing their care.

At a media conference this morning, Brenda called the lack of government oversight of home care clinics a breach of trust. This bill will help repair that breach. I urge all MPPs in this Legislature to join together to support it.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: It is a great honour to rise in this chamber this afternoon and speak on behalf of the people of Brampton West on this private member's bill, Bill 102, Closing Oversight Loopholes for Home Care Clinics Act, 2019, introduced by the member from London West. This bill amends the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994, and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act.

Madam Speaker, I have always been an advocate for an efficient and effective public health care system, as this remains one of the most crucial responsibilities of any government toward its people. The absence of such a system crumbles the foundation of a just social system and effective governance, thereby posing a formidable threat to social justice. I'm glad our government recognizes the importance of strengthening and connecting Ontario's home care services so patients and families can easily access the safe and reliable care they need.

While the bill of rights already applies to all home care clients, we feel it is important to ensure home care services

across Ontario have appropriate oversight and accountability to deliver safe and quality care. That's why, Madam Speaker, the Ontario government is building a modern, sustainable and integrated public health care system focused on the needs of patients and ending hallway health care.

I'm glad to mention here that the government of Ontario has announced in our budget an increase in spending on health care for the next year, totalling \$63.5 billion.

Our government's priority continues to be to focus our health care investments where they will have the most impact: on front-line care. The Ontario government is taking the necessary steps to strengthen and fix our public health care system, to improve patient experience and strengthen local services while ensuring that health care dollars are being spent on front-line services in a system that is centred around the patient, not the bureaucracy.

We envisage a community-based health care delivery model that connects care, and includes primary care, hospitals, home care and long-term care, mental health and addictions support, and other health care services that help in improving the quality of life of people in Ontario. We are confident that, together, we will create a connected system of care where every Ontarian is truly supported throughout their entire health care journey.

Thank you again, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to speak on Bill 102 in this House.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always a pleasure and an honour to rise in the Legislature on behalf of the constituents of London–Fanshawe. In particular today, it's especially important to me as I speak in support of my colleague the member from London West's private member's bill, the Closing Oversight Loopholes for Home Care Clinics Act.

There have been so many issues when we talk about home care. This is yet another reason why we have evidence to show that when we have home care clinics that are privatized and home care clinics that are not-for-profit, public health care dollars should be used for public health care delivery when it comes to health care.

We know that what happened to Jennifer and Brenda isn't right. When you go to a home care clinic, or you receive home care, or you go to a hospital, or you go to a long-term-care home, you want to be assured that the quality you get for health care treatment is the same across the board. Why was that loophole allowed to happen? It's because they allowed it to be privatized. Health care shouldn't be privatized. When it's a public delivery health care model, there's much more oversight to that.

When we have people who are expecting to be released from the hospital, they want to have home care at home. That's the expectation. Now there's that bit of an incentive for hospitals and doctors to recommend these home care clinics, because it's a cheaper alternative. But that doesn't work for everyone. We know that there are demographic and geographic issues when it comes to how people want

to receive their health care. If you live in rural Ontario, home care is probably a little bit more of a challenge. When you leave a hospital or a doctor's office, they may be tempted or pressured to recommend that you go to a home care clinic. That's okay if you're able to do it physically, if you're able to get in your car and drive that 45 minutes to get to that home care clinic. But not everybody has that capacity or that support.

There have been media reports in the news outlets. One of them, of course, was the *Globe and Mail* back in July of 2015 and then again, updated, in May of 2018. I'll just read from that. The *Globe and Mail* article said: "In a three-month investigation, the *Globe and Mail* talked to dozens of previous and current patients as well as front-line staff, community groups, unions, for-profit and non-profit home-care providers and industry organizations, and found that the home-care system in Canada's largest province is plagued by inconsistent standards of care."

The most important piece of everyone's existence is being healthy. Consistency is paramount in treatment.

1510

What we have here is we have a loophole that allowed this practice to happen in these ParaMed home care clinics and actually jeopardized people's health care and life. As the member from London West talked about, there could have been people who passed away who were contaminated, and we'll never know that.

When you go into a home care clinic looking for wound care, as an example, you don't expect to be infected further and have to be tested for those types of communicable diseases the member talked about, which are hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV, because of improper sterilization of medical instruments. That shouldn't be happening in today's health care system.

When we talk about health care, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about Bill 74—Bill 74 is one of the biggest pieces of legislation to come before us in the history of Ontario—to talk about how it's going to deal with our health care system. The minister and all the members across the way have said that it's a publicly funded health care system. Well, we all know that. In the preamble of that legislation, they would not commit to making sure it's a publicly delivered health care system. The preamble isn't even legally binding and they wouldn't do it in the legislation itself. When we were at committee, we brought many amendments asking this government to solidify and to commit to a publicly funded health care delivery system, and they wouldn't do it.

We know right now that there was back in 2011—excuse me—back in 2015, the *Globe and Mail* estimated 117 such clinics. Now, our current estimate is 134 home care clinics in Ontario, with the number projected to increase. What Bill 74 does, the health care bill that they've presented here and passed—very quickly, I might add, with very minimal consultation as well—is that it opens up unprecedented opportunities to actually create more privatization under health care. We know that's the case because this government won't even say the words "not-for-profit health care delivery." They won't say those

words. We know there's some privatization already in health care, but let's be frank: Going forward in this wonderful province, health care should continue to be not-for-profit health care delivery, and that's what we really believe.

