

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 97

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 97

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Monday
29 April 2019

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Lundi
29 avril 2019

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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



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

ISSN 1180-2987

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 29 April 2019 / Lundi 29 avril 2019

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	4547
Mr. Joel Harden.....	4547
Hon. Michael A. Tibollo	4547
Ms. Laura Mae Lindo.....	4547
Hon. Monte McNaughton	4547
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	4547
Mr. John Fraser	4547
Hon. Ernie Hardeman.....	4547
Mr. Peter Tabuns	4547
Mr. Roman Baber.....	4547
Ms. Jill Andrew	4547
Mr. Toby Barrett	4547
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	4547
Ms. Natalia Kusendova	4547
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	4547
Mrs. Amy Fee	4547
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4548
Hon. Jeff Yurek.....	4548
Ms. Jessica Bell	4548
Ms. Sandy Shaw	4548
Miss Monique Taylor.....	4548
Attacks in Sri Lanka	
Mr. Logan Kanapathi	4548
National Day of Mourning	
Hon. Laurie Scott	4548
Mr. Mike Schreiner	4548
Mr. John Fraser	4548
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	4549
Hon. Laurie Scott	4549
Wearing of hockey jersey	
Ms. Lindsey Park	4550

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Education funding	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	4550
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	4550
Climate change	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	4551
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	4551
Kashechewan First Nation	
Mr. Guy Bourgouin.....	4552
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	4552

Flooding

Mr. Norman Miller.....	4552
Hon. John Yakabuski	4553

Kashechewan First Nation

Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	4553
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	4553

Occupational health and safety

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto	4554
Hon. Laurie Scott	4554

Legal aid

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	4554
Hon. Caroline Mulroney	4554

Government accountability

Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers.....	4555
Hon. Caroline Mulroney	4555

Education

Ms. Jill Dunlop.....	4555
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	4556

Public health

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	4556
Hon. Christine Elliott	4556

School nutrition programs

Mrs. Robin Martin.....	4557
Hon. Lisa MacLeod.....	4557

Education funding

Ms. Marit Stiles.....	4557
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	4557

Correctional services

Mr. Ross Romano.....	4558
Hon. Sylvia Jones	4558
Hon. Monte McNaughton	4558

Education funding

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo.....	4559
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	4559

Mental health in agriculture

Mr. Will Bouma	4559
Hon. Ernie Hardeman.....	4560

Visitors

Mr. Mike Schreiner	4560
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4560

Leanne Holland Brown

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton.....	4560
------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Logan Kanapathi	4560
---------------------------	------

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Public libraries	
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	4560
Attacks in Sri Lanka	
Mr. Logan Kanapathi	4560
Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre	
Mr. Jeff Burch	4561
Attacks in Sri Lanka	
Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam.....	4561
Dietary supplements	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4561
Terrorist attacks	
Mr. John Fraser	4562
Kiwanis Club of Brantford	
Mr. Will Bouma	4562
Kashechewan First Nation	
Mr. Gilles Bisson	4562
Student fundraising	
Ms. Christine Hogarth.....	4562
Cancer treatment / Traitement du cancer	
Ms. Natalia Kusendova	4563

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly	
Ms. Jane McKenna.....	4563
Debate adjourned	4563

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

Closing Oversight Loopholes for Home Care Clinics Act, 2019, Bill 102, Ms. Sattler / Loi de 2019 visant à combler les lacunes dans la surveillance des cliniques de soins à domicile, projet de loi 102, Mme Sattler	
First reading agreed to.....	4563
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4563
Election Finances Amendment Act (Leadership Fundraising Loophole), 2019, Bill 103, Mr. Fraser / Loi de 2019 modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections (lacune dans les règles de financement des candidats à la direction d'un parti), projet de loi 103, M. Fraser	
First reading agreed to.....	4564
Mr. John Fraser	4564

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Education funding	
Mr. Faisal Hassan.....	4564
Waste reduction	
Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers.....	4564
Veterans memorial	
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	4564
Education funding	
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	4565
Education funding	
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell	4565
Long-term care	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	4565
Long-term care	
Mme France Gélinas	4565
Education funding	
Ms. Jill Andrew	4566
Education funding	
Mr. Chris Glover	4566
Injured workers	
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	4566
Visitor	
The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	4567

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Education funding / Financement de l'éducation	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	4567
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	4569
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	4571
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff	4572
Ms. Jill Andrew	4574
Mr. Billy Pang.....	4575
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	4576
Mr. Kaleed Rasheed	4576
Ms. Sara Singh	4578
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	4579
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	4580
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell	4580
Mr. Joel Harden.....	4581
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	4582
Ms. Peggy Sattler	4582
Mr. Wayne Gates	4583
Mr. John Vanthof	4583
Mme France Gélinas	4584
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	4584
Motion negatived	4585

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Protecting What Matters Most Act (Budget Measures), 2019, Bill 100, Mr. Fedeli / Loi de 2019 pour protéger l'essentiel (mesures budgétaires), projet de loi 100, M. Fedeli

Ms. Sandy Shaw	4585
Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto	4593
Mme France Gélinas.....	4594
Mr. Will Bouma.....	4594
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	4594
Ms. Sandy Shaw	4595
Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	4595
Mr. Parm Gill.....	4596
Mr. Jamie West.....	4596
Mr. Paul Calandra.....	4596
Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers	4597
Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	4597

Private members' public business

Hon. Steve Clark.....	4597
Motion agreed to.....	4597

Protecting What Matters Most Act (Budget Measures), 2019, Bill 100, Mr. Fedeli / Loi de 2019 pour protéger l'essentiel (mesures budgétaires), projet de loi 100, M. Fedeli

Mr. Toby Barrett.....	4597
Mr. Billy Pang	4599
Ms. Laura Mae Lindo	4600
Ms. Jill Dunlop	4600
Mr. Wayne Gates	4600
Mr. Roman Baber	4601
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	4601
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	4601

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 April 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 avril 2019

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us begin this morning with a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Let us pray.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask members to introduce their guests, I want to inform you all that around the Legislature today are representatives from Wilfrid Laurier University, including their president, Deb MacLatchy. I want to welcome them all to Queen's Park. I also look forward to visiting with my alma mater after question period, and we invite all of the members to attend that as well. It's in room 230.

Introduction of visitors.

Mr. Joel Harden: It's with great pleasure that I welcome Kate Logue and Jenny Sturgeon, and other parents who are advocates for autism, into this place. Welcome to your House. Welcome to the people's House.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome this morning Holly Huxtable from England and my daughter, Frances Tibollo, both lawyers recently working together at the United Nations genocide tribunal in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Today, I'm honoured to introduce Tessa Day from Courtland public school, a 13-year-old in a school in my riding, and her mom, Peggy Zehr. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to welcome from London today a good friend of ours, Don Strickland. Welcome to Queen's Park, Don.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Good morning, Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to welcome the following guests to the Legislature today: Chief Leo Friday of the Kashechewan First Nation, as well as other members of the community; Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon of the Mushkegowuk Council; Deputy Grand Chief Derek Fox of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation; Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald of the Chiefs of Ontario; Harvey Bischof, president of the OSSTF; Laura Walton, president of the Ontario School Board Council of Unions; Rayne Fisher-Quann, a student organizer; Krista Wylie; and Chuck Kwan as well. Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome some moms who are here from Ottawa this morning. They got up at 4 o'clock

in the morning to be here for the rally and support their children with autism. We have Kate Logue, Catherine Varrette, Jenny Sturgeon, Rhonda Allaby-Glass, Melanie Brisson and Martina Pietracupa. Thank you very much and welcome to Queen's Park, again.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome some members of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to Queen's Park. Visiting question period today we have Jan VanderHout, George Gilvesy and Andrew Morse. Please join them today at 5 p.m. in committee rooms 228 and 230 for their reception. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome Julie, Steve, Emily and Megan Dale, who are here to support page captain Cameron Dale. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Roman Baber: I'm pleased to introduce a constituent from York Centre, Angela Brandt.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good morning. I am proud to introduce, from CODE, the Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators, president Jane Deluzio and former president Sarah Papoff; and from OMEA, the Ontario Music Educators' Association, president Isaac Moore and Gena Norbury, elementary resources and former president.

Our three guests and other arts teachers and educators from their organizations are joining us at Queen's Park today for question period and the opposition day motion. Thank you for advocating for the arts.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind members to keep their introductions as brief as possible, and with no political statements.

The member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: We welcome people here from the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network. People are invited to room 28 at 12 o'clock. They're hosting a lunch for liver cancer awareness and also honouring a former NDP MPP, Norm Jamison.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my privilege to welcome two Windsor mothers who are disability advocates. I'd like to welcome Sherri Taylor and Mary Beth Rocheleau to Queen's Park.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: This morning I have a very special guest in the gallery, Dr. Zlatko Kusenda, my father, who is visiting us from France. Bienvenue, Papa. Bonjour.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to welcome Randy and Caroline Nickerson from Oshawa today from snapd Oshawa. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Amy Fee: I would like to welcome this morning all our new pages to the assembly, especially my daughter Sarah Fee.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome page Zoe McCabe. She's a student from Holy Rosary Catholic elementary school in Waterloo. Welcome, Zoe.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I would like to welcome Leith Coghlin here from the riding, a former Harris staffer. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to welcome Margaret Furlong, Barbara Gough, Beth Pelton, Mary Alton, Dave Clark, Seth Bernstein, Jay Fisher and Helen Victoros, who are joining us today in the Legislature. Thank you for coming.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's my pleasure to introduce Sultan. He has been a high school co-op student in my office for the past month. I want to thank him for all of his help and welcome him to Queen's Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pride to recognize the moms who are here today: Faith Munoz, Amy Moledzki, Angela Brandt, Jayana Dhatigara, Amanda Mooyer, Kowthar Dore, Sarah and Mike Klodnicki and many folks from the AAO who will be holding a rally after question period today.

ATTACKS IN SRI LANKA

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm informed that the member for Markham–Thornhill has a point of order.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Speaker, I am asking for unanimous consent for a moment of silence in the Legislature to honour the victims in Sri Lanka of the Easter Sunday massacre.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Markham–Thornhill is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to have a moment's silence in memory and recognition of the victims of the bombings in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

1040

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I've been informed that the Minister of Labour has a point of order.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I am seeking unanimous consent regarding the wearing of pins, statements and a moment of silence in honour of the Day of Mourning.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear pins in honour of the Day of Mourning, as well as a moment's silence. Agreed? Agreed. Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The Minister of Labour again.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but we also were asking for unanimous consent that the independent members be allowed to speak for up to five minutes, followed by five minutes for the official opposition, followed by five minutes for Her Majesty's government, and the statements be—we've already had the moment of silence, but for comments.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow the opposition to speak for five minutes, the independent members to speak for five minutes and the government to speak for five minutes in recognition of the Day of Mourning. Agreed? Agreed.

I'm looking to one of the independent members. I recognize the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll be sharing my time with the independent member from Ottawa South.

It's an honour today to rise to remember and to honour workers who have been killed or injured on the job. I just want to give a shout-out to the Guelph and District Labour Council for the moving ceremony that took place yesterday in Goldie Park in Guelph, and to pledge that on this day, and I would argue every day, it is our job to mourn for the dead and to fight for the living.

Mr. Speaker, any worker killed on the job is one too many deaths. Unfortunately, though, in Ontario, workplace injuries are on the rise, up 33% since 2015, and deaths have risen to 228 in 2018. So we have an obligation as MPPs to ensure that we have laws in place that protect workers and enforce workplace safety, and to ensure that we fight for the living. I would argue that we need to ensure that we not only have laws in place, but that we enforce those laws and that we have inspectors in place for proactive inspections—and that when employers don't fulfill their obligation to protect workers, we act to punish them in an appropriate way. I repeat: One death on the job is one too many deaths. Every worker should be able to be confident that they can go home at the end of each and every day to their family, their loved ones and their communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I share my time now with the member from Ottawa South.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased, on behalf of our caucus, to say a few words on the National Day of Mourning.

Everybody expects their brother, their sister, their husband, their wife or their child to come home from work every day. The tragedy when somebody dies at work is a very difficult one because we don't always say those things we might want to have said before somebody leaves first thing in the morning. It's an important thing for us to think about every day.

In my riding of Ottawa South, on August 10, 1966, the Heron Road Bridge collapsed. I was seven years old. I remember my uncle going down to the collapse. Sixty people were working on the bridge pouring concrete, and it fell 40 metres—scaffolding and concrete. Seven men died at the scene, never to go home again. Two more died; countless were injured. People's lives were changed forever. That was 53 years ago this August, and each year we commemorate those lives lost, and other lives lost, at the bridge. The Ottawa and District Labour Council, about four or five years ago, put up a monument, some 50 years later, to that horrific, terrible accident.

Workplace accidents and deaths are preventable, and often it's because someone, or a number of people, missed an important step or didn't follow the rules. Workplaces are unsafe. It's our job here in this Legislature to ensure that those rules and the enforcement of those rules take place so that all of us can be confident that the ones that we love, the ones that we care about, will return home after the workday.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. I'm honoured to rise in this House today and speak on behalf of the official opposition as New Democrats join workers across our province and our country in marking the National Day of Mourning. On the Day of Mourning, we stand in solidarity with all working people and their friends, families and loved ones to remember those who have been injured or killed on the job.

Every year, hundreds of Ontarians are killed on the job. Every year thousands more are injured, and still more are forced to live with complications of work-related environmental illnesses or trauma that they experience on the job.

Every worker has the right to earn a living and come home safely to their loved ones. I want to say that again: Every worker has a right to earn a living and then come home safely to their loved ones each and every day. Every worker, including part-time workers, temp workers, migrant workers and people trapped in unstable employment, has the right to protection and to work in a safe environment.

Every injury, illness and death in the workplace is absolutely unacceptable. Workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths are preventable.

Speaker, we as Ontarians have a responsibility to ensure that every worker makes it home safely each and every day. Particularly in this Legislature, we have that responsibility. As a province, we must honour our obligations to workers, to their families and to their loved ones by ensuring that we strengthen and modernize workplace safety standards so that they reflect the changing nature of our workplaces.

1050

Every injury and every death in the workplace is one too many. Yet every single year, we see tragic, preventable deaths and preventable events on construction sites, on the factory floor, in fields, underground, in correctional facilities, at hospitals and in communities across the province as first responders go about their work. In workplaces and job sites across our province, hazards evolve and workers can't afford for a government to be out of touch or for safety improvements to be out of reach.

Workers are making it very, very clear to this government that they must take real and immediate action to address safety concerns. When people's loved ones are suddenly taken from them on the job, whether it's in the industrial heartland, in the north, in rural parts of our province or in our cities and suburbs, families are left to put the pieces back together again—to put the pieces of their lives back together again. No Ontarian should ever have to worry about whether or not their loved ones will go to

work and never come home. That's why New Democrats are committed to making sure that our province does have strong safety regulations and that these regulations are rigorously enforced.

We often hear words bandied about in this Legislature, like "red tape." When red tape means that we have to make sure that workers are safe on the job and that workers can come home every single day to their families, then that's the kind of red tape that we agree with, and I think everyone should. It's about life and death, and it should never, ever come to that. That's why we are committed to working tirelessly with employers, with unions, with safety experts and with the WSIB to eliminate workplace incidents in Ontario. It's why we will continue to fight for the care and support that victims of workplace illness and injury need, including those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Yesterday, as we marked the National Day of Mourning, Speaker, we remembered the dead. But today and every day in this Legislature, I think it's incumbent upon each and every one of us not just to go to events that happen in our ridings at the injured workers' memorials and not just to get up and have this five-minute unanimous consent to talk about workers injured on the job, but to think carefully about how each and every one of us in our roles—whether you're a minister of the crown, whether you're a member of the governing side, whether you're a member of the official opposition, whether you're an independent member. As we go through the work that we do here, we should always keep the working people of our province front and foremost when it comes to policy and regulatory change, so that we know that the policy and regulatory change that is coming about is one that makes things safer for people, not more risky; to make sure that workplaces are healthy places to be, not unhealthy places to be; and that we actually act on the words that we speak on a day like today, as we mourn for the dead but continue to fight for the living.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, I'll recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Yesterday, April 28, marked the National Day of Mourning, where we honour and remember those who have died, been injured or become ill as a result of their job. This day was chosen to coincide with the day Ontario's first Workers' Compensation Act came to be in 1914, more than 100 years ago.

Over the past year here in Ontario and in many places across the country, thousands of people have come together to pause, remember and reflect on the workers and families who have been impacted by workplace injury and illness. As the Minister of Labour, one of my top priorities is to ensure that Ontarians have the proper protections to prevent and eliminate workplace incidents. These protections start with education and prevention and include legislation, regulation, inspections and enforcement. I am committed to making sure that Ontario's workplaces remain among the safest in the world. I'm also proud of the tireless efforts our team and safety inspectors and specialists are making each and every day to ensure that Ontario's workplaces remain safe.

Safety must be a priority for everyone. The government has an important role, but we can't do it alone. We need our health and safety partners, job creators and employers, supervisors, managers and employees. We must all work together to help create a culture of health and safety to prevent further workplace tragedies.

The knowledge and resources to prevent injuries exist. We must work together to harness it and ensure every workplace has access to it. On behalf of the government, I offer my condolences to all workers, along with their families and colleagues, who have been touched by workplace illness, injury or death. Our thoughts and prayers are with you at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the members for their thoughtful and compassionate remarks on the Day of Mourning.

WEARING OF HOCKEY JERSEY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Are there any other members who wish to raise a point of order before we begin question period? The member for Durham.

Ms. Lindsey Park: Speaker, I regret to inform this House that the Oshawa Generals have lost their four-game playoff series to the Ottawa 67's despite their valiant efforts. So I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to wear the Ottawa 67's jersey during question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Durham is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to wear a hockey sweater during question period. Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Before I begin, I just think it's important to acknowledge what many Ontarians are facing with all of the flooding that has been happening—everything from the work that the Mushkegowuk Council and Emergency Management Ontario have done to help evacuate the Kashechewan residents, to the volunteers, the army and the emergency response workers across Ottawa and Muskoka Lakes, Bancroft, Huntsville, and Renfrew county now, apparently. Things have been very tough, and Ontarians have pulled together to help each other, because that's what our province is all about, and I think it's important to acknowledge the work that people are doing.

My first question is to the Minister of Education. For weeks, the Ford government has insisted that their budget cuts would not lead to cuts in the classroom. On Friday, the government announced the Grants for Student Needs allocation, and school boards are confirming what we already knew: larger class sizes, fewer teachers, fewer courses available for students.

We are joined today by students, education workers, teachers and school trustees. They deserve a straight answer from the government, Speaker. Will the minister

admit that this is a cut in per-student funding that will inevitably lead to cuts in the classroom?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I am so happy to have an opportunity to speak about the facts, the true facts about where we're going in education in Ontario to get it back on track.

First and foremost, everybody in this House and everybody watching and listening to question period today needs to know we're investing more money in education like never before. And over and above that, we're making sure we are investing the money properly so the number one priority—student achievement—is achieved and realized once and for all.

You know, it's interesting, because here are the facts: We're investing almost \$25 billion through Grants for Student Needs. Essentially, for people listening and watching today, Grants for Student Needs is the operating envelope, if you will, that school boards need. So we're investing almost \$25 billion in the operating funds for the next school year in 2019-20, and not one teacher—not one teacher—will lose their job because of our proposed changes. Once and for all—

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What every person watching question period today needs to know is that the Grants for Student Needs have been cut by the government, which is not what the minister has acknowledged. In fact, there is an inflationary cut as well to education in their budget, so they are not even funding to inflation, which means, of course, even more cuts to education.

School boards are carefully reviewing the latest news from the ministry, but some things are quite clear already. The Toronto board says that they're facing a multi-million-dollar shortfall. That's not just the official opposition. That's the Toronto board. The Peel board says that course options will be lost. Again, not the official opposition but the Peel board. Toronto Catholic board's chair says they're losing \$655,000 in grants and eliminating 95 at-risk jobs for youth. These are real cuts affecting real Ontarians. Will the minister put an end to her cuts and restore funding to education?

1100

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I am going to stand in this House every day and put an end to the nonsense that we are hearing from the members of the opposition party. We're talking about people's livelihoods. We're talking about people's jobs. Shame on you for all the anxiety and all of the fearmongering you're causing throughout Ontario because the fact of the matter is this: We're increasing spending in education.

In the budget, people saw where we're investing \$700 million more than the previous government, and that is going to make a difference right in the classroom. Our GSN is up by almost—it's going to be almost \$25 billion, and that is a huge, significant piece of the puzzle when it comes to making sure we are securing what matters most

in Ontario, and that is student achievement. For goodness' sake, we are making sure that not one teacher is going to lose their job because we are setting aside a historic \$1.6 billion in attrition protection funding. Not one teacher—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the minister keeps denying it, but nobody believes her anymore. The Ford government is making cuts to classrooms, and our students are the ones who are going to be paying the price.

Last week, students at Cawthra Park Secondary School in Mississauga were called into the auditorium in their school and staff informed them that they would have to reselect their courses for their graduating year, and that they might even have to take summer school or night school to pick up electives in order to graduate in the time frame they expected to graduate.

The Premier can't stick his head in the sand and claim that students are fearmongering or that the opposition is fearmongering. These classroom cuts are real. They are hurting students, and they are damaging those students' futures. Will the minister stand up to the Premier, stand up for the students, get back to the cabinet table and make sure that these cuts are reversed?

Interjections.

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

Minister to reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I'm going to stand up against all of the nonsense that the leader of the opposition party is trying to discuss. Honestly, I'm telling you, we are investing money like never before. The fact of the matter is, we're increasing our funding in student transportation. We're increasing our funding for school per capita. We're going to be building schools and continuing to repair schools. We're going to be increasing our funding in French-language education. We're going to be increasing our funding by \$90 million for special education.

Again, Speaker, this is nonsense, what is being perpetuated by the opposition party. We are making sure that our number one priority is student achievement, and that they have the courses and they have the learning experiences they deserve, and we look forward to working with school boards to make sure that they themselves protect what matters most, and that is student achievement and the learning environment in the classroom.

Interjections.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. On Friday, the Premier travelled to Ottawa where he made the surprising admission that climate change is real—it was likely contributing to the flooding that we're seeing in communities across Ontario and that we should expect more of them. Now if the Premier truly believes that, why has the government slashed funding to

conservation authorities for flood management programs by half?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The question's to the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition's comments earlier and commend and thank all of the people, organizations, ministry officials, and volunteers throughout the province who've worked in response to these floods.

Understanding the impacts of climate change is essential to help manage risks across the economy to improve our understanding of how climate change will impact the province. We plan to launch Ontario's first-ever climate change impact assessment. This is a key part of our made-in-Ontario environment plan. We'll access the best science and information to better understand where the province is vulnerable and to know which regions and economic sectors are most likely to be impacted.

The previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, wasted taxpayers' dollars on actions that did little to prepare the province for the costs and impacts of climate change. That's changing under our government, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I know that the Premier saw what I saw when I travelled to Ottawa this weekend: thousands of volunteers scrambling to hold back rising water, heartbreaking losses to homes and businesses, damage and devastation.