I'm excited that this bill is brought forward. I congratulate the member from London West. The solutions that she's proposed in this bill are very, very practical and are going to help every citizen in Ontario and, quite frankly, should be an example for all provinces.

When you talk about the endorsement that happened on April 18—as she mentioned, the Middlesex board of health endorsed this bill. They know this is going to work. We also want to make sure there's accountability and quality control, which is an integral part of health care when it comes to safeguarding the health of our constituents. People deserve to feel safe when they get health care, and it shouldn't just be a complaint base, that someone complains and then the public health board finds out. It should be a mandatory, yearly inspection.

There's other things in here—of course, the bill of rights, making sure that those rights are very clear to patients, so that patients, when they do experience that, know where to go and what their rights are.

I want to again congratulate the member from London West and the constituents who have come forward today, to make sure that people understand that there are faces behind the legislation that we create in this Legislature. It can have negative effects, and it can have positive effects, so we're here to do better and change those things. I believe this bill will do just that.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 102, the Closing Oversight Loopholes for Home Care Clinics Act, introduced by the member from London West. Speaker, as you know, just a few weeks ago, the People's Health Care Act received royal assent. It will help to build a modern, sustainable and integrated public health care system, focused on the needs of the patients, and end hallway health care.

We understand the importance of strengthening and connecting Ontario's home care services so that patients and families can easily access the safe and reliable care they need. The Patients' Bill of Rights already applies to all home care clinics, but I certainly agree that it's important that all home care services across Ontario have the oversight and accountability to deliver safe and good quality care. That's why I'm proud to vote in support of this bill.

After 15 years of the Liberal mismanagement, Ontario's health care system was broken. There were too many people on wait-lists, with our seniors waiting an average of 146 days for access to beds in long-term-care homes. Too many people are being treated in hallways: more than 1,000 every single day. There were too many bureaucrats and not enough front-line staff. Our home care system was in a state of crisis. It was spending over \$1

billion each year on administration. That's 40% of the home care budget.

Our government's priority is to focus these resources where they're most important, on front-line care, and that's what the 2019 budget did. The health care budget this year is \$63.5 billion. That's up over 7% since the last full year under the Liberals. That includes another \$124 million for home care, including more personal support services and more nursing and therapy visits. We're ending hallway health care with \$27 billion over the next decade to increase capacity in the hospitals. Some \$3.8 billion over the next decade will develop a modern mental health system. There's another \$422 million for hospital operations as well.

For seniors, starting this summer, we will invest \$90 million for dental care for 100,000 low-income seniors. Some 15,000 new long-term-care beds are coming online in the next five years. Speaker, this investment will be very important to the 21,000 seniors living in Mississauga–Lakeshore. They will help us build connected, sustainable public health care. Bill 102 will help as well.

Once again, I thank the member from London West for her contribution today. I look forward to voting for this bill, and I encourage everybody to vote on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? The member for Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that. It's an honour to rise as the member from Brampton Centre.

I'd just like to start off by thanking my colleague from London West for bringing this very important piece of legislation forward, as well as all of the members who have contributed to the debate here today: the members from London–Fanshawe and from Brampton West, as well as the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

I'm very, very happy to hear that members on the Conservative benches will be supporting our member from London West's bill to, in fact, close the loopholes in home care.

Over the last decade, the past government really paved the way for the growth of privatized home care clinics here in our province. This was a way for home care operators to reduce costs and, frankly, maximize their profits. But by doing this, what we're actually doing is failing patients and our seniors by putting profit over providing proper care.

What we need in our home care system is due diligence when it comes to seniors and their care, not cutting corners and cutting health care funding to support the patients in our province, like this current government has actually done. What we need is an increase in that front-line care. We need more regulation, as the member is suggesting, to ensure that there are preventative measures to ensure that care is provided in a more holistic manner.

With an increase in demand for home care services with our aging population, it will, as the other members have already indicated, no doubt lead to more private care clinics popping up across our province. As we've heard, there are currently 134 operating here across Ontario. We've seen in the past that these clinics do not always

have the patient's best interest in mind; rather, their bottom line and profit become a priority. This is not the standard of care we should be striving for here in this province, especially when we have that reality that we're all very aware of: an increasing aging population and what the demand on those services is going to look like. We should be taking our time to ensure that we're protecting people, not cutting corners and maximizing profits.

In the community of Brampton, where I'm a member, we've seen a dramatic increase in our aging population. Our health care system simply hasn't been able to keep up. It's already stretched to the brink. We need to make sure, as more patients are going to access home care clinics or services at home while they're aging, that their loved ones will have the confidence in knowing that they will receive the best care and they will not be in harm's way because of carelessness and improperly sterilized instruments.

1520

We know that local health units, Mr. Speaker, are crucial to preventing outbreaks, and for public health; however, health units shouldn't have to wait for a complaint in order to investigate. I commend the member from London West for including that in her private member's bill, because, again, a preventative approach is much better than a reactive approach, as we have seen here. Rather than wait for a complaint, it is better that we have annual inspections, as the member is suggesting, to go into these clinics, make sure that they're following the proper procedures, and putting patients' health and safety at the forefront.

With the cuts to public health and the cuts to health care in this province, it is concerning that we may, in fact, see less regulation, less "red tape," which could in fact lead to further outbreak, or disease or illness spreading, as it did in the incident that actually was the impetus for this bill, from what I understand.

Again, I'm very proud to stand here, and I applaud our member from London West for bringing this forward, as well as Jennifer and Brenda for being here today as well. I think we need to close the loophole that excludes this government from oversight in home care services, and make sure that we are taking care of patients and putting their needs first here in the province.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It is a pleasure to rise, as always, and talk about health care, especially with all the seniors in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Over the course of the election, we had a lot of seniors that were concerned about their future and what is going to happen when they become the age that they need to move out of their homes and into a long-term-care facility. We talked with those people, and do you know what they said? "Doug Ford and his government, they're going to make sure that those seniors are taken care of and looked after." So I'm very proud to stand behind our government and our health care process, moving forward.

I'm pleased to join this debate, moved by the member for London West, regarding the Closing Oversight Loopholes for Home Care Clinics Act, 2019. As you know,

addressing the crisis of hallway health care is one of Ontario's major priorities, and it's a priority for this government. It's so great to see this priority echoed by the members of the official opposition.

Our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is working and has been working tirelessly to make sure that we create a connected system of care where every Ontarian is truly supported throughout their entire health care journey. That is what is so important. It's the connectivity from the start to their journey to where they decide to reside in their final days.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, part of our health care journey is our long-term care. That brings me to this bill at hand, Bill 102. If passed, it would amend existing legislation to strengthen oversight when it comes to complaints and inspections of long-term-care homes. As I've said, our government for the people recognizes the importance of strengthening and connecting the care system. That way, families in need can access reliable, safe care.

My riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore has some incredible long-term-care options for those who need it. Recently, I had the opportunity to honour the hard-working volunteers, almost 150 of them, from Lakeshore Lodge, which is a long-term-care home located on our waterfront. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them once again for their service. Volunteers at those long-term-care facilities are so important.

I know for me, and for many in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, having access to safe long-term care is top of mind. Residents want to have the option of staying in their communities as they age. Some will choose to stay in their homes, but for others long-term care is a necessity. That is why I am so pleased that our government's first budget contained vital spending increases in the health care budget. I just want to repeat that: Our budget contained spending increases in the health care budget. We hear so much about these cuts, but it is not a cut. We are increasing that budget.

This investment will ensure that the highest quality of care for our seniors is there when they need it. It includes new access to dental care for low-income seniors—and let's talk about that. Dental care for seniors is so important. When seniors have that dental care, they stay out of the emergency wards. They get that care they need and they don't have to spend those hours waiting to get help. We can be preventative. This was something we talked about during the campaign and it is still so important today. I'm so pleased with that announcement.

Over \$72 million were put in the budget to create new long-term-care beds across this province, and \$267 million in home and community care funding. This is all in addition to the improvements made through The People's Health Care Act, which this House gave third reading to a few weeks back. It will ensure that all aspects of people's health care journeys are integrated and seamless, which will help reduce wait times and end hallway health care.

Our government will ensure that Etobicoke seniors and seniors from across this province have high-quality care, regardless of whether they want to stay in their home or

need more supervised care. Of course, effective oversight is key to ensuring that a high standard of care is met and maintained, especially when it comes to our seniors.

This is why I applaud the member for St. Catharines for raising this discussion and bringing forward these ideas. It is never a bad time to talk about our seniors, to talk about our seniors' safety and to talk about how we can make seniors more of a priority for our government. I support the intent of this bill, and I will be voting in favour of this bill. But I believe we can continue this conversation throughout the province and as we move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I recognize the member for Ottawa-Nepean—

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: West.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Ottawa West-Nepean.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm short on time, so I'll get straight to the point. I'd like to commend the member from London West for bringing forward this important piece of legislation that's going to help to strengthen home care across the province. We know how important home care is in that triangle of care, which I've spoken about before, involving strong hospital care, strong long-term-care support and strong home care support. Making sure that the proper oversights are there so that that people can feel protected and safe in their homes is so vitally important. I commend the member for bringing this forward, and I look forward to supporting it.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry, I can't recognize a point of order at this time.

The member for London West has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to say, on behalf of the 3,001 Londoners who got those letters advising them to be tested for blood-borne disease because of the lack of oversight of the home care clinic, that I very much appreciate the debate that has taken place today. I was heartened to hear the comments from the members from Brampton West, London-Fanshawe, Mississauga-Lakeshore, Brampton Centre, Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Ottawa West-Nepean.

Certainly, what I heard, a common theme across those comments, was around quality of care. I think I can't be the only MPP who hears many, many concerns about the quality of home care that constituents receive in our ridings. Will this bill solve those problems? No, but it will close an oversight loophole in the context of the growth of home care clinics across the province. When patients are discharged from hospital, they are assessed as eligible for home care. They expect they'll get that care at home, but more and more, they're being asked to go for a clinic, often privately operated on a for-profit basis. That's where they are provided that care.

But these clinic premises don't have any oversight, unlike other privatized health care for ultrasound, X-rays, cataract surgery, dialysis, plastic surgery. These kinds of premises do have oversight in place; home care clinics do not. It is critical that we close this loophole because every patient in the province of Ontario deserves to know that

the care they receive will be safe and high-quality. This bill will address that.

Thank you.