We're joined today by families from Kashechewan, who are yet again being evacuated from their homes following disastrous flooding. The Premier admitted that once-a-century floods are now happening almost every year. If that's the case, why is the Ford government cutting the very services that could help us deal with it, including a 50% cut to the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Ontario's very first impact assessment will enable us to make planning and investment decisions that are better informed by the likely impacts of a changing climate. It will ensure better long-term management of public and private assets and infrastructure and will reduce costs to government, businesses and households.

Unfortunately, the member opposite's question does not reflect the reality in terms of our investment to Indigenous affairs. We continue to be committed to offering an array of programs and services, uncompromised in our efforts to modernize Indigenous affairs in Ontario and work effectively with our Indigenous stakeholders across the province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll tell you about the impact, Speaker. The impact is severe, and it's happening right now, not sometime down the road when they get an impact study done.

The Premier is not just cutting flood management services while the impacts are happening, but the Ford budget also scrapped the 50 Million Tree Program, which, among

other things, mitigated flood risk while fighting climate change. This doesn't even mention the Premier's decision to roll back environmental protections, scrap climate change programs and download even more costs to municipal governments that are scrambling to protect their communities, and let's not even talk about the fact that we don't even have an independent environmental commissioner anymore in the province of Ontario.

They are willing to spend millions of dollars helping Andrew Scheer by slapping campaign stickers on every gas pump in Ontario, but they can't find the funds to protect families from flooding, much less protect our province from climate change. Is this Ford government prepared to revisit the devastating cuts that they announced in their budget?

Interjections.

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

To the Minister of Energy again to reply.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take a crack at that kitchen-sink question and make the following observation: The New Democratic protestors here are bent on exploiting every issue that they can possibly do, and it doesn't reflect the facts on the ground.

She mentioned the carbon tax. Let's just talk about that for a moment. Listen to this: Boris Horodinsky owns Horodinsky Farms in Innisfil, one of the top onion farms in the country. He produces over 90,000 metric tonnes of grade A onions, grown, packed and shipped everywhere. He says, "In the end, we'll have to work these costs into our end product, into the onions. The consumer will end up paying the additional cost when they go into the supermarket to buy some onions or any other products...." He believes that the number is nowhere near the \$307 postcard we've all been sent by the federal government. In fact, he says, "It's not going to be \$1,200 or \$1,500.... It's likely going to be an additional \$2,000 to \$3,000...."

We are not going to miss an opportunity to inform the people of Ontario how much the federal Liberals and the provincial NDP want a cost of living for the people of Ontario.

KASHECHEWAN FIRST NATION

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: My question is to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs. Today, 250 members from Kashechewan First Nation are present at Queen's Park to remind the minister of the province's responsibility towards the community.

Speaker, 17 times the people of Kashechewan, including children, elders, and people with disabilities, have been evacuated as a result of the yearly flood. This government has issued a rapid response to the threat of flooding in eastern Ontario—rightly so, Mr. Speaker—yet it has failed the affected people in Kashechewan. Will this government commit to expediting the land transfer process so that the relocation of Kashechewan can begin as quickly as possible? Yes or no?

1110

Hon. Greg Rickford: First, I'd like to commend the officials from my ministry, the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs of Ontario. In fact, ministry officials from no less than five—at least—other ministries have been working hard on a coordinated response under these difficult situations to make this displacement as seamless as possible.

With respect to the member's specific request, Mr. Speaker, I've already taken action. I spoke with Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler last week. We had a great conversation. I'll be meeting with Chief Friday today and Grand Chief RoseAnne Archibald to ensure that they know that Ontario stands ready at any time, should the federal government decide to come forward and make plans to move this community.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Let me remind the members of this House that the province is a signatory party of the March 31, 2017 tripartite framework agreement. This agreement stipulated that both the province and the federal government would engage in short-, mid- and long-term solutions for Kashechewan. These solutions include relocating the community to higher and safer grounds.

Speaker, 90% of the community voted in favour of the relocation during the referendum held three years ago. My question: Minister, people have been waiting for 17 years and the province is responsible for this flooding. Promises are over. Will you honour the agreement that the province signed in 2017?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I'm very familiar with this situation and I can assure the member opposite and the people of Kashechewan who are here today that Ontario stands ready. We will make every effort available to us—use every tool—to participate in a process with the leadership of the Kashechewan First Nation community, the federal government and the provincial government to move forward.

This is not talking about it; it's about taking action. I've spoken with Indigenous leaders in the province to ensure not only that we ensure the safe displacement of those members happens now, but in the short-to-medium term there is a plan, a phased-in plan—which I've already had substantive discussions with Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler and plan to continue with the leadership of Kashechewan later this afternoon—to ensure that Kashechewan has a home year-round and this kind of displacement comes to an end.

FLOODING

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Over the past week, we've seen flooding in many communities across Ontario, including severe flooding in Bracebridge, Huntsville and Katrine in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. I've seen the flooding in all of these communities first-hand. I've spoken to the residents, who are anxious about their safety and damage to their property.

I know we have dedicated staff across the province monitoring the situation and responding with the support of the government. In Parry Sound–Muskoka, we also have dedicated municipal leaders and a huge number of volunteers doing everything they can. Can the minister please tell this House what his ministry and our government are doing to mitigate the potential damage from the flood waters?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for that question. I know he was out with the Premier last week viewing first-hand the damage in his areas.

Our sympathies go out to everyone across Ontario who has been dealing with flooding, including in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. On Friday, I visited the community of Constance Bay with Premier Ford, and I continued to visit communities in my riding over the weekend.

As we deal with the high water levels, the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre has been fully activated. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has been working with our partners at the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Solicitor General and across all three levels of government to coordinate an effective response. Together, we have personnel and supplies strategically positioned across the province to respond to the needs of municipalities as they request assistance.

I want to thank all of the first responders and the volunteers who have put in so much time to deal with this and to help those people who are suffering so greatly at this time.

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

Mr. Norman Miller: I thank you, Minister, for that answer. I understand water levels across much of eastern Ontario are at or have exceeded levels that have occurred in recent history. In Parry Sound–Muskoka, we are seeing record high water levels. Residents of Bracebridge, Huntsville, Katrine and Armour township who are facing flooding have strong local leadership to rely upon. I've met with and remain in touch with Bracebridge mayor Graydon Smith, Huntsville mayor Scott Aitchison and Armour township reeve Bob MacPhail.

However, much of my riding also includes unorganized territories where they are also experiencing flooding. Can the minister tell us what role the Ministry of Natural Resources plays in these unorganized territories?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member. As he knows, the municipalities lead the response in their community when circumstances such as flooding occur. Municipalities continue to be in contact with the provincial emergency coordination centre and are leading the response. They are coping well where there have been impacts and remain well equipped and prepared to respond to flooding.

In unorganized townships, MNRF, my ministry, is the lead for flood emergency response, and we work with our partner ministries and agencies to support people living in those areas.

For any Ontarian looking for information from my ministry on current or potential flood conditions, I ask them to visit Ontario.ca/flooding, where they will find maps, weather forecasts and other tools to help to keep them safe. We will be there when help is needed.

KASHECHEWAN FIRST NATION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs. The agreement signed by Canada, Ontario and Kashechewan First Nation in March 2017 is entitled Together We Work for Hope. But I'm not hearing hope from the community. Members of Kashechewan travelled here today to hear about this government's response to the flooding.

Mr. Speaker, will this government honour the health and the public safety commitments from the 2017 agreement and move forward with relocating the community?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the person who is shouting at the Legislature to cease. You can't do what you're doing. If you don't stop, you're going to have to leave the chamber.

Once again, I'll say we welcome guests in the Ontario Legislature. We're delighted to have you here. But you can't engage the members while you're in the visitors' gallery with comments. It's against the rules. It makes it impossible for the Legislature to do its business.

The minister had the floor and I'll allow him to conclude his response.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the honourable member's question. What we do intend to honour is a commitment to the community of Kashechewan that ensures, moving forward, we work with the federal government and the leadership of Kashechewan First Nation's community towards a plan that helps that community move to another location. I had conversations with Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler last week. I'll be meeting with Chief Friday today. I have a call placed in with Minister O'Regan, who I have had good relationships with on some particular matters in northwestern Ontario.

We intend to ensure moving forward, Mr. Speaker, that there is a plan in place for Kashechewan so they don't have to be displaced year in and year out as a result of the flooding and the location that that community currently is in.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: In 2005, more than 800 Kashechewan residents had to be evacuated due to E. coli contamination of the water supply. Many of the houses are full of mould due to repeated flooding and trapped moisture. Mr. Speaker, there is no time to waste to fix these health issues. The provincial government has a role to provide health care to the community through Treaty 9 and the 2017 agreement. What specific actions will this government take to protect the health of the community in the face of these floods?

Interjections.

1120

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

Once again, the Minister of Indigenous Affairs to reply.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I appreciate the honourable member's question. As I said earlier, we intend to honour a process that will see a solution for Kashechewan First Nation. It is unacceptable that they've been moved out of their community almost every year for the past 15 to 17 years, Mr. Speaker, and that the conditions in terms of housing are as a result of that flooding. That's why I've engaged the federal minister and the leadership of Kashechewan First Nation's community and, frankly, the Grand Chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation as well as the grand chief of the Chiefs of Ontario to ensure that we have the appropriate discussions and a plan in place, moving forward, that will ensure this problem is dealt with.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, earlier this morning we observed a moment of silence and received unanimous consent to wear the yellow ribbon to remember and honour those who have died, been injured or been ill as a result of their jobs, including my father, who died of asbestosis when I was 18, on December 12, 1985.

Last week and over the weekend, thousands of people across Ontario and in many places throughout Canada also paused to mark the National Day of Mourning. Participants included labour groups, employers, government officials and, of course, friends and family and survivors of those impacted by workplace incidents.

Can the minister inform this House how she as the Minister of Labour observed these occasions?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I thank the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore for the question and for all the fine work he is doing for his constituents, and for sharing his story about his dad. It is because of incidents like your dad that we have the day of remembrance.

Last Friday, I had the honour of participating in the day of remembrance ceremonies at the WSIB, and yesterday I joined the Lindsay and District Labour Council in my riding, as well as we reflected on the devastation caused by workplace injuries and fatalities. I heard from injured workers and their families and colleagues who have been affected by an injury, illness or death in the workplace. I heard and felt their sorrow and their anger.

These injuries and fatalities are not statistics. These are family members, friends and neighbours. We must all make a commitment to do whatever we can to help make our workplaces safe, Mr. Speaker, and I know that we all continue to do that.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you, Minister. I'm sure that the ceremony was moving and thought-provoking.

I know that the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour has been travelling through the province, hosting a number of round table discussions with employees,

health and safety advocates, and workers, all to identify ways the Minister of Labour can improve its health and safety education, prevention and inspection process. When she attended a round table in my riding, more than 30 people came out to share their experiences and suggestions. This is clearly an issue people care about deeply.

Can you please tell us what else the Ministry of Labour is doing to reduce and eliminate workplace injuries and fatalities?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I do want to thank my parliamentary assistant, the member from Burlington, Jane McKenna, for all the great work that she has been doing at the Ministry of Labour. It is one of our top priorities to ensure that Ontario has the proper protections to prevent and eliminate workplace incidents, starting with education and prevention and including legislation, regulation, inspections and enforcement.

I am committed to ensuring that Ontario's workplaces do remain the safest in the world. We are currently holding consultations on the development of Ontario's next occupational health and safety strategy, where we will drive home the message that everyone has a role to play. We need everyone—we as legislators, regulators, our health and safety partners, workers and employers—to promote health and safety to prevent further workplace injuries, fatalities and illnesses. Mr. Speaker, I am confident we can do that.

LEGAL AID

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Attorney General. Last Monday, the Premier called in to Global News Radio and spoke live on the air to Alan Carter. Among other things, the Premier said, "If anyone needs support on legal aid, feel free to call my office. I will guarantee you that you will have legal aid."

Will the Attorney General repeat in the House today the Premier's words, that anyone who contacts the Premier's office will be guaranteed legal aid coverage, or was the Premier just making stuff up again?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: As members of this House know well, the Premier is very connected to the people of Ontario through his phone. He takes phone calls and replies to cellphone messages because he wants to hear directly from Ontarians about what matters most.

What he hears over and over again—as we all do, Mr. Speaker—is that what matters to the people of Ontario is to ensure that their government is doing everything they can to protect what matters most to the people of Ontario. That is making sure that our health care system is sustainable, that our education system is sustainable and that our legal services system is sustainable as well. Legal aid provides a vital service to the people of Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and it will continue to do so. The Ministry of the Attorney General is committed to working with legal aid to ensure that those front-line services are preserved and are maintained, and they will under this government.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it sounds to us like even the Premier is embarrassed by the cuts that he's proposing, but these cuts are real and they won't go away just because he pulls over to call into a radio show with empty promises.

Will the Attorney General admit today that the cuts to legal aid will leave people in our province, often the most vulnerable people—in fact, the most vulnerable people—in our province without legal coverage, and that the Premier was wrong to offer a guarantee that he had no intention of living up to, of honouring?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Empty promises were made in this House by members of the previous government who promised the people of Ontario a series of promises that added up to \$15 billion that they knew they could not pay for.

Our government was elected with a strong mandate to restore fiscal sustainability to this province, Mr. Speaker, and that is what we are doing. Our budget that was delivered earlier this month is an important step in that way. And so I am very proud of the proposals that we have made, of the policies that we have made to make sure that the programs our government offers to the people of Ontario are done so in a sustainable way, all the while protecting the front-line services that the people of this province need most. Health care, education and legal representation for those most in need will be preserved and maintained.

Those who need legal aid can call the Ministry of the Attorney General and can call legal aid. The services will be there for those in need.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Mes premiers mots sont évidemment pour les victimes des inondations à Ottawa et partout en province. Merci aux bénévoles.

Ma question est pour la procureure générale. To respect the rule of law, equality of everyone in front of the law was guaranteed. That's why governments agreed that they should be held to account. That meant that government should be able to be sued when it does something wrong.

Now, Speaker, the government wants to change that. The Crown Liability and Proceedings Act, which is buried in this year's budget, would limit the Ontario government's liability. The Premier himself said this move was designed to prevent groups from launching lawsuits against his government.

No other province in this country has wanted to codify the case law on crown liability. Does the minister believe that Ontario judges are less able than their counterparts to balance the rights of people and the government's policy scope?

1130

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The people of Ontario have many ways to bring proceedings against the crown, and those measures are still preserved. I would ask the member opposite to stop putting out information that will lead the people of Ontario to not know what their rights are through the courts and tribunals of this province. The measures that

we have brought forward are to ensure that those who bring suits against the crown are able to do so in a way that's transparent and that also makes sure that those who have claims that need speedy access are able to access that justice in a faster way, Mr. Speaker. So I would ask the member opposite to make sure when she states her facts that she does so in a way that reflects the facts, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: The Crown Liability and Proceedings Act presumes "dismissed and extinguished" all claims against the government that are included; the wording does go further than what the Supreme Court has said.

Does the minister want to extinguish all claims that include the rights of survivors of the Sixties Scoop, for example, to be prevented from suing the government? Or the rights of Indigenous communities who were deprived wrongly of their land in the past? Or the current lawsuit by people that are in segregation for too long? Or, eventually, the people who are suffering flooding now from suing when indeed there would have been mistakes in planning decisions?

It is important for now and for the future that we protect the ability of Ontarians to sue their government when indeed they have been wronged. That's just very necessary. The minister knows that this wording goes beyond the scope of the case law. Will she just go back to the drawing board and remove appendix 17 so that there's more consultation on it?

Interjections.

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

The Attorney General to reply once again.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Speaker, I'm very disappointed in the member opposite, frankly, who knows that the people of Ontario have many ways to bring cases against the crown. In this case what the legislation does is it codifies existing case law set by the Supreme Court that states that good faith policy decisions by governments are not judiciable in this case.

There are various ways for people to bring cases against the crown, Mr. Speaker, and the member opposite is just letting the people of Ontario believe things that are not correct.

EDUCATION

Ms. Jill Dunlop: My question is to the Minister of Education. Over the past few months, our government has been hard at work finding ways to improve Ontario's education system. We've modernized an outdated curriculum, we've taken steps to get spending on track and we've put a plan forward to make sure the best teachers are at the front of the classroom. Every day, we've been taking action to put student achievement back at the centre of all we do. Yet despite these improvements, the opposition continues to fearmonger, especially when it comes to education. Can the Minister of Education share with the

Legislature the details of the government's plan for teacher job protection?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I very much appreciate the question coming from the member from Simcoe North. She works so hard at the grassroots level—and you know what, how people are supporting what we're doing in education. I appreciate this question very much because I absolutely appreciate having the opportunity to stand here today and reinforce our government's position when it comes to protecting jobs in Ontario.

Despite what the opposition says, we are taking steps to protect. We are investing a historic \$1.6 billion in attrition protection funding. It's attrition funding that will protect teachers from what the opposition is perpetuating. Speaker, this is so, so important, because change is difficult. But we're going to work through it because the changes we're implementing have been asked for. We've listened to parents, we've listened to students and, quite frankly, we've listened to teachers as well.

With this investment, I can't stress enough: No matter what rhetoric comes from the people opposite here, we are not going to lose one teacher job because of our proposed changes.

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

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the minister for reaffirming her commitment to protecting jobs here in Ontario. The Minister of Education has been hard at work to get this province's education system back on track, but every step of the way the opposition has been instilling fear in families and students and undermining the positive changes our government has been making. Can the Minister of Education tell the House the facts about the number of changes she has made to maximize student potential and achievement?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much to the member from Simcoe North because I am just absolutely adamant that our top priority—and everyone on this side of the House and in government is absolutely dedicated to student achievement. That is our number one priority, despite what the opposition says. And we're spending: We're increasing our investment in every regard to make sure that the learning environment in the classroom is second to none and continues to lead around the globe.

We're investing \$13 billion over the next 10 years to build new schools, and to repair and address the needs that local schools have. And do you know what? The opposition have been so wrong. They were wrong about the \$100 million that we invested in repairing schools. They were wrong about the kindergarten rhetoric. They were wrong about so much, Speaker. But what we're doing, and what they cannot deny, is that we're getting education back on track—

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. The next question is the member for Parkdale–High Park.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The government's unilateral cuts to public health will put public health and safety at risk. This scheme, cooked up in the backrooms without any warning or public consultation, is not about saving money since public health is the most cost-effective way to deliver better health outcomes. And it is certainly not about modernizing the health care system, as our public health care system is one of the best in the world after learning mistakes that led to Walkerton and SARS. Why is the minister going down this disastrous path that will put lives at risk?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member for the question because it provides me an opportunity to tell the people of Ontario what is actually happening with the modernization of our public health units, aside from some of the overblown rhetoric and incorrect information that other people have put forward. In fact, what is happening is that, over three years, we are modernizing the system. The city of Toronto is being asked to contribute one third of 1% of their budget extra, which is \$33 million in the first year, going up to \$42 million after three years.

The sky is not falling in, Mr. Speaker. This is an amount that can be managed by the city of Toronto, because the fact is, over the last several years, the city of Toronto has accumulated millions of dollars in surplus funding for public health. So they will be able to find this money. And when you take a look at some of the programs that are being provided, like breakfast programs for children, those will continue to be funded—not through my ministry but by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. That's where that money comes from. That will continue—

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd recognized the member for Parkdale–High Park and then the government side tried to create a standing ovation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Start the clock. Again, the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the minister: Since the government first announced their cuts to public health, the minister has failed to explain how she can guarantee that Ontarians won't be at risk if municipal governments are unable to find funding to pay for water inspections or respond quickly to a food-borne outbreak. School board officials, physicians, medical students, a former deputy health minister and even the former chief medical officer of health have all come forward to say these dangerous cuts will put people at risk. Does the Minister of Health believe she has greater expertise in public health than these people?

Interjections.

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

To the minister to reply.

1140

Hon. Christine Elliott: What I would say to the member—through you, Mr. Speaker—is that it's a question of priorities. I understand that the department of public health in Toronto, in addition to running surpluses for a number of years, also had an entire department just for advocacy, and also did a study on the health and safety ramifications of reinventing Yonge Street.

I think most people in Ontario would realize, and certainly the members over here on this side would understand, that vaccinations for children are a priority, community breakfast programs are a priority, testing water is a priority, and making sure students with special needs are supported. That's what I would be spending my money on if I was at the city of Toronto department of public health. That's what they should be concentrating on. Those are the priorities—

Interjections.

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

Next question.

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Mrs. Robin Martin: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Over the past week, a member of Toronto city council has been pushing a narrative of outrage and indignation which drives fear-mongering with overheated rhetoric and inaccurate information.

To promote the city's own political agenda and push against our government, the councillor has stated numerous falsehoods that our government is reducing funding with respect to the vital Student Nutrition Program. Speaker, can the minister please correct the record and explain to this House what it is that our government is doing to continue supporting the Student Nutrition Program?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to thank the honourable member for her responsible question on an issue that is very important.

Let me be perfectly clear: The statements made by the city councillor in Toronto, as well as the irresponsible opposition, are categorically false. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services invests \$28.5 million into school nutrition programs across the province of Ontario, including over \$8.5 million in the city of Toronto.

I will challenge the members of the Toronto city council to ensure that the money that flows from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services for school breakfast programs in the city is maintained, and that they continue to support that program and stop the fear-mongering, which is irresponsible and unacceptable.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution all the members on their inflammatory language. I'm going to ask the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to withdraw.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Sure. Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Minister, for bringing this information to the floor of the House and ensuring that accurate information is on the public record.

Our government is continuing provincial funding to the Student Nutrition Program, but this city councillor does not seem to take yes for an answer. Last week, TVO published an opinion piece on this, highlighting the funding breakdown of the School Nutrition Program, which Toronto contributes literally one one-thousandth of its budget to. The writer says, "Keeping healthy food in schools is something that Toronto could do if council so chose," and also that "only city council" can put Toronto's school nutrition programs at risk.

Speaker, can the minister please explain why city council should step up to the plate and help ensure this vital program continues?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Obviously, we're going to continue with our \$8.5-million commitment to the city of Toronto through the Toronto Foundation for Student Success. That is a priority for this government. It is protecting what matters most, which are the children of this community.

But let me also be perfectly clear: The rhetoric, the fear-mongering that has been engaged upon by the left is unhelpful and it has riled people up, when the facts were not true. I'll give you one example, Speaker: This is a government that has increased funding in health care by \$1.3 billion, yet the official opposition says that we've cut it. This is a government that has increased funding in education by \$700 million, yet the official opposition suggests there's a cut. This is a government that has invested an additional \$300 million in social services, yet the opposition says that it's a cut.

The math on the other side of the aisle is atrocious and it contributes to fear-mongering, which is unacceptable.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Minister of Education. This afternoon, trustees from the province's largest school board, the Toronto District School Board, will meet to discuss the impact on classrooms following Friday's announcement of more cuts to education. The TDSB's preliminary analysis shows that the government's cuts will mean schools in Toronto will face a budget shortfall of at least \$21 million a year, but that real number could climb as high as \$54 million.