1530

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA PARTICIPATION DÉMOCRATIQUE

Mrs. Lalonde moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of democratic participation / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la participation démocratique.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Merci, madame la Présidente.

Democracy is one of Ontario's core and defining values. Strong democratic institutions, an informed public and robust democratic participation are necessary elements of a truly successful society.

It is an honour to lead off second reading debate of Bill 96, the Democratic Participation Act. Democracy is more than voting every four years; it is an ongoing process. It's something that we live every day, even if we don't notice it. It's a state of mind. The word "democracy" has Greek origins, and it means "the power of the people." It is time to make some changes to enhance the power to the people.

Ontarians feel disconnected from politics and the political process, and for good reason. There are problems that need fixing. We must improve transparency, nous devons encourager la participation, and we must do a better job educating citizens about our system and our democracy itself.

The bill is intended to start, and to spark, a collective discussion to identify and address our democratic challenges. The legislative process itself provides a place for this conversation to begin. Legislation is typically proposed as a fait accompli. There is little discussion on how a problem was identified or if other solutions were considered. Defending a bill against criticism becomes the primary focus. I am sure we can all agree that the focus should be on finding the best solutions.

If Bill 96 passes second reading and reaches the committee stage, I want to study it in a new way. I want to show how existing processes can be used to expand democratic participation with transparency and openness. The discussion and consultation about the content of this bill should exemplify a new way of identifying and solving problems. Listening should replace defending. We should be open to changes. There should be a real conversation with the public about other possible options, other possible solutions and even other possible problems.

People should know why decisions are made. They should know if other options were considered. To have

real democratic legitimacy, the entire process should be transparent and open, with the real input and real participation of Ontarians.

Democracy is messy. Whenever democracy is discussed, opinions will differ. The changes proposed in this bill require research, discussion and consensus in order to have legitimacy. Most of all, they require the voices of Ontarians.

I would now like to touch on the specific changes proposed in Bill 96. Today, more than ever before, we expect more and we demand more from our youth. Youth today pay taxes as soon as they start earning income. They can get married at 16. They can get a driver's licence at age 16. Before they turn 18, it is expected that youth will decide on a career path, which university or college they will attend, or which trade they will make their life's work.

With all these responsibilities, they don't have a role in choosing their representative at Queen's Park. We cannot expect young people to have an interest in a government in which they can't participate. Young people's disenchantment with the ballot box matters, because voting is a habit. If you don't vote when you're young, you often never start.

Madame la Présidente, il y a des faits pour nous démontrer ce point : In 2014, Scotland allowed 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in their independence referendum. The results? Of those registered, three quarters turned out to vote, compared to only 54% of 18-to-24-year-olds. In 2007, Austria became the only western country where a 16-year-old could vote in all elections, and turnout rates for under-18s are markedly higher than the 19-to-25-year-olds.

Madame la Présidente, on se souvient qu'en 1971, nous avons changé l'âge légal du vote de 21 à 18 ans, parce que cette génération a réalisé que la société avait changé et que les jeunes adultes de 18 ans avaient droit de participer à l'élection de leur gouvernement.

Speaker, with all that we expect of our citizens aged 16 and 17, it is past time to give them a voice in choosing who governs the province in which they live.

The bill also asks that we need to prepare students to exercise their right to vote. Maybe starting in grade 1, or early on, we would educate kids about civic engagement and democracy. We could have mock elections in the classroom during general and provincial elections—or municipal, I must say.

Another aspect of this bill, Madam Speaker, is that if passed, it will mandate the Chief Electoral Officer to study and report on several things. First, we would like a study for making election day a provincial holiday, to help improve voter turnouts. Working families lead busy lives between work, school, taking kids to baseball practices and other responsibilities. Finding time on a Thursday between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. is not always feasible. I heard from many people when consulting on this bill that finding time to vote was not always easy, so during my own youth council it was brought up that having election day be a holiday would allow more people to have the time available to vote.

Another point that we would ask for study on in this bill is banning the reporting of voter intention polls during election campaigns and allowing certified pollsters to release issue-based polling. Elections should be about who we are and our choices. They should be about the ideas that drive government action. Horse-race-type polls do nothing to add to this discourse. They contribute nothing to the debate on issues. They only serve to anoint “winners and losers.” Issue-based polls could be allowed by political pollsters who have received mandatory accreditation to ensure that they are meeting professional standards.

Another point of study that we would be asking for is expanding mail-in voting. Once again, making participation in an election more accessible should always be our goal. For many citizens, travelling to a polling place on election day is not always feasible. Whether due to physical restriction or time constraint, especially for those who live in rural and remote communities, travel distance is a burden. Allowing for mail-in voting would address those concerns. Mail-in voting is already practised in many jurisdictions to increase participation in elections.

Another important point, Madam Speaker, is that the study would be about looking at mandatory voting. This is practised in Australia and Belgium. They have adopted it for years, one since 1925. I had the privilege of meeting some parliamentarians on the subject, who have demonstrated as to the increase in voter turnout. Those two countries specifically refer to fines if you're not voting. I would encourage the study to look at an incentive, Madam Speaker, and that's very important for me to note. But voters would be required to vote, indeed, in person on election day or in advance. Voters would be able to refuse or spoil their ballot.

The other part that I would like to have consideration of in this bill that we're proposing is a ranked ballot pilot project in upcoming by-elections or during the next provincial election and a full analysis of its effectiveness.