When the minister talks about change, does she mean fewer supports for students with special needs, fewer course options, the loss of teaching positions and EA positions? Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain how taking more resources away from students will help them succeed?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: First of all, I hope the member enjoyed her visit to the best riding in the province. It's a gorgeous riding on Ontario's west coast. It was very nice that you came out for a visit.

With regard to the question that was put, Speaker, I have to share with you that we want to work with our school boards. The Toronto District School Board has a budget of almost \$3 billion, and I am positive that we can work together with that school board to realize efficiencies at their administrative level, because everyone in this

House and across the province should always have student achievement as their number one priority.

It's interesting. In that spirit of everyone coming together and working together, I actually extended an invitation to our labour partners to start meeting as early as today so that we can put a stop to the fearmongering and anxiety being generated by the opposition party. But unfortunately, I haven't heard from anyone to date.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: That sounded a little bit like a threat to the TDSB, Minister.

It is not only students in urban schools who will be hurt by these deep cuts, as the minister knows. There will be even bigger impacts on kids in Ontario's small and rural schools. As the minister noted, on Friday, over 300 parents, students and education workers rallied outside her own constituency office calling on the government to halt this attack on public education. And I was fortunate to visit the beautiful riding of Huron-Bruce last week at the invitation of her constituents. I heard first-hand their concerns about how these cuts will mean teachers are able to provide less support and fewer course options and the viability of smaller schools being at risk.

Speaker, will the minister listen to her own constituents and stop these cuts?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand in this House and say that we're going to be modernizing education in Ontario and getting it back on track, all the while making sure student achievement is our number one priority. And I truly, sincerely hope that the labour partners and our education partners—our school boards—are going to be working with us. Because it's interesting: When we listened to our stakeholders throughout this province from one corner to another, we heard loud and clear teachers through to parents saying, "Hey, what about the boards? What can the school boards do to realize some efficiencies? What can they do to make sure that the focus remains on student achievement?"

Let me be perfectly clear: The nonsense coming from that member opposite about threats is ridiculous. I want to work with partners. I am ready to get to the table. I'm ready to get to work. I am absolutely ashamed at the nonsense coming from across the floor. We are a government that is prepared to get to work as of today, because teachers, students—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Ross Romano: My question today is for the Solicitor General. Ontario's government for the people was elected with a mandate to improve public safety across this province and to provide our hard-working front-line officers in our correctional facilities with the tools and the

resources they need to perform their duties safely and effectively.

1150

Correctional officers have a challenging job, and the need for a new institution in Thunder Bay is clear. While in opposition, the PC Party called for a new facility in Thunder Bay to ensure that staff, inmates and the community were safe. Could the Solicitor General please update the members of this Legislature on the status of this new facility?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the interest from the member from Sault Ste. Marie. He's absolutely right. There's no doubt our front-line correctional officers and staff work hard each and every day to keep our communities safe, protect our families and make sure that the inmates who are in our prisons are protected.

While in Thunder Bay last week, I was pleased to join the Minister of Infrastructure to highlight our government's commitment to move ahead with building a new, modern corrections complex that will keep correctional staff safe and better protect the people of Ontario.

I want to reinforce that this facility will reflect our government's vision for building a more effective, efficient and responsive corrections system, with staff well-being and public protection front and centre. The Thunder Bay Correctional Complex will be a model in a correctional system that serves its purpose of keeping our families safe, defending victims and holding criminals accountable for their actions.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you to the Solicitor General for confirming the government's support for a new correctional facility in Thunder Bay. This is good news for the people of northern Ontario and across our province.

Reckless and irresponsible spending by the previous Liberal government left the people with a \$15-billion deficit. The Liberals put essential services that people rely on, including community safety, at risk.

In the government's 2019 Ontario budget, tough choices had to be made to protect what matters most. Few things matter more than the security of the people of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, can the Solicitor General please tell the House how this new facility in Thunder Bay will improve public safety, protect staff on the job and provide inmates with comprehensive rehabilitation services?

Interjections.

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

The Solicitor General will reply again.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you to the member from Sault Ste. Marie for that excellent question and leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, last week I had the pleasure of joining the Solicitor General in Thunder Bay to make this important announcement. It was also great to see our friend MPP Michael Gravelle there, too, for this important announcement.

Courts and jails like this one help make our communities safe for people. That's why our government is committed to investing in the province's infrastructure. New correctional facilities like this one let in more natural light, create spaces for education and skills training, have more mental health units, will be equipped with scanning technology to prevent smuggled contraband and will include cultural features throughout the facility. Most importantly, as the Solicitor General said, the new Thunder Bay Correctional Complex will minimize risks to staff while also increasing efficiency.

Corrections staff do challenging work. On behalf of our government I want to thank them for their service to all of our communities.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Minister of Education. Tessa Day, a 13-year-old from Courtland public school in Kitchener Centre, is with us in the gallery today. Her teacher gave her class an assignment: Use slam poetry to write about something you care about. She decided to write about education.

Here's a part of her poem:

You don't see
All the children with dreams,
You don't even hear the screams.
You're just taking money
From the ones who need it most.
You just want to boast.

Mr. Speaker, Tessa is telling this government that Ontario children, including the most marginalized, should be our top priority. Will the minister reverse the cuts that are putting Tessa's education at risk?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Tessa, welcome to Queen's Park. I appreciate that you've taken an interesting form of art to share your ideas and thoughts. Don't stop doing that, ever, because we need people like you standing up and expressing yourself, because it allows a proper dialogue to happen.

I'm glad you're here, because I have to share with you—I need to be very clear: We are not cutting in education; we're investing. We're investing \$700 million this year alone in education. We're increasing student transportation. We're increasing francophone language. We're increasing, for example, \$90 million in special education needs.

You know, Tessa, I have young people in my family. I think about my stepkids' kids. I think about the young people in my community. If we're making these decisions to make sure that you are our number one priority and your student achievement remains—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I'm going to ask the member from Toronto—St. Paul's to withdraw her unparliamentary remark.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Withdraw.

Interjections.

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

There's still some time left on the clock. I'm going to remind all members to make their comments and direct their comments through the Chair.

Restart the clock. Supplementary question.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Again to the minister: Tessa's insights are possible because of organizations like Harmony Movement, which provides equity and inclusion training to students and to teachers. Harmony has worked with both the Waterloo Region District School Board and their Catholic board, and it's work like theirs which has sparked creativity and compassion in students just like Tessa.

Harmony Movement is here with us today, but they are being forced to close their doors after 25 years because of the minister's attack on diversity and equity programming. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell Tessa and the teachers Tessa works with where her teachers will be receiving training that will build inclusion and equity in Ontario's schools now that Harmony Movement will have to close their doors?

Interjections.

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

Once again to the Minister of Education to reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, thank you for being here. My number one priority as Minister of Education is helping students realize their dreams. Speaker, everything we do in this government is going to make sure that through education, students do have a chance to achieve their dreams.

The fact of the matter is, there was a lot of waste and mismanagement in the previous government during 15 years of Liberal rule, Liberal chaos in the education system, and so we're rebranding and refocusing on student achievement. The fact of the matter is, we are going to be looking at priorities and partnerships on the way forward—priorities and partnerships, not education and other funding that proved to be a slush fund for special Liberal projects. We are going to be absolutely ensuring student success, and not one teacher will lose their job because of our proposed changes.

MENTAL HEALTH IN AGRICULTURE

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Farming is a very rewarding career, but it also has its own unique challenges and stresses. At this busy time of year, farmers often struggle with destructive factors that are beyond their control, such as pests or weather. Farmers often work long hours alone, keeping their worries close to their chests, and this is especially true as our farmers are entering planting season.

When it comes to mental health, far too many of our farmers suffer in silence. It is critical that farmers have mental health resources, not just at planting season but all

year round. Can the minister please tell this House about the work our government is doing to ensure that farmers have the mental health supports that they need?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Brantford–Brant for his important question. I'm proud of the work that our government has done to increase awareness of mental health issues in the agriculture industry. I would like to thank all the farmers who shared their personal stories at our mental health round tables, and I'm grateful for our partnership with the University of Guelph on this issue and for the fantastic research led by Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton. I also want to thank everyone from our farm organizations who participated in our spring planting mental health video campaign for sharing their advice and personal care strategies.

I want to encourage any farmer who may need help not to suffer in silence. Take care of yourself. Take a step back and put your mental health first during this busy time. I ask all those in the agriculture community to look out for their friends, neighbours and family members who may be struggling and to reach out a hand to help.

Thank you very much for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member for Guelph has a point of order.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Speaker. I rise on a point of order to welcome two of my constituents here to Queen's Park today, Leigh LaHaise and Robert Duarte. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to take a moment to give a big shout-out to Peter Bevan-Baker and the PEI Greens for making Canadian history in being elected the first official opposition by the Green Party in Canadian history.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo on a point of order.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, as you know, Wilfrid Laurier University is here today. They are hosting a reception in room 222-223. Please come by and find out what amazing work is going on at this university.

LEANNE HOLLAND BROWN

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent for a moment of silence to honour the life of Wilfrid Laurier's dean of students, Leanne Holland Brown, who was tragically killed in an accident last week.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is seeking unanimous consent of the House to have a moment's silence in memory of the Wilfrid Laurier University dean of students who tragically passed away last week. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I would like to welcome my good friend from Markham, Arun Prasad, to the Legislative Assembly. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Speaker, when I was younger, I spent a lot of time at our local public library. I loved to read and discover and explore, and the library was a huge part of my foundational learning, as it is for many children. Libraries across the province are hubs and homes to everyone—to those who have a need to read, to use the Internet for learning or work, to those who use the Makerspaces to create and invent and imagine, to those who need somewhere warm, safe, quiet and welcoming. Libraries are the hearts of every community. They are community.

This Premier has unbelievably set his sights on our library system. He is wrong to attack people's access to library services. This budget cut 50% of the provincial funding to the Southern Ontario Library Service, known as SOLS, as well as to OLS-North. This affects interlibrary loans between different library systems, as well as training and organizational supports. Not every library has every book or resource ever written, so SOLS is the centralized, coordinated organization that delivers across the province to different libraries. SOLS coordinates and facilitates when a class needs 20 copies of a book, or a senior needs more large-print books than their library has, or a student is working on distance education, or someone needs an out-of-print book for research, or if a visually impaired client needs a book on CD. Homebound patrons, home-schooled children and academics will no longer have access to collections beyond their backyard.

This government talks about wanting to centralize systems and be more efficient. Well, here's a perfectly good, functioning example, and they're scrapping it. Smaller communities, remote and First Nations communities will be hit the hardest. And why? This Premier is nickel-and-diming this province to ensure families and folks will have less access to books, resources, learning and libraries. Shame.

ATTACKS IN SRI LANKA

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I rise today with an extremely heavy heart to speak to the horrific loss of life in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday.

We now know that over 200 men, women and children were killed in this inhumane and indiscriminate act of terror. Unfortunately, we also know that advance warnings

were provided of imminent attacks in Sri Lanka that were not acted on.

As a former political refugee from Sri Lanka, this event has deeply impacted me and my family and thousands of the Sri Lankan diaspora living in Canada. Such acts of terrorism have no place in civilized society, and more so when committed on a holy day for Christians.

All too often we see such acts of terrorism and violence across the world at churches, temples, mosques—and recently at a synagogue in the United States. These tragic circumstances remind us that hate, racial strife and merciless killings remain a threat to democracy, religious freedom and social justice across the world.

Mr. Speaker, we must all stand in solidarity and speak with a unified voice against these heinous crimes and reject divisiveness and hate. Today the world is mourning. As we mourn and keep the lives lost in our prayers, we must also seek the redemption of unity, love and compassion for those of all faiths and backgrounds.

We must continue to stand for a society that ensures the freedom to practise our faith and to live our lives without fear.

NIAGARA FOLK ARTS MULTICULTURAL CENTRE

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm pleased to stand today in this House to speak about the Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre. It is an agency that is near and dear to my heart, not only for the important work they do, but because I spent eight years as the executive director of this organization before being elected to this House.

Niagara Folk Arts is a community-based, non-profit, charitable organization whose team of over 40 professional staff and hundreds of volunteers provides vital settlement services to newcomers as they strive to create a rewarding new life in Canada.

Niagara is home to the Niagara Folk Arts Festival, the oldest continuously running heritage festival in Canada. Every May, the multicultural community opens its doors and its heart and welcomes you to experience the beauty and uniqueness of their cultures, traditions, art, music and food, including games, exhibitions and live entertainment. This year's festival runs from May 2 to May 26 and features over 20 open houses across the Niagara region.

Over the last five years, Niagara Folk Arts has welcomed many Syrian refugee families to Niagara, helping them to settle and integrate. These families have now founded a group called Syrians in Niagara and have started their own open house, teaching their new community about their experiences and showcasing their culture. I'm very proud of them.

To learn more about the festival and schedule of open houses, please go to the Niagara Folk Arts Festival website, at folk-arts.ca.

ATTACKS IN SRI LANKA

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Today I rise to speak about the horrific Easter Sunday bombings in Sri Lanka and to honour the victims and their families.

I would like to begin by thanking all my colleagues and the people across Ontario who participated in the dozens of vigils throughout the province. Words simply cannot express the depth of my grief at this horrific attack, and my prayers are with those who perished and their loved ones.

I have said this before and I'll say it again: Violence of any kind is unacceptable. Discrimination of any kind is absolutely intolerable. I fled a brutal genocide perpetuated by the Sri Lankan state and military. Vicious, targeted attacks against ethnic and religious minorities have been prevalent in Sri Lanka for many years, so these events affect me very personally.

Innocent children, women, men who just wanted to celebrate Easter, a joyous festival in the Christian calendar, will never be able to do so again. And the memories of the survivors will forever be marred by this tragedy.

As we approach the 10-year anniversary of the height of the Tamil genocide, we must reaffirm our commitment to fight crimes against humanity and to strive for justice and peace.

DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: Abigayle Lobsinger is six years old. She lives with a rare and aggressive childhood cancer, stage 4 neuroblastoma. For treatment, she endures an aggressive plan of chemotherapy, radiation, surgeries and blood transfusions. As you can imagine, her illness has caused emotional and financial strain on her family.

Cancer has made it difficult for Abigayle to gain and maintain weight, so doctors prescribed a tube feed supplement to help her maintain a healthy weight. Her feed costs \$437 per case, at a rate of 1.5 cases per week; annually, that's over \$34,000.

Abigayle's feed was covered under OHIP+, but as of April 1 it is no longer covered. When Abigayle's parents went to pick up her feed this month, they were told that they needed to pay out of pocket. The feed isn't covered under their private insurance plan either.

This government has pulled the rug out from under families by making changes to OHIP+ without warning and without consultation. The changes to OHIP+ were made without considering who would fall through the cracks, and it seems that kids like Abigayle weren't considered at all.

This government needs to get their priorities straight and cover the nutritional feed through OHIP+ for kids like Abigayle and so many others. Abigayle needs to be a priority for this government.

1310

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member's statements? The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to make a member's statement today in the independent slot.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South is seeking unanimous consent of the House to make a statement at this time in the independent spot. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Ottawa South.

TERRORIST ATTACKS

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues.

I simply want to echo the words of my colleagues from Scarborough–Rouge Park and Markham–Thornhill and express my deepest, my family’s deepest and our party’s deepest condolences to all the families that were affected by the Sri Lankan bombing on Easter Sunday. It’s really a horrific event that has affected the lives of many, many families, not just in Sri Lanka, but here in Canada and in my community of Ottawa South.

I also wanted to extend my condolences to those families affected by the shooting at the Chabad of Poway synagogue in San Diego. We just had New Zealand a little while ago, and Pittsburgh six months ago. It seems like every couple of weeks, we’re standing up or we’re tweeting about something that’s happening in the world. These acts of hate are ferocious. They’re almost instant. We live in a global village and we’re all affected by it.

I think what’s really important for us to understand is that whether it’s anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, anti any race, we don’t just have to stand up when things happen in the world and say, “This is wrong”—it’s when those small acts happen: when synagogues or churches are defaced, when mosques are defaced or when people utter words. We all have to speak up. It’s important for us to do that.

I want to thank, again, my colleagues for the time.

KIWANIS CLUB OF BRANTFORD

Mr. Will Bouma: It’s an honour to rise to speak about a very special event that recently took place in Brantford. On April 13, the Kiwanis Club of Brantford had the opportunity to celebrate its 100th anniversary. Having been chartered in 1919, the Brantford Kiwanis club is the third-longest-serving club in Canada. Since that time, the club has served the communities of Brantford and Brant through the volunteerism of its members, exceptional outreach activities and through many different projects. These projects include some great community fundraisers that go to support organizations such as Brant community health services, Stedman hospice and many, many more. Through projects like these, the Kiwanis Club of Brantford has shown its continued support and dedication to the people of Brantford and Brant.

In addition to local community-oriented activities, the Brantford Kiwanis club has also worked with Kiwanis International by participating in large projects, such as the Eliminate Project, whose goal is to wipe out maternal and neonatal tetanus, and the sustaining iodine deficiency disorders elimination project.

Speaker, in the 100 years since it has been chartered, the Kiwanis Club of Brantford has shown a continuous commitment to making the world a better place, both locally and around the world. I would invite everyone to join with me in congratulating the Kiwanis Club of Brantford on their 100-year anniversary.

KASHECHEWAN FIRST NATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yet again, the community of Kashechewan is being evacuated. This is 17 years of evacuation, time and time again. We spend millions—tens of millions of dollars—each year to move community members out of Kashechewan into Timmins, Kapuskasing, Cornwall and different points in between.

What is really galling and what is really frustrating the community is that there’s been an agreement signed between the First Nation, the province of Ontario and the federal government to move the community. I was there, when I was the member for Kashechewan as the former member for Timmins–James Bay, when we did the signing three years ago. The idea was that we start immediately towards doing what needs to be done to move that community to higher ground.

Mr. Speaker, this is not rocket science. We have done it before. When Weenusk was flooded and people died, we moved that community to higher ground. We no longer hear of having to evacuate anybody out of the old Weenusk, now called Peawanuck. Why? Because we put them on higher ground.

I call on this government to live up to its agreement. We are signatories not only to Treaty 9, but we’re also signatories to the agreement between the community of Kashechewan, the federal government and ourselves to move that community to higher ground.

Let’s get it done. Let’s put people where they should be—on higher ground—so they no longer have to live in fear when it comes to going to bed at night because their community will be flooded.

STUDENT FUNDRAISING

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Good afternoon to everyone. I’d like to take a moment to talk about some wonderful student leaders in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. Students at Bishop Allen Academy, a Toronto Catholic district school in Etobicoke, have been working hard to raise money for a wonderful cause. Bishop Allen’s SLAM team—“SLAM” stands for “Student Leaders and Mentors”—set an ambitious goal for themselves. Their goal was to raise \$6,000, with the aim of providing 32 bicycles for students in need at an elementary school in Toronto. I am so pleased to report that these hard-working students met their goal, and over a week ahead of schedule. In fact, tomorrow, April 30, Bishop Allen school will be welcoming fourth- and fifth-grade students from Lord Dufferin school for the big bike giveaway. These bikes will be given to students so they can enjoy freedom and independence just in time for the warm weather.

I’d like to give a special shout-out to Sophie Constantino for telling us about this great initiative. I also want to thank all the students, the staff, the volunteers and the donors who made Bishop Allen’s fundraiser such a success. I am so very proud to represent a riding with such exceptional students and student leaders like these students.

CANCER TREATMENT

1320

TRAITEMENT DU CANCER

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: April is Cancer Awareness Month. Nearly one in two Canadians are expected to be diagnosed with some form of cancer during their lifetime, while one in four are expected to die from it. Bien qu'un nombre croissant de Canadiens survivent au moins cinq ans après le diagnostic de cancer, le cancer demeure la principale cause de décès au Canada.

Cancer does not discriminate; it affects people from all walks of life, all backgrounds and all professions. This House is no exception. Many who are in this House today have been affected by cancer—including many who once served this province as MPPs.

Liver cancer is on the rise in Ontario. Every year, 2,500 Canadians are diagnosed with liver cancer, and 1,200 will die from this disease in 2019. For more information, please visit survivornet.ca.

Mr. Norman Jamison, MPP for Norfolk county in the 35th Parliament, was taken by liver cancer, too soon, on October 3, 2017. Earlier today, the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network, along with Norm's daughters Carrie, Shannon and Eileen and his wife, Sharon, along with survivors and caregivers, hosted a legislative reception. Thank you to all my colleagues for attending. It gave us an opportunity to pause, to reflect and to share how cancer affects us all and to honour the life and memory of MPP Jamison. Together, we can be a strong voice and advocate for liver cancer patients and all cancer patients in Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Ms. Jane McKenna: I beg leave to present a report on television guidelines from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Jane McKenna: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. McKenna moves the adjournment of the debate—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): No? I guess she has to—sorry; I apologize.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Yes, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. McKenna has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CLOSING OVERSIGHT LOOPHOLES
FOR HOME CARE CLINICS ACT, 2019LOI DE 2019 VISANT À COMBLER
LES LACUNES DANS LA SURVEILLANCE
DES CLINIQUES DE SOINS À DOMICILE

Ms. Sattler moved first 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for London West care to give a brief explanation of her bill?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. This bill closes a loophole that excludes from government oversight home care nursing services that are delivered in clinic settings rather than a home. The bill gives the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care the duty to oversee and inspect home care clinics and gives public health units the mandate to conduct annual inspections of these clinics. It requires home care clinic operators to supply the addresses of existing clinics to the medical officer of health for the health unit in which the clinics are operating and also to give notice of their intent to open any new clinics.

The bill requires home care clinic operators to notify the local health unit if complaints are made about infection prevention and control practices, and updates the home care and community services bill of rights to ensure that patients know about their right to make a complaint to the health unit. It also requires posting of the bill of rights in an accessible and conspicuous place within the home care clinic.

ELECTION FINANCES
AMENDMENT ACT
(LEADERSHIP FUNDRAISING
LOOPHOLE), 2019LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS
(LACUNE DANS LES RÈGLES
DE FINANCEMENT DES CANDIDATS
À LA DIRECTION D'UN PARTI)

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act in respect of contributions to leadership contestants following the leadership vote / *Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections en ce qui concerne les contributions faites aux candidats à la direction d'un parti postérieurement à la tenue du scrutin.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief.

It essentially says that contributions to the leadership contestant after the leadership vote shall be made only for the permanently restricted purpose of repaying the liabilities of the leadership contestant incurred for the leadership contest. So it will not allow people who are leadership contestants to continue to raise money after they've paid their debt to circumvent the annual donation limits that exist in Ontario.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition here signed by the great people of York South–Weston.

“Stop Ford’s Education Cuts.

“Whereas Doug Ford’s new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes starting in grade 4;

“Whereas the changes will mean thousands fewer teachers and education workers and less help for every student;

“Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take at least four of their classes online, with as many as 35 students in each course;

“Whereas Ford’s changes will rip over \$1 billion out of Ontario’s education system by the end of the government’s term; and

“Whereas kids in Ontario deserve more opportunities, not fewer;

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

“Demand that the government halt the cuts to classrooms and invest to strengthen public education in Ontario.”

I fully support this petition. I’ll be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Jadon to deliver to the table.

WASTE REDUCTION

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I’m very pleased to table a petition that comes from a school in Kingston.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas plastic bags and polystyrene are so lightweight that they get blown into trees, streams, lakes and

oceans. Only 11% of all plastic in Canada gets recycled annually...;

“Whereas Canadians use 2.86 billion plastic shopping bags per year...;

“Whereas plastic bags and polystyrene are made from petroleum, and mining it adds greenhouse gases to the air, and pollutes the ground and streams;

“Whereas plastic bags and polystyrene break down into microplastic bits and get ingested by marine life and birds making them sick, as well as entering the food chain;

“Whereas up to one million seabirds and 100,000 sea mammals and countless fish die each year from ingesting plastic...;

“Whereas plastic bags take 10-1,000 years to decompose and polystyrene never biodegrades and can be fatal for wildlife...;

“Whereas stores can sell reusable plant fibre bags, and takeout food and drinks can be served in cardboard or reusable containers;

“Whereas the students of Ms. Jerreat’s grade 4/5 class, and all grade 5s from Elginburg District Public School in Kingston, Ontario, and all children in the province of Ontario want and need clean lakes to swim in, clean air to breathe, and a healthy planet;

“We, the undersigned”—and now they have accumulated 1,500 signatures—“petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To ban plastic shopping bags and Styrofoam (polystyrene) packaging used for drinks and food from being manufactured, or commercially distributed, in the province of Ontario.”

I certainly support this petition and am happy to put my name to it. I will give it to page Caleah.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas during the war in Afghanistan, Canada lost 159 military personnel;

“Whereas those brave souls were driven along the Highway of Heroes between CFB Trenton and the coroner’s office in Toronto;

“Whereas since Confederation, 117,000 Canadian lives have been lost in military conflict;

“Whereas there is a recognized and celebrated plan to transform the Highway of Heroes into a living tribute that honours all of Canada’s war dead;

“Whereas that plan calls for the planting of two million trees, including 117,000 beautiful commemorative trees adjacent to Highway 401 along the Highway of Heroes;

“Whereas this effort would provide an inspired drive along an otherwise pedestrian stretch of asphalt;

“Whereas the two million trees will recognize all Canadians who have served during times of war;

“Whereas over three million tonnes of CO₂ will be sequestered, over 500 million pounds of oxygen will be produced and 200 million gallons of water will be released into the air each day, benefiting all Ontarians in the name

of those who served our country and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice; and

“Whereas there is a fundraising goal of \$10 million;

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

“That the current government of Ontario put its financial support behind this fundraising effort for the Highway of Heroes Tree campaign.”

I fully agree with this. I’m going to sign my name and give it to Thomas to bring down to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Don’t Increase Class Sizes in Our Public Schools.” I would like to thank the over 100 constituents, Parkdale–High Park parents, teachers and students, who signed this petition last week at my No Cuts to Education town hall. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

1330

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

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

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

As a parent of a student and child in the public education system, I fully endorse it and will affix my signature to it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: This petition is named “Stop Ford’s Education Cuts” and was gathered at a student assembly.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas” Premier “Ford’s new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes starting in grade 4;

“Whereas the changes will mean thousands fewer teachers and education workers and less help for every student;

“Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take ... four of their classes online, with as many as 35 students in each course;

“Whereas” Premier “Ford’s changes will rip over \$1 billion out of Ontario’s education system by the end of the government’s term; and

“Whereas kids in Ontario deserve more opportunities, not fewer;

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

“Demand that the government halt the cuts to classrooms and invest to strengthen public education in Ontario.”

I’m happy to affix my signature and have Leo bring it to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have hundreds of signatures and still more petitions coming in on this very important issue.

“Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would love to thank Mrs. Doris Labelle and Mary-Catherine Tremblay. They are at Elizabeth Centre, a long-term-care home in my riding, watching me read this petition. They gathered 450 names on it. It reads as follows:

“Time to Care:

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

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

“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the

most reputable studies on this topic recommends 4.1 hours of hands-on care;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Thomas to bring it to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good afternoon, Speaker. I rise in support of some very organized young people and community members.

Their petition is called “No More Cuts to Education.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Education’s changes to the teacher-to-student funding ratio will end up increasing class sizes;

“Whereas larger class sizes can cause a lack of necessary support for students and decrease the amount of ‘one-on-one’ interactions spent with teachers—valuable time that can help students succeed;

“Whereas less teachers will decrease the amount of special programs and extracurricular activities (clubs, teams, choirs, etc.);

“Whereas the government trying to balance the budget is taking priority over investing in our kids’ future;

“Whereas making it compulsory for four credits to be from online courses for secondary school students will be harmful to all students;

“Whereas the Ontario eLearning Consortium website states that online courses are not for all students;

“Whereas not all students have access to a reliable electronic device and high-speed Internet; and

“Whereas all these decisions will be detrimental to all students of Ontario and will result in the loss of thousands of job positions—breaking the Premier’s promise of budget cuts without job losses;

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

“—That the Ministry of Education launch a large and publicized consultation with a large amount of students, teachers, unions, etc. on the new proposed rules that lasts for a reasonable period of time and all results be made public;

“—That a cap which is agreed to by teachers, students, parents, etc. be put on the size of all classes;

“—That the Minister of Education define what involuntary job losses are;

“—That the Premier, ministers and members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario respect the decisions and choices teachers, parents, students, advocates and other members of the community make (work action, strikes, walkouts, protests, etc.);

“That the government restores funding used to repair schools which was cancelled when the cap-and-trade system was abolished; and

“That the Minister of Education give students the choice when it comes to taking online courses.”

I proudly support this petition. I hand it over to page Kate for tabling with the Clerk.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: My petition is signed by hundreds of students from the Ontario College of Art and Design and it’s entitled “Increase Grants Not Loans, Access for All, Protect Student Rights.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

“—provide more grants, not loans;

“—eliminate tuition fees for all students;

“—increase public funding for public education;

“—protect students’ independent voices; and

“—defend the right to organize.”

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

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled “Workers’ Comp is a Right.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for petitions this afternoon.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform members that we have a former member in the Legislature joining us today, the member for Mississauga South in the 38th Parliament, Tim Peterson. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

1340

OPPOSITION DAY

EDUCATION FUNDING

FINANCEMENT DE L'ÉDUCATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would like to move the following motion:

Whereas the government has announced changes to education funding that will reduce teacher-to-student ratios and make online learning mandatory, resulting in larger class sizes and lost jobs for education workers; and

Whereas larger class sizes will result in less individual attention for students and ultimately reduce course options for students, particularly in applied learning and the arts; and

Whereas online learning is not appropriate for most students, and research shows that it mostly hurts students who are already struggling; and

Whereas rural school boards have expressed concerns that these changes will negatively impact students who live in areas with smaller populations and have limited access to broadband services; and

Whereas school boards have indicated that these changes will disproportionately affect programs and supports for Black, Indigenous and other racialized youth; and

Whereas the government’s changes will result in fewer adults supporting and educating students in our schools, be they teachers, social workers, guidance counsellors, educational assistants;

Therefore the Legislative Assembly calls on the government to reverse their planned changes to education funding, student-teacher ratios and mandatory e-learning and instead work with parents, education experts, educators and school boards to devise education policies that work for students.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Horwath has moved opposition day motion number 3.

I recognize the leader of the official opposition to lead off the debate.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me on this particular motion, and to tell you all that I’m very honoured to rise to speak to this motion.

Over the last couple of weeks and months, I, along with all of our caucus colleagues—and, I’m sure, some over there too, but certainly all of our caucus colleagues here in the official opposition—have had the chance to speak to students, parents and educators in communities across the province. We’ve had the chance to hear from so many Ontarians about their vision for education, about the high-quality, fully funded public education system that every young person in this province deserves. The point is that we have been talking to a lot of folks in the province about what a vision for education would look like if that kind of system were in place, where it was fully funded, where it was about high quality and about the opportunity to provide a great education for every young person in our province. That’s what they deserve.

In speaking to Ontarians about that future that they want for their schools and about the future that they want for their kids who are in school right now, it was truly remarkable to hear how consistent some aspects of that vision are across the province. No matter where you travel in Ontario, people want the same things. They want a province where public education is valued and fully funded; where local schools and libraries stay open and are in good repair and available to people to utilize; where every student feels safe and valued in their school; where kids have a chance to discover their gifts, whether those gifts are in math, music, computer science or art; where the curriculum teaches students how to be safe and creates a safe environment in the school and in all learning areas. They imagine a province where teachers and education workers are respected and where they can give every child the specialized, one-on-one time that they need to grow and thrive.

Sadly, we know that isn’t where we are right now because of the decisions of this government. After years of cuts and freezes, of course, from the previous government, short-staffing and crumbling buildings exist in our school system because of the legacy of the Liberal government. Our world-class education system was left hanging by a thread. But instead of investing in students and in education, the Premier and his government are taking public education from underfunded to under attack.

This government is squeezing funding for public schools below the rate of inflation, slashing valuable courses, electives and programs for kids, and firing thousands of teachers and education workers. All the while, we’re supposed to be trying to help kids get better at math. Well, it seems to me that if the Premier wants to help kids improve in math, he shouldn’t be firing their math teachers.

Instead of listening to Ontarians, instead of actually sitting down with students and parents, teachers and

education workers to hear what would make things better in our school system, the Premier and his government decided to do something that no one wants, something that no one ever asked for: They raised class sizes for middle school and high school students, jamming even more students into every single room so that there's no time to give anyone one-on-one help when they need it. Nobody asked for that. Nobody wants that. Regardless of where I go in the province, parents and young people are telling me that they don't want their classes to be bigger; they don't want less time with their teachers.

This government is actually cutting thousands upon thousands of teacher and education worker jobs and getting rid of even more adults out of our schools. The Premier is planning to force all students, regardless of their ability or their learning style—and even regardless of whether they have access to broadband Internet at home or have access to a computer at home—he's requiring each and every one of our kids to take four mandatory credits online instead of in the classroom with a teacher.

I was in Thunder Bay just last week, and what parents there and across northern and rural Ontario were asking was: How the heck are kids supposed to take e-learning classes if they can't even access broadband Internet? That is a reality in our province, and shame on the Minister of Education for not even knowing that, or, at the very least, ignoring that fact.

Parents in northern and rural communities are concerned that this government's education cuts are going to have the same consequences as cuts by previous Liberal and Conservative governments. These communities are still dealing with the consequences of those cuts. They remember the last time the Conservatives were in office and cut education to the quick, and they know what it did to the kids in the system—the class stacking that's caused when you cut those teachers out, where kids are having to go to classrooms that have not only different grade levels of kids but also ability levels, where students from different streams and grades are forced into one crowded classroom.

People have seen this movie before, Speaker, and they know that it means more school closures, especially in small communities. It means a reduction in the quality of the education we're providing to the children of this province. It is going in the wrong direction. It also means that more kids, especially in rural Ontario and small-town communities, especially in the north, are asked to have to ride on buses even further as their local schools are closed.

At a time when many families are already not getting the support they need from the education system, and when Black, Indigenous and racialized youth are over-represented in applied classes and under-represented in university streams, when LGBTQ families are being erased from the curriculum, when child poverty is on the rise in Toronto and more kids are in desperate need of extra supports, this government has cut arts, co-ops, electives, supports and after-school programs. That is shameful, Speaker—absolutely shameful. Those are the programs that used to help kids succeed and stay on the path to building their future and their best lives.

Ontario families want more from their schools, and this government's budget is squeezing schools tighter, not even covering inflation, cutting per-student funding and certainly not offering the expanded opportunities that Ontario students deserve.

It does not have to be this way, Speaker. People deserve so much better. Our young people deserve so much better than what this government is dishing up. Kids, parents and educators should not have to go it alone in the province of Ontario. There's far too much at stake to let the Premier take Ontario's education system from bad to worse, to let another four years go by where kids are getting less from their schools instead of more.

But the good news is that it's not too late to fix all of this. With this motion, we can stop plans that are hurting children. We can stop backsliding when it comes to preparing them for the future, and we can begin the work of doing right by Ontario families by working with parents, education experts, educators and school boards to make plans that actually work for students. That's something that I would advise that this government take more seriously than what we've seen thus far. They like to cook up deals behind closed doors with their well-connected insiders and their people with an agenda. But what it turns out looking like on the other side, when the rest of us finally get to see what the heck they've been up to behind closed doors, it means that this province goes backwards on every file.

1350

We're talking about education today, but we're seeing it in every single area of life in this province, and everyday families, the ones that this government pretends that they care about, are the ones that are going to suffer. They are the ones that are going to have a harder time. Their kids are going to have a harder time and they are going to have a harder time as this government withdraws the services they rely on.

But that's what should be happening and that's what can happen: They can actually go back to the drawing board and talk to real people, talk to families, talk to educators, talk to young people. I'm calling on the government to act on that right now. Over the last weeks and months, students, parents and educators have pushed back against the cuts and rollbacks, and all this minister likes to do is name-call. She calls us fearmongers, she calls them fearmongers—she calls everybody a fearmonger. Of course, we're not fearmongers; we're afraid of what the government is doing to our education plans. That's what we're afraid of.

I urge all of the members to listen up when it comes to this debate and to stand with the people who really care about this issue, the people that it affects directly. I know that I listened to folks all through the time I was back home during the constituency week break, and I can't imagine that the MPPs on the other side of the House in the government benches didn't hear an earful in their ridings as well when it came to the direction this government is taking the province in. People are not happy. They're very, very concerned and worried, and they know the damage

that Conservative governments do lasts for a long time and hurts families over a long period.

I think it's up to all of us to actually stand with students and parents as they fight for the public education system that Ontarians deserve, one where we invest in the local schools and libraries that are the backbones of our communities; where we move forward with a modern curriculum and resources that help kids thrive in today's world—a curriculum that includes anti-racism, Indigenous perspectives, modern sex ed, arts, co-op, science, technology, math and so, so much more; where we make sure that every child has the one-on-one attention that will help them to do their best; and where special education is there for every child who needs it so that they can reach their full potential, so that no matter what a child's gifts are, they have the opportunity to discover those gifts. Together, we can build a modern public education system that is the envy of the world, and we can start today with this motion, Speaker.

Thank you so much for listening to what I have to say. I look forward to the remainder of the debate.

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand here today to speak to you about our government's plan for education to get it back on track. To share the time this afternoon, I'm very pleased that my parliamentary assistant will be in the House, as well as some amazing colleagues who serve as wonderful advisers, because they connect with their ridings day in and day out. Again, in everything we're doing, we're standing on the shoulders of our stakeholders, our parents, our teachers and our children, because it behooves us to clean up a mess that we inherited after 15 years of mismanagement and to get education back on track.

Speaker, let me tell you, on March 15 I was very pleased to present our plan, Education that Works for You. This vision was developed in consultation with 72,000 Ontarians in what is now known as the largest consultation ever conducted on Ontario's education. Through this consultation, we heard from parents, teachers, students, grandparents, employers and a number of organizations about what they want to see in terms of getting our education system back on track. We've listened, we've pulled together a plan that is going to demonstrate that indeed we did listen, and we're going to get it right. Their feedback and opinions helped to inform a new vision and a new era in education for Ontario.

The plan that I talked about and introduced on March 15 introduced a new four-year math strategy. People were begging us to get back to the basics and make sure children, once again, whether it was in grade 1 or grade 12, had the opportunity to get back to the fundamentals when it came to learning math.

A new strategy has also been introduced as a result of our consultation. Science, technology, engineering and, of course, math are topics that must be focused on to address the realities of the work world today and into the future. We need a more comprehensive curriculum that, again,

focuses in on science, technology, engineering and math, but all the while, we need to ensure—and I'm committed to this—that students have a balanced experience in school, and that balance will come when the STEM subjects are complemented by the arts.

Another thing that we've done as a result of our consultation is introduce a revised age-appropriate elementary health and physical education curriculum. Parents, teachers and students alike talked about the need to clean up the mess we inherited, based on ideology and experiments, and get it right once and for all. I am so pleased to say what we'll be introducing is going to do just the right thing at the right age for the right reasons. For that, I say thank you to everyone who contributed to the consultation.

I'm also pleased, Speaker, to share with you that we're going to be revising the First Nations, Métis and Inuit studies curriculum from grades 9 to 12. It's going to be embedded. I can't wait. It's going to be such a stark improvement over what the previous government had. Just stay tuned on that one; you'll be really pleased. I know everyone in this House is going to be very pleased with the direction that we're taking that.

Another thing that we've introduced is a renewed focus on financial literacy and skilled trades. Again, people, through our consultation, demanded that we ensure that our curriculum and our focus in education in Ontario was preparing students for the realities of the world today and tomorrow. Parents and students alike want to be prepared so that they can have the life skills and the job skills required so that they have the confidence to move forward. And you know what? We're getting that done as well. The response to our focus on financial literacy and skilled trades has just been over the top. To everyone who has contributed to date and encouraged us to keep moving forward, I thank you so much. And thank you to all of my colleagues as well for helping make this happen.

Everything we do is measured and responsible. Those are values I hold very dearly, our Premier holds very dearly, and I know our entire PC government does as well. So we're moving forward in a measured approach to changing class sizes in elementary school and better aligning ourselves with other Canadian jurisdictions in secondary school. Online modules will allow parents to introduce topics to their children at home. We're supporting teachers, because the number one, first teacher in a child's life should be their parents. So we're supporting our parents with online resources, and they can use those resources when they feel their child is ready at home. Our plan is thoughtful, measured and responsible. And you know what? Our number one priority through everything is student achievement.

Madam Speaker, time and again, I have stood in this House and pledged my efforts and my commitment to ensuring every student in this province has access to the best education possible. This includes safe and supportive classrooms, a much-needed modernization, if you will, of the curriculum, and a commitment that works towards getting the best learning environment set in place for both the teacher and the student. I thank everyone in this House for the support they gave to Bill 48 in that regard.

Madam Speaker, since day one, we've encouraged consultation far and wide. That's what we do. That's the basis and the foundation for solid policy. Together, with our consultation with the public in education, we have designed separate opportunities for our labour partners, including teacher federations, education worker unions and trustee associations. In fact, we're in the midst of one of those consultations right now. After developing our plan, we invited all of our labour partners and education partners to come back with sincere, constructive feedback in terms of what they feel will work very well and where there were opportunities to make tweaks. They have through May 31 to come back with their ideas and their thoughts. I look forward to working with all of our partners, because no matter what gets said in this House or in the media, the number one priority and the thread that should be binding us all together is student achievement and that learning environment in the classroom.

Decisions that we are making will continue to protect Ontario students and teachers, respect their parents and make sure that our students graduate with the skills they need. I'm extremely proud of the changes we are making to education. Since day one, the opposition and other third parties have been fearmongering, unfortunately, and spreading misinformation, while we consistently introduced changes to bring student achievement back to the focus in all we do. You know what? We have been absolutely solid in the direction we're heading, and while we are solid and steady and thoughtful, we're balancing the need to correct all the misinformation that comes from the members opposite.

1400

The opposition party was wrong about the health and physical education curriculum. They've been wrong about the investments in terms of school capital and school renewals. They've been wrong about kindergarten. They've been wrong about teachers' jobs. And, in this motion, they're wrong again today.

With every change that we make, we're improving the education system in a responsible way. We have made our decisions using facts.

So if the opposition wants to talk about class sizes, we gladly will, because, quite frankly—do you know what? There are no changes at all from K to grade 3. There is no more than one student per class in grades 4 to 8 that could be entertained in terms of a minimal increase. And then, from grades 9 to 12, our mature secondary students could potentially see an average increase up to 28—six more students. That is aligning Ontario's secondary school system with the other jurisdictions across Canada. For example, in Quebec their class sizes for grades 9 to 12 are set at 30; our average we're proposing in our plan is 28.

Again, we want to talk to our labour partners. We want to talk to our education partners. We want to get it right. If they have ideas to bring forward and they have offset suggestions that we should entertain, I'm open to that, and I look forward to them coming to the table.

Under the previous government, Madam Speaker, teaching positions increased by 11% while enrolment

declined by 1%. That's another fact that no one can deny in this province. I'm going to repeat that: Under the previous government, teaching positions increased by 11% while enrolment declined by 1%. We're on a trajectory that is unsustainable, and that is why we have to get this right. We have to get it right on behalf of the future of this province, and that future of the province is absolutely dependent upon making sure we get it right for our students in the classroom.

Another example of opposition fearmongering relates to education for our rural and northern students. This motion wrongfully claims that we'll harm students in rural Ontario. That's wrong again. I would like to remind members opposite that while I'm Minister of Education, I am so proud to represent the amazing riding of Huron—Bruce. The fact of the matter is that we have unique challenges ahead of us, and the priorities and benefits of rural Ontario are always on my mind and appropriately addressed.

Between myself and a number of my colleagues, I am so proud of the diversity that we have around our cabinet table. We've got rural covered, we've got northern Ontario covered, we've got urban Ontario covered, and we work really, really well as a team to make sure that we cover off and place a proper lens on every policy that we discuss.

In reality, do you know what? At the end of the day, we've developed an education policy that respects both rural and urban Ontario. I'd like to add that this is very, very different from the previous Liberal government. I proudly serve in a rural riding, and I can tell you first-hand that the previous government did not even attempt to apply a rural lens to their education policy—or anything they did, quite frankly. For rural students, we have committed to ensuring that every school will have access to reliable and affordable Internet with our new broadband strategy that will be coming forward from the Minister of Infrastructure. He represents a rural riding, as well. He knows how important that is. This will bring equity to our rural and northern schools, as well as our urban schools. Unfortunately, we have a lot to do, because that issue was ignored for the last 15 years.

Speaker, with the time I have left, I want to talk about some more facts. Under our PC government, the total education budget will be increasing by \$700 million this year and will continue to grow by another \$300 million by 2021-22. That is an average annual growth of 1%. We've committed \$13 billion to new schools and school renewals over the next 10 years, and this year alone we've committed another \$1.4 billion for school renewals alone. We've identified Indigenous studies to be a priority. We've identified Indigenous student retention and graduation rates as a priority, and we've committed \$3.7 million to implement a revised First Nations, Métis and Inuit studies curriculum for grades 9 through to 12, and to support the Indigenous graduation coach program in targeted boards.

We'll also be investing \$7.6 million in the 2019 Focus on Youth Summer Program, which creates summer employment opportunities for students who experience barriers to employment. It wasn't too long ago that the

opposition was trying to claim we were getting rid of that. They were wrong in that case as well.

We're also providing \$6.6 million to fund transportation for children and youth in care so that some of our most vulnerable students are able to stay at the same school, which gives them more stability to their lives.

As the opposition knows, we are providing \$6.1 million for the After School Skills Development Program, which supports children with autism spectrum disorder in social, communication, self-regulation and life-planning skills development.