1540

Madam Speaker, people have complained that our first-past-the-post system results in wasted votes and encourages strategic voting. Ranked ballots, where voters can rank their preferred candidates, could address these complaints. I know my colleague beside me will be talking about this as something that she brought in at the municipal level and that they are able to exercise.

Madam Speaker, the status quo is not working. Studies show declining support for democracy among millennials. Why? Why do we take our democracy for granted? Maybe because there is no perceived impact on government, no real participation, declining faith in institutions and excessive focus on partisanship rather than solutions.

In preparing to introduce this bill, I undertook six months of consultation. I spoke to and listened to voters and potential voters about our democracy. I travelled to many parts of our province, including Welland, Windsor, London, Kingston, Toronto, and of course my own riding of Orléans. I would like to say a few special thanks. I want to say thank you to Brock University, the University of

Guelph, Western University and the University of Toronto, where I was able to hold round tables with students.

I also want to say thank you to my own youth council in Orléans and to Mark Henschel, along with his brother, who visited during the Christmas holidays to speak to me about democracy and this proposed bill. I also would like to thank my colleagues Arthur Potts, Sophie Kiwala and Kate Graham who helped me with round tables.

Madame la Présidente, these proposed changes are by no means a cure-all, but they do represent prudent steps that would help improve our democratic process. I look forward to hearing further debates with my colleagues, and I look forward to beginning the conversation and to strengthening democratic participation in Ontario. I certainly hope that we'll have your support on this very important piece of legislation.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 96, the Democratic Participation Act, introduced by the member from Orléans. Strengthening our democratic participation, especially for our youth, is a very worthy goal. The PC Party has 13 millennials here in our House, including our youngest MPP elected, the member from Niagara West. Speaker, we have a culture in our party of giving young people real responsibility and real opportunities. We have young people in our provincial executive, our riding associations and our youth associations, including my son. I asked them for their thoughts on this bill and I would like to share some of their thoughts today.

Speaker, I'd like to start with an interesting provision in this bill: the requirement that the Minister of Finance provides every person who files a tax return a statement on Ontario's finances to be vetted by the Deputy Minister of Finance, the FAO and the Chief Justice of Ontario, but, interestingly, not the Auditor General. I'll return to this in a moment.

Speaker, we can understand the thinking here. Misinformation about provincial finances could undermine trust in our government and the electoral process, particularly among our youth. I understand this because, as you know, I ran against the former finance minister, and he did provide us with a pre-election report on Ontario finances. It wasn't vetted by the Chief Justice of Ontario, but it was vetted by the Auditor General. I want to read what she said. She said the former minister's report "is not a reasonable presentation of Ontario's finances, because of the understatement of the expenses resulting from the Fair Hydro Plan and the understatement of the pension expenses." She said, "We think this accounting is bogus." It's "like you treating your credit card debt as an asset in your books. Does that sound right to you?" She warned she could issue an adverse opinion on Ontario's public accounts, the first adverse opinion for any government in Canadian history.

We had four debates in Mississauga–Lakeshore, and at each one the former minister said he had a balanced budget and he was now in a "surplus position." Speaker, the

voters of Mississauga–Lakeshore simply didn't believe him. They rejected the Liberal Party in many ridings across this province—less than 20% of the vote and only seven seats.

A few months later, the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry, including Gordon Campbell, a former Liberal Premier in BC, confirmed Ontario's Liberals had left us with a \$15-billion deficit.

In contrast, our Minister of Finance produced a great budget last month. It protects what matters most and fixes the mess left to us by the member's government, in a responsible and sustainable way. The Auditor General approved. "For the first time in the last three years," she said, "I've issued a clean audit opinion."

The statements proposed in this bill would be costly, and now that the member's party has been defeated, it's no longer necessary.

Bill 96 would also require education about democracy in all grades. But once again, the curriculum already requires citizenship education in every grade: in civics and citizenship in grade 10, and in Canadian studies in grades 9 and 10. Students already learn what it means to be a responsible and active citizen in their community.

Bill 96 would also lower the voting age from 18 to 16, but, Speaker, 18 is the age of majority. Even my 15-year-old son agrees. We looked at all the great democracies in the world—Great Britain, India, the United States, Australia, New Zealand—and none of these countries have a voting age below 18.

Next, Bill 96 would require a ranked ballot pilot project. In other words, elections in some ridings would be based on different rules than elections in other ridings. This would create a two-tier system in which, to quote Animal Farm, all members "are equal, but some are more equal than others." That's simply not right.

The Liberals attempted electoral reform once before, and it was rejected by Ontarians. Almost two thirds of Ontarians, and over 95% of the ridings, voted to keep the first-past-the-post system. In fact, electoral reform has been rejected nearly every single time it has been tested in Canada. Federally, even Prime Minister Trudeau has turned his back on this promise.

Lastly, Bill 96 would require the Chief Electoral Officer to report on regulating opinion polls, voting by mail, and mandatory voting. This is an independent officer of the House, who already has the authority to make recommendations to amend the electoral act. Last fall, he met with me here in Queen's Park, and I'm sure he met with most of us. He asked for my recommendations, and I shared a few with him. But we should respect his independence.