I think about being in Elmwood just a few weeks ago at the Tommy Cooper Awards, and a gentleman who works in this particular field was absolutely ecstatic with the investment that we're putting into the After School Skills Development Program for children with autism. He couldn't say enough, and I'm excited by his enthusiasm. I know the return on the dollar for that investment is going to be just phenomenal.

We're also continuing to fund a pilot to improve school-based supports for children with autism spectrum disorder which will allow applied behaviour analyst practitioners a dedicated space in schools to provide direct service to students with ASD.

Our government is clearly protecting what matters most in our education system. We're taking a responsible approach across government to restore confidence in Ontario's finances, all the while ensuring that our most vulnerable students get the support they need.

The opposition members supporting today's motion should be ashamed of themselves for continuing to instill fear and anxiety across this province. Instead of looking at the facts, they continue to repeat stale attacks and talking points. For that reason, I will not be supporting this opposition day motion. This motion is fearmongering at best and interferes with a genuine effort to give education partners and labour partners the opportunity to share their positions by May 31.

I want every person in this province to know this government's number one priority is student achievement. Again, I'm going to repeat that: I want every person in this province to know that our number one priority is student achievement. We need to get education back on track because it has gone completely off the rails.

We are committed to ensuring every single student in Ontario has access to the best education possible, and the proof is in the action we're taking every single day.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pride to speak on behalf of this motion that the official opposition is bringing forward today, which I think speaks really to what we have been hearing from parents, students and education workers across this province for the last few months.

I'm going to start by saying I think it's important we do talk about facts versus the fiction created by this government day after day after day that nobody in this province is buying, not one person. Madam Speaker, from day one, this government has told Ontarians to brace for cuts to

programs and services. The Minister of Finance even told us that everyone would have to make sacrifices without exception. They commissioned a road map for those cuts from Ernst and Young that recommended 4% across-the-board cuts to education as a starting point. That's a fact.

But this government didn't even wait for the budget. They cut \$25 million from education programming before the end of 2018, scrapping programs that helped some of our province's most vulnerable students.

This government is playing the politics of division—let's be clear—when it comes to education funding. They've tried to drive a wedge between students, parents and education workers at every single opportunity and it is shameful, demonizing education workers and going so far as to call them thugs. Shame on this government.

With the release of the Grants for Student Needs on Friday during our constituency week, they're continuing the deep cuts to public education, but they are going to very great lengths to sell these as an investment, as a modernization.

1410

As the minister said this morning in response to my question, they are "rebranding" education. That was an interesting one. I hadn't heard that before—rebranding education. It's a very interesting term because it kind of speaks to the lack of content, of thought, of expertise in this government's policy when it comes to education.

But while the government is trying to pass off as an increase a funding package that doesn't even cover inflation—as an increase—the reality is, as we all know here on this side of the House and as everybody watching knows, very different indeed.

Their cuts are already having an impact on the ground. I'm going to just read out a bunch of examples here: 69 people laid off at Bluewater; at Avon Maitland, 35; at Thames Valley, 35 EAs were laid off; at Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic board, 60 jobs, including 40 teaching jobs; and at Dufferin Peel Catholic, 170 declared surplus and only 55 projected to retire, so there is a bit of a gap there.

Over and over and over again, week after week, we are hearing about these redundancy notices and surpluses. Meanwhile, Madam Speaker, students are being herded into gyms to hastily reselect their classes, because many simply won't be offered next year.

Madam Speaker, I think—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member from Chatham-Kent–Leamington will come to order.

Ms. Marit Stiles:—I'm going to return to it in a couple of minutes, because this really is about students, and this government maybe needs to be reminded of that. This is about students and the impact on students. What this means for students is less options and less one-on-one time with educators.

Families of children with autism and other exceptionalities are being put on an emotional and financial roller coaster that is shameful, as the government makes up

policy on the fly without ensuring that necessary supports are going to be in place in our schools.

Looking ahead, it only gets worse for Ontario students. By the end of this government's term, there will be thousands fewer teachers in our schools. The government can try this word salad of job losses versus retirement versus attrition. It's jobs lost. It's teaching positions and education workers' positions gone. It's EAs gone. It's guidance counsellors gone. It's fewer caring adults in our classes, again and again.

Students are going to be crammed into classes as large as 40 or even higher. The Minister of Education maybe needs to go back to school and understand what it means when you talk about class size averages.

I want to share some math with you that Muna Kadri, who is visiting in the gallery today, gave me earlier today, which is that if you were, say, to cut what the minister has said at this point, which is 3,475 positions from our schools, and each of those educators teaches six classes, which is about right, then you're looking at 20,000 classes lost across this province— 20,000 classes lost. So don't try to rebrand that, because we know what it means.

They're going to lose access to classes in technology, in the arts and music. I was in the minister's own riding this week, where the teachers were talking about their concerns about losing the robotics programs, computer programming and skilled trades programs.

In many schools, especially our smaller schools, we already are stacking courses, so that you might have a teacher teaching, say, six or four different levels in one classroom—imagine that—and then having to add onto that. It's impossible. It's hard to imagine.

Those students will lose the crucial support of education workers like janitors, caretakers, educational assistants, clerical workers and librarians. They'll be forced into—and our leader mentioned this earlier—untested online mandatory classes, which also, by the way, means losing hundreds of in-person instruction hours.

There is absolutely no research out there that says that mandatory online learning will be good for our kids.

These cuts are going to have a devastating impact on education in this province, and despite the evidence, the Premier and the Minister of Education have refused to admit that.

Just this morning, the minister said that the changes they are implementing have been asked for. Madam Speaker, I want to conclude by saying that no one asked for this—not one student, not one teacher, not one education worker. No one voted to take resources away from our students, and thankfully, I can tell you, nobody is falling for this government's spin.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you for the opportunity to stand today on behalf of the constituents of Niagara West and address the opposition day motion that is before the House today. I wish to also thank the members of the opposition for their contributions to the debate today.

I had the chance, when I was serving in opposition, to speak to many motions that came forward from the Progressive Conservative Party when we were sitting on the benches that the current opposition is sitting on. We had the chance to bring forward a lot of different points that were very important to the people of Ontario; they raised these points time and time again throughout our time in opposition. I was there for about a year and a half, and I remember some of the issues that came up specifically around education: a lack of attention to skilled trades, for example; a lack of attention to science, technology, engineering and math; a lack of recognition of the challenges that rural communities face; and a lack of awareness about what some of the realities are that rural Ontario and northern Ontario and communities outside of Toronto faced when it came to education.

We know, of course, that the former Premier of Ontario did have the opportunity to also serve as the Minister of Education in the province of Ontario, and yet when we came to office, when we were knocking on doors across Ontario, whether it was in urban Ontario, whether it was in suburban Ontario, rural Ontario or northern Ontario, we heard concern about a system that was failing students, a system that was failing parents and a system, frankly, that wasn't working.

On the 15th of March, I was so proud to stand beside Minister of Education Lisa Thompson as she brought forward a vision for what Ontario can be and a vision for what education here in our beautiful province can be as well, and that vision, quite rightly, had as its heading the phrase "Education that Works for You." The reality is that, over the last 15 years, we had an increasingly ideological education system that failed to reflect the realities of the world that kids were growing up in. We saw increasing skills gaps that were growing between where the jobs of the future were, where the jobs were when children were graduating from high school or heading off to post-secondary education or perhaps looking at a trade, and what the actual skills were that were being taught in the education system.

I'm very proud that Minister Thompson spent a great deal of time listening to those who work in education, those who are being educated and also parents, who care deeply for their children's future, who care deeply about the Ontario that their children will inherit and who care deeply about the education system that their children are in.

Of course, one of the important things that we really brought forward and what I'm going to be spending most of my time on this afternoon in the limited time that I've been given to address this motion—I'm not going to get into all of the inaccuracies. I'm not going to get into all the problems with this motion and some of the inherent premise in it. I'm not going to speak for too long about how we're investing over \$700 million in additional funding, because what we know is that it's not just how much you spend.

We saw the Liberals spend, spend, spend without seeing results. We understand the importance, of course,

of increasing investment in education, and that's why I'm so proud that our minister brought forward a budget that had an additional \$700 million in funding. But we know that, unlike the Liberals, we can't simply take the hard-earned taxpayers' money that Ontarians have given this government to use with discretion and throw it out the door without ensuring that we have proper metrics and without ensuring that we see value for that money. We can spend, spend, spend. That's what we saw under the Liberal government. They increased spending in all sorts of areas, but we didn't always actually see what the final result was. In fact, Speaker, interestingly enough, what we can also see is that in some areas, although you don't need to spend more, you can also still see better value.

1420

What I'm going to be speaking about is e-learning. E-learning is one of those skills that, unfortunately, the Liberals didn't speak much about. I know the opposition has been spending a little bit of time talking about it in ways that are simply inaccurate and don't reflect the world that we see and the workforce that we need to see for tomorrow. I'm here to clear up a few misconceptions, perhaps, around that and also speak a little bit about what some of the experts are saying with regard to e-learning and the importance of the state of digital literacy in Canada, and Ontario in particular.

Speaker, one of the important things that we've seen—and the government of Canada, as well, has done work on this—is discussion around the rapid development and adoption of digital technologies and the way that's changing the way we work and communicate, and also the way that we educate and are educated. We see that firms have recognized the need to embrace technology in order to remain competitive in the global marketplace; artistic creators have embraced digital technologies to enhance their art; and individuals have recognized the value of technology to become effectively connected.

I'm so proud that our minister and our government have also seen the value in teaching these digital skills—these skills that will prepare our students for the economy going forward and that will give them what they need to create the right conditions for a world-class digital economy. This will also require digital skills for all Canadians.

What we've seen, Speaker, is organizations such as CERIC, the Advancing Career Development in Canada group, speaking about the importance of improving adaptability in ongoing learning, specifically with recognizing digital literacy: the ability to use digital technology and the Internet to gather, manage and evaluate information, to create documents in multiple media formats and to communicate at distance as a prerequisite for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. These are skills that we're so excited to be promoting in our education system, in school boards across Ontario, and these are skills that we've also seen as needed.

We've heard support for the e-learning steps that we've taken come forward from individuals such as Sean Monteith, the Keewatin Patricia District School Board director of education, who recently said in an interview

with Steve Paikin that our proposal in terms of e-learning has great potential for students in northwestern Ontario. He said, Speaker—and I know the opposition doesn't want to quote this, but we have to make sure that we have some of this cleaned up. What he is saying is, "We have, in some of our communities, a lack of access to certain specialization or expertise in particular subject areas. For example, if you're a student in Red Lake who needs to take grade 12 level university-level calculus, there may not be enough students to run a full calculus course, but we still have the responsibility to deliver calculus to that student." An electronic calculus course would be the way to do that.

Speaker, we are investing in e-learning because we know that this is the future. We want to see a forward-looking education system that reflects not only today but what the needs are moving into the future.

The Upper Canada District School Board, the UCDSB, also released a statement, and in it they said that they believe that e-learning courses will significantly benefit its students and families, as the district has seen overwhelming success and growth in Web-based programs. From 2017 to 2018, there was a 63% increase in online course enrolment offered during the summer semester as an online offering of diploma credits. The UCDSB has found that e-learning courses give students the opportunity to customize their programs to meet their interests and needs even when enrolment challenges in a small school setting have prevented the ability to offer certain courses.

We've seen also, Speaker, quotes from various individuals. I'm not going to get into all of them, but what we've also seen, even here, from Jeff Cummings, a technology-enabled learning coordinator with the Wellington Catholic District School Board—he stated, "I [think] e-learning has been quite a positive experience in our board, and I take all the concerns to heart. I certainly hear all those, but our students have been taking courses predominantly in the summer as a reach-ahead model." So they are seeing that students "are looking for different types of learning experience in their regular day school ... so that they can take more hands-on learning, co-op, experiential learning."

Jeff Cummings then went on to explain how his board has made significant investments in-house to deliver online courses in engaging ways.

Speaker, what we're doing now in the Ministry of Education, under the leadership of the minister, the member for Huron—Bruce, and with the full support of our caucus, which has been so wonderfully supportive as well of the changes that we've made in ensuring that we have education that works, is that we're actually looking forward. We're saying, "Where can we take best practices from across the province? Where can we ensure that we have not just a patchwork of digital services, that we have not just a patchwork of digital services, that we have not just a patchwork of e-learning in segments of the population that doesn't reflect, really, what we need to see as course offerings?"

We're making sure, also, that we have these abilities in place for all students across the province and that we are

able to ensure, no matter where you are as a student, that when you're taking these courses—which, I might add, is one credit a year. If you listen to the NDP, you think, “There are not going to be any schools left. We're going to have everybody sitting in their basement on their iPad.” To listen to the fearmongering that we hear from the opposition, this seems to be what they think the government is planning on doing. No. We're taking practical, pragmatic steps, small steps, in ensuring that we're preparing students for the 21st century workforce, that we're using 21st century tools that we have at our disposal to ensure that they are trained in these technological skills—that, as we've heard, as I've spoken about as well, these digital skills for tomorrow are actually being utilized.

One of the things we've heard as well from the government of Canada—I have to say, I don't agree with our federal counterparts on a whole lot, and there are a lot of things that I frankly disagree with them on, but they have said that in order for Canada to become a leader in the digital economy, digital skills development must be fostered in all Canadians. Well, I know our minister agrees, I know our cabinet agrees and I know that our caucus and Premier agree we can do better. That's really what the changes are that we're making.

Speaker, I'm proud to say that I'm going to be voting against this motion today, because this motion is an attempt to distract from the changes that we're making that will ensure our education system works; that will ensure that we're not seeing declining EQAO scores, that half of grade 6 students are failing math; that ensures, when we're graduating students, that they have a career path that will end up in a good, stable job. This is something I hear from students across Ontario. I have the chance to meet with student trustees' associations, and they have a lot of real wisdom to offer and real life experience when it comes to talking about how they can see these changes beneficially impacting them. One of the major components I hear from these student trustees as well is the need to ensure that there are actually jobs at the end of the day, that they have the potential to access those jobs and that they are given the skills required.

That's why, on March 15, when the Minister of Education stood and said that we have an education system that works, I was proud to support that system. I was proud to support that announcement then and I'm proud to support it today, and today I say shame on the NDP for fearmongering. Shame on them for playing with the politics of fear and division. I support our public education system, our party supports the public education system, and we will ensure that today, tomorrow and for years to come Ontario has an education system that works for you.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm going to focus my debate today on the way in which these cuts to education directly impact and hurt and devastate arts education in schools.

Large classrooms will not work for arts students or educators. Students' achievements in the arts must be valued. Arts programs are where many gifted students,

students with different learning needs and many marginalized students find acceptance, validation and a place for their skills to shine. Cuts to art programs will hurt all of our students, including Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ and disabled students, our most vulnerable students who find spaces to tell their stories, to show their lived experience through the arts.

The government and the Ministry of Education—I've said it before—must put a little STEAM into their STEM. They must remember that A is for “arts” as well as “achievement.” But don't believe my words. Let's go to the people: the teachers, the students, the families who have written us over a hundred messages in the last 24 hours.

Number one, Emily Leadbeater, music teacher from Miller's Grove Public School: “I work for the Peel District School Board as a kindergarten to grade 6 music/drama/dance teacher.... In early March, I was notified that I was being declared surplus” by “my board due to ministry level cuts and not our regular staffing process. This means that the arts program that I have poured my heart and soul into” for over five years “will cease to exist. My classroom door will be closed and my instruments will sit silent.... [m]y school community will suffer greatly in losing the arts program as it is now. I teach all 225 kids at my school and I pride myself in making my program a place for everyone to be successful and feel great about learning through the arts.... Music and drama/dance will simply be taught by whomever has space in their timetable”—if at all. Teachers with no training in arts will teach arts.

1430

Sarah Papoff, Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators: “As a teacher I know supporting student success requires personal connections, trusting relationships and ongoing communication between students, parents and teachers.

“Two years ago, my class of 21 students included two grade levels and six students with individual education plans. Five students required one-on-one support, without which they not only would have fallen behind but their behaviours would have a negative impact on all the students. At first, they were disruptive and required constant support to avoid negative impacts on the entire class....

“The smaller class, combined with drama as a major motivator enabled these students and class to have a successful year. I am still in touch with many parents and students about the positive impact....

“The changes set up educators to fail which will cause irreparable harm to our students and diminish academic success for those who are least resilient.”

Chris, HDSB teacher: “Today was a tough day for students at my school. As a result of the funding cuts to education in Ontario, it was announced that many of the elective courses are being cut next year because they cannot be financially supported given the new class size requirements. A particularly heart-breaking moment was when my at-risk students in my special education class were crying because their favourite classes were cancelled next year”—their vocal music and their tech classes.

“These elective courses are what keep students in school. This is not a routine experience, as these courses have run for decades.

“Thanks for fighting for our students!”

Last but not least, because I can't get to all of them, is Sonia Trivedi. She's the lead arts educator and supervisor of the arts council at North Park Secondary School. She says, “According to Forbes magazine, creativity is the number one skill jobs look for. Without these art courses, we are reducing creativity. We are taking away passion. We are hindering potential change-makers of the future.”

This government needs to stop racing to the bottom on the backs of our students. Shame on you.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm honoured to rise in the House today to speak on the opposition's disagreement with our government's commitment to build a world-class education system which allows our students to academically excel and reach their full potential.

I'm so proud to stand by the government and the Minister of Education, the Honourable Lisa Thompson, and also our member from Niagara West, for the changes we are making to education in this province.

Our students, under the previous government, were academically suffering and saw a decline in math scores due to the disastrous discovery math teaching method.

It is not surprising, Madam Speaker, that the opposition and the Liberals have been vocally against this decision. Since the very beginning, they have been spreading untrue information to Ontarians—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member from Markham–Unionville: I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Billy Pang: Withdraw.

But we are investing \$7.6 million in the 2019 Focus on Youth summer program, which helps employ underprivileged students.

We are also investing \$6.6 million for the transportation of children and youth in care, which helps students transition into their new schools. Does the opposition think that supporting underprivileged youth and children transitioning from different schools and requiring accommodation is inequitable? I'm concerned that the opposition does not know what they want, besides needlessly critiquing our government.

The opposition has been saying that we must modernize our school system, but yet they oppose e-learning.

Speaker, we are all aware, as many members of this House acknowledge, that there is a training gap between secondary and post-secondary education. One of our jobs as responsible representatives of our constituents and our future workforce is to ensure that students can have a smooth transition into the post-secondary sector with confidence and be familiar with the teaching methods. E-learning is an increasingly popular method of learning for many post-secondary students, Madam Speaker. In fact, since 2004, students have used e-learning to earn high school credits to earn their diploma.

Besides secondary education, universities and colleges across the province find e-learning to be an effective and convenient method of teaching because of its incorporation of several kinds of media, such as podcasts, recorded lectures, online forums and much more. See, for example, the University of Toronto: They have numerous online training. The University of Waterloo: Through its web page, I can see that Waterloo has more than 525 online courses. Every faculty offers online courses, and there are multiple undergraduate and graduate degrees fully available online. Just this afternoon, we had a lunch reception here with a group from Wilfrid Laurier University. They provide more than 100 courses online.

As a father of two children in public schools, I can confidently say that students already supplement their traditional classroom education with these tools available online. My son, who is in grade 4, accesses Google Classroom every day.

E-learning is not just useful technology that students are already comfortable with using; it helps bring our education in the province into the 21st century, getting them out of the Stone Age. We need to recognize that e-learning can be a valuable tool to help our students, and that's why we intend to make changes to it. In the 2020-21 school year, we will begin a phased-in requirement for secondary school students to take a minimum of four e-learning credits—that means one credit per year—in order to receive their diplomas, with the exception of students who can be exempted on an individualized basis. This is an important consideration as we are aware that certain students may not be able to complete courses completely online for personal reasons. We are accommodating that already.

That year, we will also be centralizing e-learning to provide students in Ontario with greater access to education opportunities, no matter where they live. We know that having broadband access is key to supporting modernized digital learning in the classroom. Therefore, by the 2021-22 school year, we will ensure that every school in Ontario has access to reliable, fast and affordable Internet with our new broadband strategy, thanks to the Ministry of Infrastructure. We need to bring equity to our rural and northern schools in order to ensure that everyone is getting the best education possible.

Let's talk about GSN, the Grants for Student Needs. It's the main funding that school boards receive annually. Providing GSN information will allow school boards to make informed decisions about their budgets for the 2019-20 school year. The GSN for the 2019-20 school year is projected to be \$24.66 billion, which is an increase of \$47 million over the 2018-19 school year. The increases to the 2019-20 GSN reflect investments focused on the areas that have the greatest impact on a classroom, and on investment to reflect enrolment growth. Our government is protecting what matters most by delivering an education system that puts student achievement at the centre of everything we do.

1440

I am extremely proud of these changes that we are making to education. With every change we have made,

we've improved the education system in a responsible and measurable way. The new investments in the Grants for Student Needs are impacting the following grants for the 2019-20 school year:

- \$1.6 billion over four years in attrition protection allocation;

- increasing the Special Education Grant by \$90.6 million; and

- increasing the Student Transportation Grant by \$92.2 million.

Mr. Speaker, while the opposition continues to adopt disruption and misinformation as their approach to our education announcements, we will continue to make sure that the student is at the centre of our decisions and ensure that their futures are bright.

One thing the opposition simply cannot contest are the facts. We are increasing capital funds for our schools. We are applying a strategy to improve math scores for our students. We are revising the secondary school curriculum—which has not been revised for over a decade—for our Indigenous students. We are teaching our students how to be more financially literate, and about skilled trades. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we are transitioning our education system into the 21st century, not keeping them in the Stone Age.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join this debate this afternoon. I do feel like I am living a whole new reality here in this place, because 20 years ago, during the original Harris years, 120,000 teachers, educators and students walked out because of the same sort of funding language that we're hearing from this government. You'll remember that at the time it was John Snobelen. He said, "We're going to create a crisis in education."

The only thing that is different this time is that the minister has decided that she's just not going to make it a formal statement. From my perspective, I have to say, what this government fails to understand is that public education in the province of Ontario is a core principle for us, and people will rise up. They will fight for these programs, like the program that we heard of today when my colleague from Kitchener Centre brought Tessa Day from Courtland public school in Kitchener, who has benefited greatly from the Harmony Movement program, a program that focuses on equity and inclusion and art and training. The minister, in her place today, stood up and told Tessa to keep on fighting. Keep on fighting for equity, because it's 2019. We still have to fight for basic principles of equality in the public education system in 2019? What kind of message is that to a student who has travelled here when her program is closing?

This is what the frustration is, and this is why our leader and the entire caucus have brought this motion to the floor of the Legislature, because we are not fearmongering; we are fact-mongering. We are trying to get the facts out—good line, Jamie.

So "Don't let the facts get in the way of a good debate," you know. We've seen this play itself out, too. There is a

very disturbing pattern of behaviour that this government follows through on. We saw it on the autism file. You throw a policy out there. You see how many people it's going to hurt. You see how loud those people are going to go. You call them names like "professional protestors," parents who have children on the autism spectrum and whose lives are already stressed beyond belief. It really is heartbreaking to have had the parents come into our offices all last week. I'm sure the members on the other side are hearing these things as well. How could you still, in good conscience, continue to go down those roads?