We shouldn't demand reports on special issues. We shouldn't be regulating opinion polls. I reject the idea of that. We should respect free speech, either for pollsters or for the press, especially during campaigns. We don't need to vote by mail. It's more open to fraud, and we have the US and the UK to prove that. It would depend too much on the reliability of Canada Post.

Last, we don't need mandatory voting. Respectfully, if the Liberals wanted to improve turnout, they should have

offered a better vision for the future than they did last spring.

These are the reasons why I cannot support this bill today. It takes a great intention—increasing democratic participation—and it has delivered an unworkable scam that would cost taxpayers more and do more to undermine democracy than the improvement it should be.

I urge all members to oppose this bill.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise today to speak on Bill 96, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of democratic participation, brought forward by the member for Orléans.

Democracy is one of the pillars of our society. It is the reason why I'm standing here before this House today. Any change to the way our democratic system works must itself be done democratically, in a fair, transparent and non-partisan manner.

In this bill, there are no provisions or requirements provided to engage the public in what would amount to a substantial change to the voting process in this province. Ranked ballots would completely change elections as we know them in Ontario. Instituting ranked balloting without any meaningful consultation or studies into the matter, whether it be permanent or not, is absolutely unconscionable.

1550

Over the last few weeks and months, we have seen unprecedented levels of youth engagement. Young people have made clear that they have a voice and that they will be heard. They have shown us that they are informed and that they care about what the government does in their name. Whether it be the environment, e-learning or cuts to OSAP, the young people of this province have shown us that they are a force to be reckoned with and that they will not be ignored.

Young people deserve to be heard and to have a seat at the table, but just as important is how that is done. Educating students on democratic citizenship is something I support and I believe to be very important. Engaging in our political process is not only a right but also a duty. We are all responsible for our collective futures and that of our province. However, there are other parts of this bill which detract from this. It is also worth noting that under this bill, students would be deprived of the ability to make a fully formed and educated decision, as not all party platforms would be presented to them for mock elections.

In 2016, Madam Speaker, New Democrats put forward a motion calling on the government to establish an advisory panel on political finance reform and electoral participation. This motion was defeated by the Liberals. Our motion called for an independent, consensus-based approach overseen by the Chief Electoral Officer, with input from each party that earned at least 3% of the vote, and would include members of civil society.

If the Liberals really cared about election reform, they had 15 years to do so, and they did not. Furthermore, this bill does not lower the voting age to 16 in all elections across the province. It allows municipalities to keep the

voting age as is in municipal elections. This would create a patchwork of different voting ages across the province, with no standard voting age.

Whether it is issues of social justice, climate change or education, the young people of Ontario are at the forefront, pushing for equity, standing up for the environment and fighting for their futures.

I cannot stress enough, Madam Speaker, the importance of transparency, openness and public consultation with regard to any change made to our democratic process. Unfortunately, this bill does not reflect that.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: We're speaking today on Bill 96, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of democratic participation. It's a private member's bill put forward by the Liberal member from Orléans. She is asking that we require education about democracy and democratic participation in all grades.

I think we have quite a bit of education in our public school system. In fact, while we were in here today, I got a text message from somebody I know from Thornhill named Janeah Villaneuva. She just moved here from the Philippines last summer. She is attending grade 10 at Westmount Collegiate high school. I'm trying to help her a little bit with some of her studies; I know her mother very well. She is working on a project right today to list 15 things that the government should be required to do. I thought, "Do you know what? I don't believe in coincidences." I don't know about everybody else here, but I thought I would share a few of them with you.

(1) All people must pay taxes, which I thought was very interesting for somebody in grade 10 to send me.

(2) The country must be eco-friendly to protect the country's living and not-living components.

(3) Everyone has equal rights.

(4) Each person has the right to live free.

(5) The citizen has to donate five hours of community service each year. Now, you can see where that's coming from, because the students themselves have to do community service. They're thinking, "Gee, this is very important. This is very rewarding. Maybe my parents and my neighbours should have to do community service as well."

(6) At 16 to 17 years of age, they should be able to work part-time while they're going to school. I think that means that their schedules should be more accommodating so that they can attend school.

(7) The last one I'm going to read to you is that there should be no noise pollution at night.

I thought that was also interesting because, to tell you the truth, Madam Speaker, I got up fairly early this morning. It was still dark outside, and there was some recycling truck coming down my street with squeaking brakes. I remember it very clearly, and it was just this morning.

We're talking about a lot of issues that the member has put forward. One of them is about lowering the age of voting from 18 to 16. You can see that our 16-year-olds—

because Janeah is 16—are engaged, they are interested, but they're not at the stage where they really understand how the government works, how finances work, how taxes work, how everything works. Maybe there's a compromise in there. Now that we can have online voting so much more easily—maybe not for our constituents, but certainly, we could come up with some kind of online voting system, that I would suggest the member opposite consider, to allow those younger than 18 to vote online because it wouldn't be as expensive. We wouldn't be worried about fraud, because the votes wouldn't be, I guess, as serious of a concern in terms of fraud. But they would be able to vote, and it might be beneficial to us to see how those 16- and 17-year-olds are voting. It might actually affect government policy. It might affect platforms and elections, because we would see how they voted. Maybe it would be more of a referendum type of vote.

The member from Orléans is also asking about requiring the Chief Electoral Officer to report on various matters.