For us and for Tessa, who was here today—hearing us fight for public education gives her hope. That is why this motion is here, because we genuinely want this government to see that the road that you are going down on public education will ultimately hurt the classroom experience. It will compromise the learning environment. This rebranding exercise—public education doesn't need to be rebranded. It needs to be funded. It needs to be a focus of everything that we do in the province of Ontario, because at the very base of what we believe in, in this House and in this province, is that public education is the great equalizer. If you get public education right, everything else falls into place. And when you get it wrong, you compromise the very principles and fabric of this province. We, of course, are going to be fighting day in and day out in this House to ensure that public education is at the core of the work that we do in this place. Shame on this government for turning your back on students and the educators in our system.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: We are here today to discuss a motion that calls for breaking promises. This motion brought forward by the opposition calls on our government for the people to reverse changes and break promises. Those are the promises to education funding, proposed class size ratios and mandatory e-learning.

Our government is protecting what matters most by delivering an education system that puts student achievement at the centre of everything we do. At the forefront, we listened to the people and delivered results.

After months of consultation, our Minister of Education—and I want to thank her for the amazing work she has been doing throughout this whole process—has taken a comprehensive approach to our previously broken education system by simply listening to the people of Ontario and delivering promises. Through our changes we are taking a responsible approach to balancing the budget that restores confidence in Ontario's finances while protecting what matters most: our world-class education system.

As a father of four and a concerned citizen of Mississauga East-Cooksville and Ontario, I'm extremely proud of the changes we are making to our education system. I remember that since day one, the opposition and other third parties have been fearmongering and spreading misinformation while we are consistently making changes to bring student achievement back to the focus of all we

do. The opposition has been wrong about so much. They have spread misinformation to the good, hard-working—
Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw, and to be very careful with the language he chooses going forward.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

They have been wrong about the health and physical education curriculum. They have been wrong about investments in school capital. They have been wrong about kindergarten. They have been wrong about teachers' jobs, and they are wrong again today. This false information by the new disaster party needs—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw again.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

With every change we have made, we have improved the education system in a responsible and measured way. That's why we are modernizing the system to ensure students leave school with the tools they need to be successful both inside and outside the classroom.

Through the budget, we recently announced that we are investing more in education in 2019-20 than the previous government committed for 2018-19. We are building on our plan, Education that Works for You, and introducing new measures that will help make sure Ontario students are leaders in education once again.

The opposition continues to fearmonger and scare the people of Ontario, but our proposed class size changes will align Ontario with other Canadian jurisdictions. For example, in Quebec, the average class size is 30, while we are only proposing 28; 28 is not a lot of students, Madam Speaker. Currently, class sizes range from 26 to 27. We are only proposing a couple of more students. In fact, under the previous government, teaching positions increased by 11% while enrolment declined by 1%.

At the same time, we saw achievement decline as math scores went down. Neither the teachers nor students were able to do simple math that is needed on a daily basis, which is a shame, Madam Speaker.

1450

In our government's first budget, we have increased education spending by \$700 million, and education spending will increase by another \$300 million by 2021-22. That does not sound like cuts to me.

We were elected on a promise, and we will continue to work with our education partners, and they will have the opportunity to share their voice by the end of next month.

I went into university in 2005. I remember my first day in university here. For our first lecture, we were asked to go into an auditorium, and I remember the auditorium had approximately 150 students. Just imagine if a high school student—what our government is trying to do is to make the transition process from high school to university easy for them.

Just think about this, Madam Speaker: Students, especially in the first year of university, are from an average class size of 26 to 27, and right away they are sitting among 150 to 200 students. I was part of that, Madam

Speaker. I was part of that auditorium where more than 300 students, at times, were listening to the lectures by the professors.

I think that our government's approach is right, where we are saying let's prepare our students, especially in high schools, so that when they go into university, we do not hear about stress, anxiety and mental health. These are the reasons why, Madam Speaker, because they are not able to transition well into university.

I'm glad that our government is making the right decisions, and I stand by those decisions.

Now let's talk about the e-learning.

Going back to my university days, I remember that in 2005—and I'm sure there were years before—that one of my courses was an online course. It was pure and straightforward that out of my five major courses, one of them was an online course.

Now just imagine students in high school. If we are not able to prepare them by having just one e-learning course, then how are we going to get them ready to have an online course in university?

I remember that we were told in university, in the first semester, "There you go. This is your online course. You study online, you're going to have online exams, and off you go." That's how we took one of our courses in university.

So I don't understand what concerns my respected colleagues on the other side have about just having one e-learning course. Again, we are preparing our students to get into university. They are high school students, and they are ready. They are ready to have online courses moving forward.

I was just having a conversation with our great minister over here about the advantages of online courses. Prior to becoming an MPP, I was working for an organization—BlackBerry—and I remember that each time when a new product or a new service was launched, all of our courses—even if we were working, we had to do our exams, and everything was online. We had to go online, study online and then do our exams online.

I think that having one course is definitely going to improve our students who are going to be transitioning from high school to university and then onward.

My son is five years old. Every evening my wife will give him her cellphone. There is an app where he goes and he has to read a story or whatever she would like him to learn that day. What that app allows him to do is to record what he's reading. Now, Madam Speaker, what's wrong with that?

I was just mentioning to our minister here that I was looking at one of the ads on TV before coming here for our 1 o'clock session. I saw the ad where a kid—I think he was around 10 or 11 years old—climbs to his treehouse and he has a tablet with him. He presses a button and the bulb goes on. Then a few of his friends walk in. He presses a button on his tablet and the stairs go down.

What it does is, it shows that our children are already exposed to technology. So why not just make use of it? Why not just make sure that our children are ready for

tomorrow? This is the whole reason—as I said to you, Madam Speaker, when my son is reading through his app and everything, he’s getting ready for tomorrow, for school and everything. And I’m proud of the fact. Coming from a technology background, I know how important it is for our students to be ready for tomorrow. There is nothing wrong—there is nothing wrong—with using technology in schools and classrooms. I don’t understand why the respected members opposite have issues with technology being used in classrooms.

As a matter of fact, last week I met with a teacher at one of the events I was attending. She came to me and she said, “Kaleed, thank you very much for removing cellphones from the classroom, because they were a huge distraction.” And for a second I was like, “Wow. A teacher coming and thanking me for removing cellphones.” She said, “It was a huge distraction in the sense that sometimes when we were teaching we could see earpieces in kids’ ears and they were having phone calls.” So it was something where she said, “Thank you very much for taking the initiative. Thank the minister as well because it’s a huge thing.”

But that doesn’t mean, Madam Speaker, that we should not be using technology for good reasons. She mentioned to me that sometimes when they’re having conversations and they want to look into reports, they can hit Google right away and fact-check.

So what I believe is that the minister is doing a fantastic job of bringing new initiatives: e-learning, health and physical education. There is so much that we are trying to do, and there is so much that we need to do, to make sure that our students, our future of this province, are ready to take up the challenges that they’re going to face tomorrow.

At this point, I’m not going to support the motion brought forward by the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate? The member for Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to all my colleagues who have spoken here today as well.

Thousands fewer teachers, bigger class sizes and less help for kids is not the way forward for our province. In fact, these callous cuts to our education system are actually dragging our province in the wrong direction. They will not, as the minister claims, help increase student achievement.

That couldn’t be more evident than in the region of Peel, where more than 360 teachers with the Peel District School Board have learned that they will no longer have permanent positions heading into the new school year. That is shameful.

The board’s director of communications confirmed to CBC News last week that 176 elementary school teachers and 193 secondary school teachers were informed about this change. Meanwhile, our education minister has downplayed the cuts as “an annual exercise.” That is simply inaccurate. The last time the Peel board issued surplus notices was in 2014, and they estimate that there were about 40 of them, not hundreds, as the minister keeps saying in the media.

1500

On Friday in my office in Brampton Centre, we held a community discussion on education and we were joined by students from Turner Fenton secondary, Harold M. Brathwaite, Heart Lake secondary and St. Marguerite d’Youville Secondary School, just to name a few. Concerned parents and educators from across the region who have all expressed serious concerns about the loss of teachers in our classrooms also joined us.

There seems to be quite a lot of confusion around how the new e-learning system will even be implemented. Students expressed concerns about equity and how they would even access a course that is being taught online. Many of these students also pointed out that many students don’t actually have access to a laptop at home. So there are serious equity concerns that simply have not even been fleshed out by this government.

Students raised concerns about access to mental health supports, extracurricular programs and the education supports they all need to be successful and transition into post-secondary education.

People in this province are concerned about the real impacts to students when this government says that they are going to increase class sizes to 28. Students will have reduced access to educators for one-on-one feedback and instruction. This is bad news for struggling students as well as for any student with career goals involving a transition to post-secondary education. Oftentimes, those programs are so competitive that in those final years they do need that extra help to raise their GPA in order to be accepted into the post-secondary education program of their choice.

Students, parents and educators in this province are calling on this government to do better, to invest in our education system and to ensure that students have more opportunities, not less.

I’d like to read an excerpt from a grade 8 student at Earncliffe Sr. Public School who, instead of walking out, wrote the local MPP a letter:

“I don’t believe that classes should be growing but rather shrinking. As of right now, I think there are still too many kids in classes as it is hard to concentrate and learn. With classes getting bigger, it’s just going to get worse. With that being said, you might think that larger classes will help us, but they won’t; it will ruin our education.”

This is a grade 8 student who is very concerned about what high school is going to look like for them.

I’d also like to take an opportunity to extend my gratitude to the teachers who showed up at our community discussion as well: teachers like Japeet Kaur Toor, Alycia Rodrigues and Tania Lowery, who were all issued surplus notices.

Melissa Basta was one of the 360 teachers who were laid off despite promises that not one teacher would lose their job. Just a year ago, she was hired into a permanent position with the Peel board, and, after seven years of proving herself and dedicating her life, she now won’t have a job come September.

I don't have enough time to go through all of the impacts that these cuts are going to have, so I urge this government to know that students in our province deserve more opportunities and a better education, not cuts in our classroom.

I urge this government to do the right thing and reverse these cuts and support our opposition day motion.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to join the debate this afternoon. Not surprisingly, I won't be supporting the motion before the Legislative Assembly.

What's clear is, as the government moves to restore the financial strength of the province, restoring confidence and trust, it's imperative that we protect what matters the most: our world-class health care and our education systems. That's exactly what we're doing and will be doing.

The people of Whitby, whom I have the privilege of representing, re-elected me because they were exhausted by the waste and mismanagement of the Liberal government, exhausted by irrational planning and incompetent execution and crippled by a resultant soaring debt load. Consequently, they looked to the Ford government to make changes aimed at improving the life of all Ontarians.

Recently, the budget revealed that we would be spending more on education in 2019-20 than the previous government had committed for 2018-19. This year, the government has increased education spending by \$700 million, and a further increase of \$300 million by 2021-22.

Speaker, our plan, Education that Works for You, introduces measures that are far-reaching, but framed—and this is important, as part as the discussion; it's one that I think legislators would expect—within a very strong policy framework, because education has many features, doesn't it? Many features.

The government's proposed class size changes will result in a closer alignment with other Canadian jurisdictions. We've heard those comparators in other discussions thus far, and I'll come back to that as I move through my remarks. It is a change that is neither radical nor is it challenging for students, their teachers or education workers.

I'll provide another example, Speaker. Florida spent more than \$20 billion on reducing class sizes beginning in 2002. Let's stay with that figure for a moment. Around the same time, the idea took hold in Ontario. Matthew Chingos, the vice-president of education data and policy at the Urban Institute—which you're familiar with, Speaker, I know—studied the results and found that class size reduction in Florida had little if any effect on students going forward.

I talked about comparators with other jurisdictions, and Quebec is one. The average class size is 30, and in Ontario the government is proposing 28 for high school, and for grades 4 to 8, an increase from 23 to 24. There will be no change, absolutely no change in class sizes prior to grade 4. As we speak about class sizes, Speaker, it's important to note that there are currently 125,979 teachers in the

Ontario system, up from 112,000 in 2004, when the Liberals took power. This is despite student enrolment falling by 109,000 during that same time period.

I alluded to some of the features of the government's plan on education, and I talked about it in the context of being far-reaching and forward-thinking. It includes a plan to improve science, technology, engineering and math skills, and it contains a revised focus, as it should, on financial literacy and skilled trades. That comes from the consultation that was undertaken, where more than 72,000 people participated.

Not surprisingly, moving to another area, the government feels that an online learning strategy will have quite the obvious effect and will better place students on a path to future success. We recognize that e-learning could be a valuable tool to help our students, and that's why we intend to make programming changes. Since 2004, students have used e-learning to earn high school credits towards their diplomas. Students will be able to select from an expansive range of subjects and have the ability to access courses that support multiple pathways beyond high school, such as apprenticeship, college, university and the workplace. It will give students the opportunity to interact with and learn from students and teachers across the province, and it will promote a comfort level and skill using digital tools while learning in virtual environments.

Simply put, Speaker, this government is bringing our education system into the 21st century, as it should, allowing us to use our ever-improving technologies to teach and learn in exciting new ways. New doors will be opening, not closing. The government sees it as a way to reduce some of the geographical inequities that exist today, by making great education available in a more equitable fashion to all Ontarians. Obviously we cannot execute an online program for all without technology in place to support it. That's why by 2021-22, the government is committed to ensuring that every school in Ontario has access to reliable, fast and affordable Internet service.

What's important within the context of this discussion is that no school will be left behind and each will be assessed to understand its specific needs.

1510

Does the government support students? Well, here are some examples, beyond those that have already been cited. A few examples: We'll be providing \$350,000 to the Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship Program, helping grades 11 and 12 students and providing the chance to earn two senior business study credits. We'll be committing \$7.6 million on a program to create summer employment opportunities for students. We're providing \$6.6 million in funding for transportation services, enabling students to stay in their schools when their residence changes. This is a particularly important feature—and I know you know this, Speaker—in terms of rural schools, in particular. And certainly, last but not least: \$1.4 billion in funding for Integrated Services for Northern Children, providing access to services from teacher diagnosticians, psychology professionals and speech and language professionals. That's been a long-standing request. We've listened and we've responded to it.

Unfortunately, Speaker, the reality is this: The previous government failed our children when it came down to teaching the basics. This lack of foundational knowledge has left too many of our children, including my grandchildren, ill prepared for the challenges of the modern world. You all know that. What's clear is—and yes, it's clear—our approach will be different. We're getting back to the basics, respecting parents and working with teachers to ensure our children develop the skills they need to succeed in a highly competitive job market.

Let there be no doubt that we're making a substantial investment in our children, in our future. Collectively, we all have a vested interest in that outcome. We might disagree on the approach, but in the end, it's the future of our children. Enabling our students to find good, career-oriented jobs in a modern global economy—we all aspire to that, don't we? We all do.

In summary, Speaker—and I only have 47 seconds left—our government is protecting what matters most by delivering an education system that puts student achievement at the heart of everything we do. The children of Ontario, teachers and education workers deserve no less.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate? The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. In the interest of full disclosure, as you know, I've been married for 43 and a half years to a trustee of long standing with the public school board in Windsor.

Let me begin by quoting from a letter to the Premier and education minister from the chair of the Greater Essex County District School Board. I hand-delivered the letter to the minister a couple of weeks ago. It details the serious concerns and the considerable confusion the board has over the direction the government has taken on public education. What is not apparent in moving class sizes from 22 to 28 is “how the government rationalizes this radical increase with the potential impact on students,” as they “anticipate this move will limit school course offerings and students' ability to access optional areas of study and pathways opportunities.” The trustees write that “the reduction in the Pupil Foundation Grant, cuts to education programs—other EPO grants and uncertainty about funding for students with autism and other special needs has us questioning our ability to provide the programs and services our students need and deserve.”

In closing that letter, the chair of the board, Jessica Sartori, writes, “Trustees of the Greater Essex County District School Board require and demand a greater level of information to be shared on all changes made so far by your government to Ontario's education system.”

“Furthermore,” she writes, “we recommend that future alterations are accompanied by much greater insight at the time of their announcement.”

I also have a letter that was hand-delivered to my Windsor office by a retired teacher who specialized in the arts. Eric Skelton, who lives in my riding, has remained active within the local arts community. He writes about his strong objections to the changes announced by the minister two weeks ago. Her statements regarding pupil-

teacher ratio increases and e-learning, he says, “put taxpayers in jeopardy of losing the strong, equitable education system that Ontario has taken decades to build.”

Eric goes on to add that “raising the student-teacher ratio by 27% from 22:1 to 28:1 will have huge effects on student choices, rural schools, and particular subjects and course types.

“Some classes must have smaller numbers, including classes for students with high needs or courses with safety issues.

“These must be balanced with classes which have higher numbers to achieve the board-wide averages.”

Speaker, he goes on to say that the smaller classes will be put in peril. The special-needs class with six or eight students becomes far less viable.

Eric concludes that “the areas that will suffer will include students with special needs, the arts, dance, drama, music, visual art, media, physical education, technology, social science courses,” and he goes on. Eric expects that “the situation will be magnified greatly in rural schools, which struggle to provide programs comparable to urban and suburban schools.”

Speaker, we know what happens then. As Eric writes, “the dominoes will fall to the point that vulnerable schools may have to close. This is not equal access to education.”

I agree. The government can develop a new slogan, “A Place to Grow,” but will children be given equal opportunity to grow and develop? Will younger people be encouraged to enter teaching as a profession and grow a career? Will short-term financial and political goals grow a better crop of well-rounded and educated students? I think not. A better slogan for this government may well be, “If it ain't broke, break it.”

Speaker, every time I hear someone say that not one teacher will lose a job, the little angel on my left shoulder says, “Ontario: a place to grow. Just look at Pinocchio's nose.”

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Today, I want to discuss how this government's education cuts will affect students and families in Thunder Bay and Atikokan, and why this motion to reverse the cuts is so important.

Premier Ford and Minister Thompson have routinely thrown up proposals and half-baked plans for our shared education system, but they do not provide full details. Then, later on, they add some more information, or not, creating chaos. This is no way to reform our education system. They are putting our children's education at risk.

I received many letters, visits and emails. One educator wrote something to me that really speaks to what's happening. She said: “I love my job. I am a special education teacher at a well-respected school in Thunder Bay. All our schools are in a state of crisis. The proposed cuts will hurt our school. We run a ‘skeleton crew’ every day. We are short-staffed. Daily, we have support staff sick with no supply staff. “We are then forced to send kids home from school because we cannot support them. We need you to help us educate Premier Ford and Minister Thompson. We

need them to understand the high level of need in Ontario schools. We need them to understand the implication of cancelled programs, higher class sizes and fewer special education supports and services. For the first time, I am very concerned about the system [my children] will pass through. They will get lost in large classes. They will see behaviours and acts of aggression they should not have to witness. They will not have the learning interventions needed should they develop learning challenges. Ontario deserves an education system that we can be proud of.”

Premier Ford and his party did not run on education cuts, but unfortunately, that is what is happening. School boards, teachers, education workers and students have made it clear that these changes will lead not just to larger classes but also to fewer caring adults in our schools. For rural and northern communities, these cuts will hit even harder. There may be other negative consequences, like closed neighbourhood schools and fewer courses.

In addition, Rainy River District School Board chair Raymond Roy is concerned about graduation rates. He told the Fort Frances Times that “I can’t emphasize enough that we’re worried about the impact that cuts will have on our graduation rate and on school boards across the whole province. It’s definitely a challenging time.”

1520

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation district president in Thunder Bay, Rich Seeley, wrote to me: “These reductions will have devastating effects on the entire education system in Ontario and will be felt acutely in Thunder Bay. Increasing the average class size from 22:1 to 28:1 will remove 20% of the classes from our schools” as well as 20% of our teaching positions. “In Thunder Bay public high schools, we would see an elimination of approximately ... 272 classes.... Thunder Bay will need to severely cut their program offerings.”

Let me conclude by saying that I am so proud to speak in favour of my leader’s motion. The government must reverse its plans. They must work with parents, education experts, educators, education workers and school boards to create policies that work for students. Students and their families deserve better.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: It’s a pleasure to rise today in this House to talk about public education. I have many family who teach in the system. I also, like my colleagues, have had the opportunity to get home and talk to people about how these cuts are impacting our community in Ottawa Centre and Ottawa at large.

An epiphany came to me when I was in the middle of doing something this past weekend that had nothing to do specifically with education. I was filling sandbags because the city that I live in—the outskirts are being hit by the impacts of climate change. Neighbours are coming together to protect their communities, and they’re sandbagging towns like Constance Bay and areas like Britannia. Do you know what this motion does, Speaker? This motion is about sandbagging our public education system from people like this, from governments like this,

that purport to talk lovely talk about how they love our educators and our education partners and then, in real time, stab them in the back—stab them in the back by making them countenance pink slips.

I agree with what my colleague from Brampton Centre says. We are seeing pink slips being issued on a scale that we have never seen before because this government doesn’t have the courage to say what a previous Conservative Minister of Education once said: that it was time to create a crisis in the education system. That’s what John Snobelen said. He had the courage to say it.

This government is so cowardly, they are pushing forward an austerity agenda, and they’re doing it on the backs of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I’m going to ask the member for Ottawa Centre to withdraw.

Mr. Joel Harden: I’ll withdraw the word “cowardly,” Speaker, and I’ll insert “merciless,” “unkind,” “duplicious” and “mean.”

Interjections.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please. I’m going to ask the government side to come to order. The minister—I do not need his assistance. Thank you.

I’m going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Joel Harden: I’ll withdraw, Speaker, but it’s clear to me that this is a government that doesn’t want to look in the mirror, and it’s too bad.

I was raised by rural Presbyterians—Conservative voters. Do you know what they believed in? They believed in being honest with people. They believed that if you really wanted to cut public education and hurt the public education system, if that’s what this government actually wanted to do, they should have told the people of Ontario that. But do you know what they did, Speaker? They said that they could have their cake and eat it too: cut taxes and improve services. “Go online; everybody is doing it. There will be no impact on layoffs.”

Nobody is believing this. We’re not stirring anybody up. Just like in the autism debate, my friends in the government said, “You’re stirring people up.” We’re not stirring people up. People are wise to the charm offensive. They are going to stand up and defend their public education system, and the government must know that the opposition will sandbag our public education system. We are not going to let you harm it.

I want to be very clear, Speaker, and I want to be clear to the people watching this at home: If students want to walk out of class, if teachers want to oppose this government, you have a friend in the official opposition of the Ontario Legislature. This MPP and this party will stand up for you. We will not deceive you.

We need to make sure that when members like I have heard today stand up in this place and say things like “Why don’t we go with the model of giving five-year-olds cell-phones to improve their numeracy? Why don’t we think about a situation in which a class of 150 was so informative for me at the university level, let’s try it in high

schools”—Speaker, I can’t wait to get my hands on the Hansard of this debate. There have been some real gems produced here.