Making election day a provincial holiday: Well, we already have so many holidays. I think that what the member is maybe missing is that our economy is not keeping up with our costs here in the province of Ontario. The former Liberal government, of which she was a member, was spending \$40 million a day more than they were taking in. To ask our businesses to take on an even heavier load, requiring them to pay their workers—because that's what it means when you make a provincial holiday, Madam Speaker: The workers get paid, and the businesses do not earn any profit. There's no production going on.

Her government already brought in a statutory holiday within the last dozen years, and here we are, debating whether or not people should have another day off—a full day off—on which to vote. That's obviously a concern to our business community. We're trying to grow our economy. We're trying to create good jobs. We're trying to get businesses from around the world and businesses here in Ontario and Canada to invest in Ontario, and we're hearing suggestions from a member of the independent caucus—I guess we could call it the Liberal caucus—who is suggesting ways to scare off business and to scare off investment.

I heard her explanation of how she wants to have a ranked ballot pilot project, on which my colleague from Mississauga–Lakeshore raised concerns, in fact. He quoted Animal Farm, where “some animals are more equal than others.” I think he was mentioning that some voters or some members in the Legislature would be considered more equal than others.

The last main point that she's suggesting is that the Minister of Finance provide everyone who does a tax return—that they would get a statement on the province's finances. Considering that we also heard that the Auditor General wouldn't sign off on the previous government's finances—so then for a member of that government to therefore suggest that we should have more transparency

is a tiny bit rich. But of course, we do want to move to having more accountability, more transparency and, of course, more sustainability here in Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: As always, it is a great privilege to speak here on behalf of my constituents in the great riding of Davenport.

I also want to thank the member from Orléans for bringing this bill forward. I think this is obviously an important topic. Our democratic system and electoral reform are very important issues deserving of significant debate and discussion.

I want to start off by saying how much I support, and how much we support in our caucus, the notion of lowering the voting age for young people in Ontario. As the education critic for the official opposition, I meet with a lot of young people, a lot of students who care a lot about the future of this province, the future of their education system in particular, and have strong but important feelings that deserve to be heard. Madam Speaker, I think we give a lot of lip service in this House to the importance of the voice of youth and young people, but I think we have come to a place where we need to serve those young people by actually allowing them to have a formal vote in our electoral system. I'm very supportive of that.

1600

I did want to talk a little bit more about the member's proposal for the ranked ballot project—I think that's what it's called—the idea that you would engage in this five-year process to have a consultation or discussion on ranked ballots. I want to be very clear that the New Democratic Party has been very clear and on the record that any changes to Ontario's electoral process cannot simply be the result of a vote by MPPs but should be given and be driven by an independent, non-partisan process overseen by the Chief Electoral Officer with province-wide public consultations.

What concerns me about some of what's being proposed here is that role of the political in this process. I want to remind everyone here that in the last federal election, about two thirds of Canadians voted for parties that were promising electoral reform. In fact, the current Prime Minister promised that 2015—do you remember this?—would be the last one held under first-past-the-post. They promised to table legislation within 18 months of taking office that would enact electoral reform, but, Madam Speaker, they broke that promise.

In fact, just remembering back to that time, what I found the most galling—and I know great MPs like Nathan Cullen have been such incredible proponents of electoral reform—was that they actually decided to conduct another consultation, but it wasn't really based on much. It was really just about one form of electoral reform, which is the ranked-ballot process. This is after they had all kinds of input—a multi-party committee that came together and said, “No, actually, we're not looking at ranked ballot. We'd like to see this other form. We'd like to see something more along the lines of proportional representation.”

Then they sent out this survey to Canadians, a very, very biased survey. Then, in the end, you know what? They didn't do anything anyway. Because guess what? They didn't like the answer. And that's why this is a conversation that needs to happen among folks who are independent of the politics that we all experience. Because let's face it, we all have our own ideal model that we think will work best for us. The point is to come up with something—we, of course, support mixed-member proportional representation—to find a system that actually serves the people and not one that just serves one party's particular interest.

Madam Speaker, with the greatest respect, I think we're going to have to disagree on some aspects of this bill. But I am very happy that we had this opportunity to have this discussion.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's a real pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon and debate Bill 96, the Democratic Participation Act, presented by my colleague and seatmate, the member from Orléans.

It is a really important day in the Legislature when we're talking about how to make the democratic process more engaging and inviting for the public. I believe the member has touched on some very important issues and themes in which to do that. What she's asking is for this to be further studied at the committee level and for more input to be provided, more consultation to be had.

Recently I was at one of my local riding associations. They were doing voting on their new executive. Three-year-old Theodore said to me, "What is voting?" Of course, I had to define this in terms of this three-year-old so he could understand. I said, "It's to make a choice." A few hours later, after the voting was done, I said to him, "Theodore, what is voting?" And he said, "Make a choice." That's what we have to do here: make voting something that is meaningful and engaging for everyone.

What better than to lower the voting age to the age of 16 so that young people, when they're in school, they're in the education system, can have the information that is available to them to actually participate in that voting process?

I see here that Australia has lowered its voting age to 16.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Austria.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Austria has lowered its voting age to 16, and is making voter registration begin at 14 and 15 because you have to engage young people throughout this process. I know we have a student vote already in our system, and it would be good based on your bill, Bill 96, to make that something that's consistent across all school boards and at all levels. This is about democratic participation, it's about making voting more meaningful, and I support—

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a pleasure to rise and speak about the Democratic Participation Act and thank the member

from Orléans for obviously some very hard work. I believe she's very sincere about what she has put forward.