Look at what is happening to our public education system at a ground level. The member from Whitby got up here and had the temerity to say that lower class sizes have no impact on the quality of education because of one study by a Florida academic. Speaker, I’m going to tell you something as someone who is a teacher, as someone who has taught. I would ask the minister, I would ask this government, to spend a day in the shoes of people working in the system, because that is who we care about. We care about the teachers, we care about the parents and we care about the kids, and we will not stop fighting until this government does the right thing.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I come to this Legislature from the classroom. I am proud to be a teacher, and I want to make it clear that I will stand up for the students and their potential and defend strong public education every day. It is apparent that I am not alone. In the wake of this government’s decision to put education and education workers in its sights, we have heard from parents and educators and have seen rallies like I have never seen before. Determined students walked out across this province en masse. Educators and community members descended on Queen’s Park, and trustees and school boards are sounding the alarm.

I have a letter from Melissa, a high school teacher who works at a school in the GTA with challenging and high-needs students. She writes, “Larger class sizes for a lot of my students will mean less support. Also, I taught summer school online. I started with 52 students and ended up with 17 at the end of the course. This is largely because independent learning of this kind does not suit all learners. I also had students who did not have reliable and regular access to the technology needed to even complete the coursework independently.”

Speaker, I have taught in Whitby, in Pickering and in the south end of Oshawa, and everywhere it was true that some students don’t have reliable or affordable access to the Internet. Students deserve everything that we can give them.

Speaker, I want to share part of the letter that the Students Say No provincial organizing team wrote to defend their movement when this government attacked them and tried to squash their power: “The youth of Ontario are a force to be reckoned with, and we took this opportunity to show you exactly how strong we are....

“This province is a democracy, not a dictatorship. You can’t ignore, discount, and dismiss the voice of people who are telling you that you’re harming them. You’re here to serve us, not the other way around, and we the students will not stand for having our voices and our lives ignored.

“You do not sit in these classrooms. You do not have to take these online courses. You do not suffer from these cuts. The people who see the difference in class sizes and online learning and autism funding are telling you that this

will not work for the students of Ontario, and you’re making the conscious decision to ignore us. We are smart enough to know when we are being shortchanged for your own gain.”

Speaker, this government is delusional. They either don’t understand what they’re doing, or they are gas-lighting. We watched the Minister of Education tell a 13-year-old girl here today not to believe the truth that she is living every day at school. Here is some truth: Both the Durham Catholic and Durham District School Boards have written letters.

The DCDSB says, “We firmly believe that the quality of the education we provide will be adversely impacted by the changes the ministry has announced.” They cite class size changes, e-learning, special education funding and overall funding cuts as causes of major concern.

The DDSB says that staffing reductions “will result in fewer options for students,” and “when the government does not replace retired teachers ... course options for our students diminish drastically, especially in the areas of the arts, trades and specialty subjects.”

They also sound the alarm about mandatory e-learning, the new Ontario Autism Program, changes to curriculum, mandatory math testing and funding.

Also, it is unconscionable to reduce early childhood educators when violent incident data shows a large number of incidents happening during our early years and primary grades. We need more qualified, caring education workers working with our students, not fewer.

Our students deserve better. Support this NDP motion to reverse the cuts that you are making today and avoid the damage that you are doing to our future on purpose.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: What is so galling about this government’s response to the motion that is before us today is the anger, the indignation that they are displaying by the fact that the NDP is bringing these issues forward. We are being accused of playing politics, of fearmongering. But I can tell you, Speaker, if this government is not interested in what school boards have to say, in what students have to say, in what education workers have to say, in what parents have to say, the official opposition is.

1530

This government can ignore and deny as much as they want. They can make things up and refuse to consult, but they can’t escape the reality of the on-the-ground impact that these cuts are going to have, and that is the reality that school boards are expressing in the letters that have been written across this province about what these cuts are going to mean.

I’m going to read from the letter from the Thames Valley District School Board. The chair of the board says that the “proposed changes to class sizes will significantly impact our programming and pathways for our secondary students, narrowing the scope of what schools can offer and providing fewer opportunities for students at each level of their secondary education. In addition to areas of

core curriculum, the changes will impact courses in technology, trades, family studies, locally developed, Native languages and specialized programming.”

Speaker, if anyone has ever seen a student at risk, whose only reason to get out of bed in the morning is because of the drama class they go to at school, the ceramics class, the dance class, these are critical options for students to enable them to get their education and be successful in school. The Thames Valley board also went on to say, “Implementing the proposed changes to class size in our secondary schools will reduce our base teacher funding by approximately \$17 million, once fully implemented in four years. As all boards have an obligation and requirement to honour collective agreements, the attrition funding provided by the Ministry of Education over the four-year period does not address the significant funding shortfall.”

The board goes on to talk about the impact on student mental health, well-being and safety. In a school climate survey that was recently implemented in the board, students said that their most significant concerns were substance abuse, mental health, safety and physical environment. The Thames Valley board understands that having educators in a classroom is critical to support students with the concerns that they are having. This will be compromised by the changes that are being implemented.

Finally, Speaker, I want to say a couple of words in my role as economic development critic for the Ontario NDP caucus. A government that claims to care about business attraction and recruitment should know that anyone considering opening a business in Ontario wants assurances about the quality, the stability of our public education system. That’s not just in terms of the workforce that will be available to these businesses, but because it reflects quality of life in a community, and that is important for both employers and employees. Site selectors who are looking at those “Open for Business” signs on the border to this province and thinking about opening a business are going to think twice when they see 150,000 students walking out from schools across our province and 40,000 parents and education workers on the lawn of Queen’s Park. This government is not only jeopardizing the well-being, the quality of life in our communities; they’re also undermining our ability to attract businesses and support economic development opportunities in Ontario.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: It’s always a pleasure to stand up and talk in this House, but I want to say clearly, so everybody understands: I am a graduate of a publicly funded education system in the province of Ontario. Thank you to all the teachers; I want to say that right off the top.

We’ve seen this government say there’s no layoffs, but during this debate today, what did we learn? That’s why I like going last. We learned there’s going to be cuts in the arts. We learned there’s going to be cuts to music. And if you can imagine, they’re going to cut some of the skilled trades, the tech courses. They’re going to cut robotics. A school in my area, Westlane, has gone across North

America winning award after award after award, and I want to say congratulations to Westlane.

Obviously, there wasn’t any truth—I hope I can say that—because now they claim they’re putting money—I’m sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): It’s okay. As long as you are not directly saying something negative about a government member. Tread lightly. Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. Now they’re claiming they’re putting money aside to stop layoffs. Well, why don’t you do this: Why don’t you take the \$1.6 billion that you’re going to put into layoffs and reinvest it into the arts, into our skilled trades, into our classrooms? Wouldn’t that make more sense than what you guys are doing?

Then you talk about wanting to work with your partners. You want to work with your union partners and the teachers. But this is what your finance minister said this weekend. The Minister of Finance said on camera—I can’t believe he did it on camera, but he did—“No one should believe a word the teachers’ union ever tells them again.” That’s what our finance minister had to say about the educators who are in the classrooms with our kids today.

It was his government that said there would be no job loss, then changed their mind and said there would be job loss, but it wouldn’t be that bad. Madam Speaker, they changed their mind 88 times on this particular issue. They’re saying that they need to spend a lot of money because the job losses aren’t going to be that bad. It’s absolutely ridiculous.

I’ll sit down as I don’t have a lot of time left.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It has been an interesting afternoon. But I had a more interesting afternoon last week, when I went to Englehart High School to speak to a class. Actually, I went to Englehart High School and my kids went to Englehart High School. After I spoke to the class, we talked to some teachers.

There are some pretty basic facts that most people understand: When you put less teachers and less education assistants in a class, the quality of education goes down. That’s a pretty basic fact. When you raise the number of kids in a class, the quality goes down, but you need less teachers. That is basic, basic math. More kids in a class, less adults in the class means less teachers. How you get around that, I don’t know.

In a small school like Englehart High School, like those that are scattered across rural Ontario, when you make the classes bigger—for instance, this school has 125 students—when you start putting grade 9 applied and academic and then you throw grade 10 in because you have to raise the class numbers, you are going to close that school. You’re leaving the board no choice but to close that school.

For this government to yell at the former government about closing all the schools and then doing exactly the same thing themselves—exactly. Kids in Englehart with this government eventually aren’t going to be able to go to

Englehart High School because of the rules that you're putting in today.

Why you're doing this, I don't understand, because there are so many rural people on your side of the House who should understand—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please. I'm going to ask the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville to withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): My apologies. Back to the member for Timiskaming.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. That's the one thing I don't understand about rural members on the other side: why they're not saying to their corner office, "Do you realize what this is going to do to small schools in our ridings? Do you realize what this is going to do?"

As far as e-learning—e-learning works for certain kids, but there are a lot of kids whom it doesn't work with. To say that you have to have four classes through e-learning when a lot of people in this province don't have broadband—and, even with what the government has announced, will continue not to have broadband—basically you're telling students in rural Ontario that they don't matter. I'm quite frankly shocked that PC members throughout rural Ontario have the guts to sit there and think that their students don't matter.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça a été très intéressant d'écouter le débat aujourd'hui. Ça devient de plus en plus clair que si tu es un étudiant ou une étudiante dans une petite école, si tu es un étudiant ou étudiante avec le conseil public ou le conseil catholique francophone, il y a beaucoup de petites écoles. Si tu regardes dans mon comté, dans tout le Nord-Est, même dans le Sud-Ouest, souvent les écoles françaises sont des plus petites écoles. Ce sont ces écoles-là qui vont avoir le plus de difficultés.

Quand on entend les membres du gouvernement nous dire que les changements n'auront pas d'impact, c'est très difficile à accepter ça. Quand on voit les changements de 24 élèves à 28 élèves dans une classe, pour les classes dans les petites écoles françaises, c'est très difficile à avoir, madame. Ça veut dire que pour ces enfants-là, il y aura de moins en moins de choix, et il n'y a rien de bon qui vient de ça.

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

Back to the leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. I'm exercising my right to reply.

I thought it was interesting to see what the York Region District School Board has to say, because York is represented all by Conservatives. Here's what their school board has to say.

On class sizes, the board says they "will lose approximately 300 teaching positions" in the secondary schools. They go on to say that academic courses will rise to 36

kids per class, college and university courses to 36, open courses to 32, physical education to 30, science to 32. They also then go on to say that 45% of kids coming into school for the fall "will not have a full timetable to complete their secondary school education." Your own kids will not have a full ability to complete their secondary education. Even more alarming, there are almost 80 students who will have no timetable whatsoever because of the cuts this government is making.

They go on to say, "Electives will be extremely limited, and as teachers retire, the inability to replace them will result in a loss of specialized courses, particularly affecting science, technology, engineering and mathematics classes"—the STEM courses. "We can no longer use staffing from larger schools to accommodate smaller schools." So that's the risk that is obvious.

They go on to say that access to both mandatory and elective credits is going to negatively affect the students: "The proposed changes to secondary schools will disadvantage students looking to enter the skilled trades the most."

I can go on: 25% of the e-learning program drop out already. They don't like the e-learning piece as well. They say rural areas in the board will not have access to widespread bandwidth.

None of this stuff is fearmongering. It's the facts. It's from your own school board. Listen to what people have to say—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Be seated, please.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 3. 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.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1543 to 1553.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 3. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 41; the nays are 63.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

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 18, 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 Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The last time the bill was debated, the member from Thornhill had the floor. Questions and comments? Questions and comments to the member for Thornhill?

Further debate? The member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I am pleased to be able to rise again on behalf of the people from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, who entrusted in me the power to speak truth to this government, to speak to the significant cuts and significant challenges that we are facing in this budget before the House.

It's often said, and I've said this before: You often think that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, and I would

say that that is no more true than it is with this budget, because, Madam Speaker, if you were to look at the cover of this budget, you would think all is well in the province of Ontario, all is well in the classrooms of public schools in the province of Ontario. But we just spent three or three and a half hours debating public education, and we know that that is not the case. This picture is not an appropriate picture for what is going on in Ontario, what is going on with—

Interjection: There's a library.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. The fact that there's a library—there's a lot going on in this picture that just really says that that adage, that you can't judge a book by the cover, is very well implicated by this.

We have learned since reviewing this budget—we really know that a budget often reflects—it's said that it's a theological document, because how many times have we heard, “If you show me your budget, I will show you what it is you value”? Clearly, this budget tells us that this is a government that values booze and rebranding.

1600

There is so much missing in a budget that the people of Ontario were anticipating. The people of Ontario were looking for relief. They were looking for a vision from their government, and this budget does not deliver that.

We have a budget that talks about—I think it's 35 times; it's dozens of times that this budget uses the word “alcohol.” There is not one mention of the word “poverty;” it's not to be found in 400 pages of this budget. The reference to climate change is not in the budget—actually, I think it's in there once. The government is complaining about the federal government in terms of climate change. So we see what the government values, which is clearly access to alcohol, but what it doesn't value, based on what is in the budget, are the most vulnerable people of Ontario. It doesn't value our young people in the province of Ontario and it certainly doesn't value what most people are saying: our climate. Climate change is a critical, critical problem for our province, and this government clearly does not value that because it's not reflected in this budget.

I would have to say that this budget has been described many times as really a mean-spirited budget; a “cruel budget” it's actually even been described as. I would say that the reason that this budget is received by the people of Ontario as a cruel budget is because after 15 years of cuts, after 15 years of having to deal with hallway health care and cuts to their education, the people of Ontario were looking for relief. They were looking and they thought, maybe, that they could have a government that would make things better, a government that would work to build the province so that people could have a decent life here, they could have a prosperous future, but unfortunately this is a budget that does not deliver on that promise. That's one of the reasons why this budget has been described as mean-spirited.

I think the other thing that we need to talk about with this budget especially is the level of cuts that are in this budget. We anticipated that this government would cut and

move to privatization, because that's just in their DNA. That's what Conservatives do. They like to cut. They like to privatize. We expected that. But we did not expect the kinds of cuts to the level that are in this budget.

This is a budget where the cuts here are taking things away from our children, from public education, the most vulnerable people in the province of Ontario, and students. It takes away from people living in rural communities. It provides nothing for the Franco-Ontarians who have made their voices quite clear that they had expectations of this government.

Madam Speaker, let me just say that—what is it they said about an iceberg? The tip of an iceberg is 10% and 90% is under the surface? We all know that the part that's under the surface is the most treacherous; that's the most dangerous. Really, this is an apt description of this budget because you know what? You can look at the highlights in this budget, but once you look below the surface, that's where the waters get treacherous for the people of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, just so we're clear about some of the cuts that we're talking about here, let me just go over them—some of the highlights, or I guess we would call them lowlights. Right off the top, \$1 billion in cuts for the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. That's \$1 billion coming, again, from the most vulnerable people in our community, people living with disabilities, families with children with autism, and people who are trying to access services for women who are experiencing violence. These are the people who least need to experience these kinds of cuts from their government, and they were looking to this government for some form of relief, but they clearly haven't got that.

There's \$1.3 billion from rural affairs, northern development and forestry at a time, as we've been hearing in this House, when we are facing some of the most calamitous impacts of climate change in our province. Some of these cuts impact flood and water management, and we have historic and catastrophic flooding. We have flooding in parts of Ontario. We have flooding in Ottawa. People, as we speak now, are trying to protect their properties, sandbagging their property. Volunteers and front-line people are trying to prevent the damage that people are facing at the same time that this government is cutting the very budget that would help to prevent some of these impacts.

We have cuts to forest firefighting budgets. This is at a time when we are seeing more and more climate-induced wildfires in the province of Ontario—more frequent than ever before. But this government, in its wisdom, thinks that this is a time to cut that budget.

I can't even understand who came up with the idea that they should slash a major tree-planting program, the 50 Million Tree Program. We're going to cut that, just axe it—no pun intended there. We're just going to axe the 50 Million Tree Program—trees that are there to help mitigate against some of the impacts of climate change, the soil erosion, trying to create the kinds of conditions that will help mitigate against some of these climate-induced events that we're seeing. That seemed like an appropriate

time—the government, I guess, thought this was a good time to be cutting—

Interjection: On Arbor Day.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: On Arbor Day. Is that quite true?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, it's true.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is not. Is that true?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Oh, did you all know that? That you cut the 50 Million Tree Program on Arbor Day? Well, there we go.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's unbelievable.

The Indigenous affairs budget has been slashed. I sit beside a member who represents, in this House, every single day, the realities of Indigenous people living in the province of Ontario. This is what this government has done after hearing this member speak over and over again, telling compelling stories of the kinds of conditions that his community is experiencing. This government thought that this was an appropriate time to slash the Indigenous affairs budget—never mind the conditions that the member has been speaking about. What does this say about this government's commitment to true and meaningful reconciliation? It really is an insulting way to try and move forward with true, meaningful consultation with our Indigenous communities.

We've got \$700 million from training, colleges and universities, with the threat to withhold as much as 60% of what's left. I'm going to talk a bit more about that coming forward.

We have health care and education squeezed to less than inflation. When you have inflationary cuts like that, those mean real losses. Those are real jobs, real front-line workers that are going to be lost in two sectors—health care, in particular—that are already struggling just to keep things together, never mind that now they have to struggle with increased cuts from this government.

Recently, we're understanding the scope of the cuts that we are now facing to our public health services in the province of Ontario. We have been hearing about an opioid crisis in Ontario. We have been hearing about vulnerable people who are relying on things that public health provides, like breakfast programs, like access to diabetes care and screening. Public health helps immunization monitoring. They provide prenatal support programs. In fact, I worked at a program in Hamilton, Healthy Babies Healthy Children, that was funded through public health. It helped provide the best start for babies in the province of Ontario. The public health cuts are dangerous cuts, and we're hearing communities all across Ontario speak out against these. Not only is this government slashing public health, they are providing absolutely no answers as to how these cuts are going to be managed—absolutely no help whatsoever in helping municipalities address what the impacts of these cuts to public health will be in their communities.

We talked today quite a bit about our public health care system, but I have to say that we're going to talk some more about that because it's unbelievable. Particularly, we

talked about—we didn't really talk a lot today, but it always stands out there that we have crumbling schools, which are only going to get worse with these cuts. And we know now, despite all of the gaslighting coming from the other side, that we are going to be losing educators. Teachers are going to be pulled from classrooms. It's a fact. We're hearing it day in and day out. That's something that nobody in the province of Ontario expected or voted for. That's something, again, that describes why this budget is actually a cruel and mean-spirited budget. It doesn't provide the kind of relief people were expecting and people deserve when they're accessing public education for their young folks.

1610

Legal aid funding was cut by 30%. What is the rationale for that? Legal aid was cut by 30%. I would say that what we have here is a government that doesn't want to be held accountable. When you limit people's access to justice, this just fits into the theme of a government that gets rid of the independent officers. Let's talk about it again. The French Language Services Commissioner, the Environmental Commissioner and the child and youth advocate: three independent officers who had the ability to say to this government what they are doing right and what they are doing wrong. But this government does not want to listen. They think they have all the answers. They get all their answers in backrooms. They don't want to hear from independent people, and they certainly don't want to provide legal aid funding to people who also would like to have access to justice and be able to defend themselves. But this is something that this government is, clearly, quite callously cutting.

I would have to say, though, that cruellest of all in these cuts is the fact that people are still waiting for answers. There are families with children living with autism who still do not know what services are going to look like for their children going forward. We're hearing time and time again about autism providers who are losing their jobs. We have heard horror stories about families that are now having to pull out their credit card to ensure that they have access to services. But still, there is no clear plan. We just hear empty words from the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, but we don't have a plan. That is something that the people of Ontario expect—a government that actually comes forward with a plan.

We have people who are living with disabilities. There's no answer on Passport funding, so they can only sit and wait in fear. I talked to a young woman who relies on a diabetes support program—a young woman who shouldn't be afraid, shouldn't be fearful, that the supports she relies on are going to be cut away from her, but in fact, she is. This is a young woman in high school who doesn't know whether or not the supports she relies on to manage her diabetes are going to be there going forward. This budget doesn't provide her with the answers and the relief that she deserves.

Never mind the not-for-profit agencies in our communities, agencies that serve, in particular, women who are experiencing violence. For those programs, again, funding

is frozen—no clear answers. There are layoffs. There are programs that are being cut, and there are layoffs in these programs.

I don't know what this government is doing, but while this government puts out a budget that provides absolutely no detail and no direction, these people are living in fear and uncertainty. That is something that a government should not be doing to the people of Ontario. They should be providing certainty. They should be providing relief. They should be assuring the people of Ontario that they will be looked after. But instead, these people are sitting at home waiting, without any information, in complete uncertainty as to what their future will be. That's a shameful, callous way for a government to treat people who rely on the services that they are cutting.

We just spent—how long, Madam Speaker?—three and a half hours, I would say, talking about public education in this province. It's hard to believe that there would be anything left to say. But guess what? There is a lot left to say.

I do have to say that the member from Oshawa called what is happening here “gaslighting,” and I couldn't come up with a better expression myself to describe what is going on here. We have a Minister of Education who says that there will be no cuts, and everyone in the province of Ontario—school boards, educators, teachers, children—is saying that cuts are happening. But apparently, on the alternate-universe side of the Legislature, there are no cuts happening. Really, that is just a form of gaslighting; it's twilight zone.

How much evidence—how many times can we, as the loyal opposition, raise not our concerns but the concerns of school boards, raise the concerns of parents, children and educators, to tell you what they're fearing? Yet this government thinks that what they're doing is what the people of Ontario asked for. It is not. I can assure you it is not. I spent constituency week hearing from parents, parents who are angry at this government—not just disappointed; they're angry at this government, because they feel that they were—can I say “duped”? I don't know if I can say “duped”—by this government's promises that, in fact, have put them in a worse position as far as their kids' education.

Parents and students expect a government to provide a vision, a hopeful vision, a vision that means that there's a better future, a promising future. But what we have now is a government that has actually dashed the hopes of students who are in school now. In fact, they are going to have less quality in their education than the students who came before them. That is not necessary in the province of Ontario. Students deserve a high-quality public education. Really, it's not the right of the Premier of this province to take that away from them. It's not the Premier's education. It's not the Premier's future. It's the young people of Ontario who deserve this future, and they are standing up and they're making it perfectly clear that they're not going to sit around quietly while their education is taken away from them.

Can we repeat the number of times we said that these pink slips are being issued in the province of Ontario?

School boards in Windsor, Guelph, Waterloo sent out redundancy notices. In Hamilton, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is sending out redundancy notices. I know that—if I could find the notes here; they just go on and on—there are redundancy notices all across the region of York. Toronto: We're hearing about the huge cuts happening in the city of Toronto. These are real teacher positions, these are real educators that are being taken from the classroom; it's not just some accounting practice or some accounting discrepancy. It's got nothing to do with year-end budgets. These are teachers that are being taken out of kids' classrooms. In Hamilton, the Hamilton Catholic school board is issuing notices to 36 teachers just as the beginning, and the Toronto school board said they're facing a multi-million dollar shortfall.

As we have said—as MPP Sattler has said, if this government doesn't want to listen to school boards, they don't want to listen to the loyal opposition, they think that—I don't know what they think that we're here doing—but if they don't want to listen to us, how in heaven's name can this government not listen to school boards and other elected officials who are doing their best to make sure that there's a quality education for our students? How can this government not listen to parents, parents who said, "We never asked for our kids to be jammed into classrooms"? How could they not listen to educators and how could they not listen to the students? The students that are leaders of today are showing that they know what's going on and they're going to stand up and fight for their rights.

A teacher that visited me in my constituency office during last week said—and I'll pass this on. She's facing a redundancy notice and she wanted me to pass on the notice to the government to say, "Trust me when I say this is most definitely involuntary." It is a devastating job loss for her. These are not "involuntary job losses." People are losing their jobs.

We have the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association which described this budget as "regressive" and that it is moving us backwards. Liz Stuart, who is the president of the OECTA, said, "We are most certainly looking at increases in class sizes and the loss of specialized programs and supports. When we should be making investments to ensure all students are able to reach their full potential, the government's cuts will result in more students falling through the cracks."

The sad fact is, in the province of Ontario, we've seen this bad movie before. We saw it the last time the Conservatives were in power. We saw the same kinds of cuts to the classroom, we saw the same kind of chaos, and it has taken us years to recover, if at all. I mean, we've barely recovered from the kinds of cuts that Premier Harris, under his government, enacted in our public schools. It was described that under Premier Harris this crisis in education was intentional, because you can't imagine that a government would be this inept. You can't imagine that a government would be creating—

Interjection.

1620

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I know, it's hard to believe that this government would be doing this by accident. You have to really work hard to create this kind of chaos and uncertainty. So it can only be seen as intentional.

So why would a government create a crisis in education? It's a really important question to ask. During Premier Harris's time it was described as a "useful crisis" in education. Part of that usefulness was that you take a public system and you underfund it, to a point where it is actually such a setup for failure, it's a system that fails. And then what do we do? This purposely created confusion and chaos, lowering the quality of our public education—what does that result in? It opens the door for the kind of privatization that this government is so in favour of. It opens the door to more private schools, possibly American-style charter schools. That can only be the answer—because the other answer is that this government is so inept, that the Minister of Education's education file is in such tatters because they don't understand what they're doing? You can't have it both ways. Either it's intentional or it's not intentional. And if it's not intentional you're inept, and if it is intentional, what is the outcome going to be for a quality public education system?

We hear about larger class sizes. We've been hearing all the numbers. This government says that that's not going to happen. But we hear from school boards that have given us precise numbers, the kinds of numbers—35 to 42 kids in a classroom. We're hearing these numbers from the experts, from the elected officials. We're not just making those up; those are actual numbers that are being presented. That's a lot of kids in a classroom, especially kids in high school who are trying to prepare themselves for further education. Whether they're going to college, university or an apprenticeship program, they need to ensure that they have quality education to be able to get into the university or the college of their choice. This is not a time to be undervaluing or devaluing and creating poor-quality education for our students.

There's no evidence—no evidence at all—that increasing the class sizes and taking teachers out of classrooms is going to improve education. It just defies logic to actually say that. No one—no one—would believe that. The cuts that are before us in our public education system, resulting in larger class sizes, do not in any way benefit students. In fact, students will be suffering.

Our member from Timiskaming talked about the impact this is going to have on our rural and northern communities, and we know this through experience. We know that kids who are being currently bused to rural schools—kids are spending hours a day already on buses going to schools. When you make these kinds of cuts that you're doing for rural communities, we face more school closures and more children on buses to go to school when they should be in the classroom, not on a bus.

Again, it's hard to know how much more we can say about the government saying, in the most improbable way, that kids should be mandatorily taking online courses. Where is the evidence? There is absolutely no evidence

that this in fact will help their education. Forcing kids to take online classes just, again, defies logic. Never mind the fact that we talked about how deeply inequitable this is. In rural communities, access to broadband is clearly a problem. But also, given that this is a budget that doesn't mention the word "poverty" at all, and that it's a budget that's taking a billion dollars out of community and social services, it's not surprising that this move in our education system of having kids taking online courses doesn't address the inequity for low-income students. Does this government think that every student has a computer? Does this government think that all students have access to high-speed broadband in their home, Internet access? Does this government not think that kids perhaps may have to share computers with their siblings or not have one at all? So what are the options for kids that have to take four mandatory online courses if they don't have a computer, they don't have access to the Internet? What are the options? The Minister of Education said they can go to the library. Guess what? This is a budget that's slashing 50%; they're taking away 50% of the Ontario Library Service funding. So, "Go to the libraries." But, "Oh, sorry, we forgot." It's a cruel joke, almost. "You can't access the computer, you don't have the Internet, but you can go to the library. But, oh, we forgot to tell you: In fact, we're slashing the library budget." No wonder this budget is being described as cruel.

We talked a lot about the conditions of our schools. I've said this in this House a number of times: In my riding of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, there are 31 schools that have failed the lead test, so we have schools that are not just crumbling; we have schools that are potentially poisonous to our children. Thirty-one schools in my riding have failed the lead test, including Ancaster Senior and Dundas Central. We have kids that go to school and can't drink the water, but we're going to cut money from this budget. Well, they've already cut \$100 million from the money needed to fix our schools.

In my riding of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, it's about \$150 million in a capital repair backlog. It's about \$110 million in the MPP for Brantford–Brant's riding: \$110 million of repair backlogs in Brantford–Brant. My guess is that this is not something the people of the riding of Brantford–Brant expected just to lay there. I think they probably expected that this government would fix it. And in the Minister of Education's own riding of Huron–Bruce, it's \$113 million in repair backlogs. So you know what? Our schools are crumbling, our schools are in need of repair, and this is not a budget that comes anywhere close to addressing that problem.

We talked a lot about what's missing from this budget today. This morning, we had a day to acknowledge the Workers Day of Mourning. We had a wonderful, well-attended, very sombre ceremony in Hamilton. We have a long-standing tradition in Hamilton, at the Hamilton city hall, of honouring the workers who are killed and injured on the job, and we had unanimous consent this morning. But what I heard in Hamilton yesterday was talk about some of the violence in the classrooms that our educators are experiencing. No talk of that here. It's missing from

this budget. We hear stories, increasingly, of teachers that are in overcrowded classrooms and are underprepared to deal with some of the violent outbreaks in our schools. We've heard stories of teachers that, in fact, have to go to school, go to their jobs, wearing Kevlar to protect themselves. This is in the province of Ontario. This is happening right now. So we have workers that are facing these kinds of difficult, violent situations, and a budget that doesn't address it at all.

Let's be perfectly clear: The reason that we're seeing increases in these kinds of violent incidents and difficult situations for our educators in classrooms to deal with is because kids are not getting the supports that they need and the supports that they deserve from this government. There is absolutely no mention of special education funding at all in this budget. I mentioned earlier that we have a minister that has failed to explain to us what the changes to the autism support program would be. We can only expect that we're going to end up with more children that are struggling and not getting what they deserve in terms of services from this government. We have fewer EAs in classrooms. There are no mental health support services identified in this budget. This is yet another way that this government has let the kids of the province of Ontario down.

There's a lot missing, as well. I talked about the equity. It doesn't address equity at all. There is no new funding for English as a second language. There's no plan at all to deal with current rural and remote school closures, never mind more when they decide to take teachers out of classrooms. There's really nothing at all to address the problems in the school system, other than taking teachers out of classrooms. Our kids deserve so much better than this. And you know what, Madam Speaker? They know it. We've seen already the leadership that these kids are showing. We had 100,000 kids who walked out of school because they wanted to say, "Students say no." They know what's up. They know that this is their education and that they have to fight for it.

1630

It's just such a shame that young people have to fight for their education. It really shouldn't be the case. They should have a government that in fact assures them that their education is a number one priority. It's not something that they can balance the budget on the backs of—your education.

In my riding, in Dundas, I had hundreds of kids who came to my constituency office. Since then, they've been coming to my constituency office one at a time to talk about their concerns, to talk about their fears for their education. I would just say that what I have learned is that on May 8, there's going to be another province-wide student sit-in, again part of the Students Say No movement. My office in Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas will be open to these students, because do you know what? I want to hear—we want to hear, directly from students—what it is that they are fearing.

This government has really devolved to the point where all they can do is hurl insults and talk about fear-mongering, but the government doesn't want to hear what

the students of Ontario are really fearing—because they have real fears. They fear these crowded class sizes and how that's going to impact their education. They don't want to lose teachers, teachers whom they've gotten to know, teachers whom they trust. They don't want to see that happen. They are fearful about their ability to even graduate if, in fact, it's mandatory that they take four online classes and they can't do that.

We currently have students who are being herded into auditoriums and gyms because they have to re-choose courses that they've already picked. They're fearful that they're not going to be able to get the courses that they need to graduate so that they can go on to post-secondary, if that is their choice.

We just heard this morning a shocking statistic from the York region board that 45% of students won't have a full course load that will allow them to graduate because of the lack of course options. This is a shameful state of affairs in the province of Ontario, and do you know what? Our students are showing such leadership, and I have to say that I am endlessly proud of the way that they are standing up to this government.

When I went to visit Westdale high school in my riding, the students were very clear that they knew why they walked out. They were actually quite insulted that the Premier had said that they were being manipulated by their teachers or that they were being manipulated by the unions. They had a clear message for the Premier, and that was that they wanted to say, "Don't underestimate us, and don't undermine our education," because they are here to say that they are going to continue to stand up to fight for their education.

We talked a lot about post-secondary cuts. This is a government that talks about the future, talking about how we want to prepare our students for the future, and then they make cuts to post-secondary education that make it even more difficult for the kids of Ontario to access post-secondary education.

This government clearly, as we know, scrapped the free tuition program, which helped young people access post-secondary. They're adding the Student Choice Initiative, which will make it mandatory for institutions to provide an online opt-out for essential programs. They got rid of the six-month interest grace period for student loans. When students graduated and they had a six-month grace period to not accrue interest on their loans—when you graduate from a program, you don't have a job on the day you graduate. In fact, what you are doing as a new graduate is trying to find a job in your field of study, but this government is not going to give you any kind of accommodation while you try to find that job. They're going to ding you on your interest rate from the day you graduate, and really, why? Why is this government even earning interest on the backs of students' loans? It makes absolutely no sense to me. Clearly, with this budget, this is only going to get worse for the students of Ontario.

Let's move on from that. In Hamilton, we have a lot of post-secondary institutions. I'm really proud of that. We have McMaster University. We have Mohawk College.

We have Redeemer college. So there's a lot of investment in post-secondary education. In fact, in Hamilton, we recognize that and we value that. We value the importance it plays for our young people, but also for our economic development.

So these cuts to education, the threat that the government has around the strategic mandate agreements, these are not seen as positive at all in Hamilton, or in any of the educational institutions in Hamilton. These are things that they are just going to have to absorb and manage, and it's not making education better for students.

In fact, if we look at the strategic mandate specifically, Stephanie Bertolo, who is vice-president of education for the McMaster Students Union, has this to say: "Students are concerned about how the proposed funding metrics in the upcoming strategic mandate agreements will be measured and the effect they will have on universities. Universities will have little time to adapt, which may result in significant funding decreases that will inevitably have a negative impact on students' learning experiences. Students want a high-quality education and believe that the provincial government should provide adequate funding to Ontario's universities."

Again, a theme here: that students and educators, whether it's public school or post-secondary, are saying that these changes are making education worse for the students of Ontario.

Again, so much is missing from this budget. We have no mention of the non-repayable grants for students, particularly grants for Indigenous students, Black students, students with disabilities and other equity-seeking groups—no mention of grants, only mention of loans.

There is, not surprisingly, no mention of a school for Franco-Ontarians, who are looking for a university—in fact, there's no mention at all in the budget. Once again, we see that this is a government that seems to have just turned their back on Franco-Ontarians. Franco-Ontarians, university students, and students of all stripes deserve so much better than a government that is saying, quite clearly, that they don't value education. It doesn't seem to be a priority for them. But you know, you can get alcohol at 9 o'clock in the morning in the province of Ontario. That seems to be something that's important to this government.

Miss Monique Taylor: I wonder if you can get in rehab by 11. Oh, wait, we have no rehabs.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly.

Let's just move on to some other issues that are a complete lost opportunity, failure and disappointment in this budget—and that's the issue of child care. The evidence is rock solid that an investment in child care pays off fivefold in terms of economic development. It's not just an issue of access to the workforce for individuals, women, families that want to get back to work after they've had children. It's an issue of economic development.

We know it's been a long-standing problem that the cost of child care is unaffordable for almost all families in the province. It's quite well known that child care, in fact,

is one of the biggest expenses for families, right up there with housing. For children in Toronto, it's quite well known that people can pay as much as \$20,000 a year to access child care. These are costs that people can't even fathom when they're trying to get ahead and when they're trying to perhaps buy a home or pay down debt. These are huge, huge costs for people.

In the city of Hamilton, the average cost for child care is almost \$1,500 a month. That's in a city that faces significant challenges with low incomes and poverty, and these are the numbers that we're facing with child care.

So does the province of Ontario need a child care plan? Yes, absolutely. But what is announced in this budget is just half a loaf. It's not even going to come close to addressing the need that we have in our child care system.

What are the most important issues when we want to develop child care? We want to look at increasing the number of spaces. But we don't want just any spaces; we want to make sure that these are high-quality, safe spaces for our children to go to. This government, in one of their bills around red tape, doubled the number of children under the age of two that can be in home-based child care. They touted that as their child care plan. Creating spaces that are unsafe, that put our children at risk: Is that a child care plan? I say no. That is no way to develop a child care plan.

1640

Also, the issue in child care is not just the number of spaces but the affordability of spaces. This child care credit that the government puts forward will do nothing to address the fact that there are skyrocketing costs in child care. It doesn't regulate costs at all. All it does is provide a rebate. If families are able to access a space, and if they are able to afford \$20,000 a year, they may be able to get this rebate. But there's nothing about this rebate that will allow families that can't afford child care to get child care. It doesn't help those families at all.

In fact, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives did crunch the numbers, and they said that the child care tax credit that this government is touting, which says you can top out around \$6,000, the child care tax credit—when they did the numbers, 41 people in the province of Ontario would qualify for that top amount—41 people.

This child care tax credit clearly is a failure. It does nothing to help families who are in desperate need of child care and who are looking to this government for some relief and for some answers. They're going to have to wait a bit longer.

There's a whole issue that really hasn't come to the fore yet, but it's starting to. It's like that iceberg: Now people are starting to see what's below the surface and how this is going to impact the province. What we're seeing are municipalities that are now quite distressed by the direction that this government is taking. This idea of balancing the provincial budget by downloading to municipalities is right out of the playbook of Mike Harris. There is no ability for municipalities to address the download, because the province has all the cards. It really is quite a cruel jest that this government now is slowly balancing their budget by downloading costs to municipalities.

I was on the pre-budget consultation as part of the finance committee, and we toured the province. So many rural municipalities were saying to us, "Listen, we are struggling with these costs." They had infrastructure costs. They had roads that were crumbling. They were struggling to provide some of the public health things that we're talking about, that are already being cut. They were struggling to provide senior care. They were struggling to provide housing. They were looking to this government for relief. I don't think they expected that this government would now continue to download the costs.

The worst part of all is that yet again, this government has created chaos and uncertainty in our municipal level of government.

In the city of Hamilton, as probably in most municipalities, they'd just come to having finished their budget rounds. Most of us are starting to get our tax bills from our municipalities, saying what the increase is. This government has now put on the backs of local ratepayers the costs that they are downloading. Governments at the municipal level have basically been given two choices: "You can either cut services or increase taxes."

My question is, is this what the Premier meant when they said that they were the government for the people? Is this what was meant when they said, "We're going to put more money in your pocket"? Because, guess what? You may put some money in the provincial pocket, but you're taking money right out at the municipal level, with increased municipal property taxes and decreased services. Really, it is just a manipulation that people will see through. People will see. When they start to see that the services they rely on at the municipal level are gone, they will know that this is because this is a government that really thought it was a smart thing to do, to balance their books on the backs of municipal ratepayers.

The Spectator in Hamilton wrote an op-ed on this, quite specifically, and they had a few things to say about this which I think maybe would be appropriate for me to read today. Essentially, what they have to say is that this is the government—let me see if I can find that Spectator. It said, "Even though many of the details remain to be seen"—which is below the iceberg—"what's clear is that this is downloading on a historic scale. Mike Harris must be grinning ear-to-ear. In the words of" a Hamilton councillor, "They're notorious for solving their fiscal problems on the backs of municipalities."

"Here's the thing. Municipalities have nowhere near the flexibility of senior governments when it comes to paying for things. Cities," as I said, "have basically two choices: Cut services or increase taxes to pay for them. So if you didn't like that 3% hike or so this year, prepare for one much higher next year, thanks to the Premier who still claims he's got the backs of all the little guys. Sounds more like he's got his boot on the necks of the little guys. Keep your eye ... we haven't seen it all yet."

Really, the fact that municipalities are where people most directly experience services, like their roads, like their waste collection—we're going to see the kind of impact that this downloading has. While this government

continues to say that they're balancing the budget and balancing the deficit, the people are going to know where that's coming out of. It's coming out of either their pockets or cuts to their services.

We talked a little bit about what we were talking about earlier, some of the things that this government is doing that are disadvantaging the most vulnerable in our community. I just have to say again that the very fact that this government is slashing the Legal Aid Ontario budget is something that I just never expected to see from a responsible government. It's 30% fewer resources to put toward providing legal services to the most vulnerable Ontarians, like helping young moms ensure their kids are safe from an abusive spouse; like ensuring that people who are renters are not taken advantage of; or like assisting refugee claimants with their cases. This is a decision some lawyers are calling discriminatory, and one that will likely be challenged in court, which is kind of appropriate because, really, this government has made a lot of business for the lawyers. Lawyers are doing very well under this government, with all the lawsuits they'll be facing.

Listen to the Attorney General this morning. She said that the people who are looking for legal aid services can just call the ministry, or call legal aid. What a cruel jest that is. Do you think that someone in the province of Ontario who is facing an illegal eviction is going to be able to speak to the Attorney General? When they call legal aid, as she suggested, what is the answer going to be? It was a callous thing to say to the people that rely on access to justice through legal aid. It's just disgraceful.

We did also hear that the Premier thought that he would weigh in on this by calling a radio show. Apparently, he said that—

Mr. Wayne Gates: 1-800-DOUG.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, 1-800-ACCESS-TO-JUSTICE.

"If anyone needs support on legal aid, feel free to call my office. I will guarantee you that you will have legal aid." Again, this is irresponsible and disrespectful, because people rely on legal aid. This is critical to people that have difficult lives or are in a desperate situation. For the Premier to callously, flippantly say, "Just call me; I'll make sure you have legal aid," is an abdication of responsibility. It's just a level of a government that absolutely has no sense of propriety, has no sense of the rules and has absolutely no sense of some of the struggles that the people of Ontario are facing, and some of the expectations they had of this government. This government has made their lives more difficult and more challenging.

That is just one piece: access to justice, which is a cornerstone of what we call a civilized democracy. But that's where this government decided to cut.

I can't believe it, but I'm going to have to talk about gasoline stickers. This is what we're going to be talking about today.

Again, hidden in this massive budget—as I said, below the surface—we see a lot of things showing that this government doesn't really want to be accountable to the people of Ontario but, at the same time, wants to be able to, let's just say, bend the rules.

It's no surprise that the Premier loves self-promotion. It's probably, given his background, no surprise that he likes rebranding and putting stickers on things. I don't think we should be surprised by that.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. But I really think that we, as the province of Ontario—my sense of people, when I explain to them what this province is forcing people to do, which is put a sticker on all of the gas pumps describing the tax increase but omitting certain information like how much the province is taking in terms of gas tax—most people that I talk to are embarrassed. They are embarrassed. They feel that this province is being made a laughingstock. The fact that this government takes this so seriously is really shocking. They take it so seriously, in fact, that not only is the Premier forcing gas stations to put these propaganda stickers, these partisan stickers, on gas pumps in the province, but if they don't comply with the Premier's edict, they will be fined.

1650

This is a government that says they're there to support business, but this is more red tape. This is such a heavy-handed move that people of Ontario would like to think it's a joke, but it actually is quite ominous: If you don't follow what the Premier wants, you are going to be fined, and these are significant fines. There are plans that you can punish businesses that refuse to go along with this with fines of up to \$10,000 a day. So you're going to be fined \$10,000 a day because you think that it's wrong to have to put government-sponsored propaganda on a piece of equipment that belongs to your business.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has a few things to say about this. It's a government that has already been taken to court by businesses—and, as I said, the lawyers are doing pretty well in this province, and this is something that, again, is most likely to be challenged in court. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association have this to say about the Premier's stickers. I know that we can't describe someone—a very witty MPP said we're not allowed to call this something, but it certainly is a form of heavy-handed authoritarian government. We can't call it a dictatorship, but we could call it a sticktatorship, I think. I think that would be appropriate for this move. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, even though it's not funny, actually said, "Touted as a transparency measure, the requirement is, in fact, a way of forcing private companies to peddle government propaganda. It is compelled speech and it goes against the fundamental protection provided for freedom of expression in our Constitution. We need to fight it."

The Premier and this government thinks that these rules, the rules of democracy—things like our "notwithstanding" clause in our Constitution—are just bothersome things in the way. People of Ontario and of Canada stand by these institutions that ensure that we have democratic processes here. And it's not just the Canadian Civil Liberties Association that says, in fact, that this is a contravention of our freedom of expression. Funny enough, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has something to say

about these stickers that are being forced upon the businesses of Ontario: “Chamber president Rocco Rossi says the group’s members—some of whom are gas station operators—believe the stickers violate their rights and freedoms.”

So Rocco Rossi and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association agree on this stickergate thing. He went on to say that he “calls the fines”—\$10,000 a day—“‘out-sized’ and the program an example of unnecessary red tape on business.”

Clearly, this is a government that doesn’t mind red tape sometimes. I would like to say that this is ludicrous, but it’s very serious. The implications of this are very, very serious.

In the time I have left, Madam Speaker, I would just like to talk a little bit about something that is in the current budget—again, the frightening pieces that are below the surface of this dangerous iceberg—and that is schedule 17. Schedule 17 deals with the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act, and that really is buried in this year’s budget. What this is intended to do is limit the Ontario government’s liability. Yet again, we see a government that likes to talk a big game, but they do not want to be held accountable. When people ask, “Where did this come from? Who asked for this to be put in here, for protections to be put in here so that the government could limit its liability?”—it was clear that the Premier himself said that this move was designed to prevent groups from launching lawsuits against the government.

The Premier said—let me see if I can find his quote. The Premier has been quoted confirming that the new act was designed to limit access to justice for those critical of the government. Sound familiar? This is his quote: “You even look sideways, and some special interest groups are out there trying to sue you, you know. It’s ridiculous. I’ve never seen anything like it. It’s tying up the courts. I want to clear up the courts until real lawsuits