I requested to speak to this because the whole concept of citizenship is one that's very important to me. As the former executive director of a settlement agency, I've been to many, many citizenship ceremonies. Seeing the look on a newcomer family's faces when they become citizens of our country and are given all the rights to vote really impresses upon you that they don't take it for granted, but many of us, as Canadians, really take that right for granted.

The concept of citizenship is really one that is definitely worthy of debate. It reminded me of one of my favourite authors, John Ralston Saul, who writes about the failure of globalization and returning to concentrate on citizenship. As we all know, after the failure of globalization in 2008 and the vacuum that that left, we had all of these right-wing populist parties step into that vacuum. They don't talk about what we can do for our country or our province. It's all about selfishness. It's all about me, me, me: Can I get that tax break? Can I get that buck-a-beer? Can I get something for myself?

Citizenship is the opposite of that. Citizenship is really a way out because it speaks to our responsibilities to our country, to our province, our municipality, our children's future, and reconciliation with Métis, Aboriginal and First Nations peoples. It speaks to all of the important things that will really take us forward as a country, not just ourselves. So I really commend the member from Orléans for a very thoughtful bill and some very hard work.

Going through the bill, there are some great suggestions. I think that you would find that many in the New Democratic Party at least will agree with lowering the voting age to 16. Based on my conversations with young people these days and what they're going through, they're certainly better informed than many of the older people I talk to, quite frankly.

I'm not sure why we would have a different voting age for municipal elections. I think that 16 is old enough to vote in all elections.

I also think we could talk about newcomers. The board I used to sit on, OCASI, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, talked about giving the right to vote to newcomers who own property and are simply waiting for their citizenship ceremony to come. Why should we not be including them in voting?

Of course, mandatory voting, I think, is an excellent idea as well.

This is a very, very thoughtful bill. I'm not going to repeat—my friend from Davenport really summed up our problems with the bill. Ranked voting: I think that has to be something we look at for all systems of voting, and, of course, the fact that we have to have a public process when we come forward with democratic changes. I'm not sure that's accomplished here, but thank you to the member for a thoughtful bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Orléans has two minutes to reply.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Madame la Présidente, j'aimerais remercier mes collègues ici, all our parliamentarians who have participated in this important

debate. I think we can all agree, and I said this earlier, that democracy is messy. We all have a perspective. We all have beliefs. We all come from different perspectives. But this was the intent of the bill. The entire premise of this bill is to bring it to second reading, to bring it to a committee, to further the conversation, to enhance participation, voter turnout and to find solutions where Ontarians will feel a little bit better, I would say—maybe not all, but some Ontarians—to come to the polls.

There are lots of things in this bill, and I realize that. I know that there are components of the bill that some of you may feel comfortable with and some of you may not feel as comfortable, that I didn't go far enough. But this is our chance to bring it to committee and to further enhance the conversation about democratic participation.

It had sparked—and I'm happy to hear that some of you have youth councils and have engaged with children in the schools, because most kids and young adults who I spoke to want to be part of democracy. They want to find a way that we and they could vote at 16.

The Chief Electoral Officer, I did meet with him. I think he's independent enough to help us, help the government, help all of us bring a feasibility study that will help—

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

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

CONSUMER PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT (RIGHT TO REPAIR
ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS), 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION
DU CONSOMMATEUR
(DROIT DE RÉPARER
LES PRODUITS ÉLECTRONIQUES)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item number 64, standing in the name of Mr. Coteau.

Mr. Coteau has moved second reading of Bill 72, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 respecting the repair of electronic products. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."
All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."
In my opinion, the nays have it. I declare the motion lost.
Second reading negatived.

CLOSING OVERSIGHT LOOPHOLES
FOR HOME CARE CLINICS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 VISANT À COMBLER
LES LACUNES DANS LA SURVEILLANCE
DES CLINIQUES DE SOINS À DOMICILE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Sattler has moved second reading of Bill 102, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994 and the

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is a majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy? Agreed.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION
ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA PARTICIPATION
DÉMOCRATIQUE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Madame Lalonde has moved second reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of democratic participation. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the nays have it. I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Point of order: I recognize the member.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I would like to correct my record. I just want to apologize to the member. I meant to say London West instead of St. Catharines. I do apologize for that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All members have the right to correct their record.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: Earlier today, I made reference to the member from Brampton West. I'd like to correct my record. It was the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All members have the right to correct their record.

Orders of the day?

Hon. Bill Walker: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Walker has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, May 6, at 10:30.

The House adjourned at 1614.

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Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
Wayne Gates, Randy Hillier
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stephen Crawford
Doug Downey, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Kaleed Rasheed
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Dave Smith
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Chris Glover
Christine Hogarth, Logan Kanapathi
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Dave Smith, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Parm Gill
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Jane McKenna
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Lorne Coe, Michael Coteau
Mike Harris, Faisal Hassan
Jane McKenna, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Toby Barrett, Catherine Fife
Goldie Ghamari, Michael Gravelle
Jim McDonnell, Norman Miller
Christina Maria Mitas, Suze Morrison
Michael Parsa, Peggy Sattler
Kinga Surma
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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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

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
John Fraser, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie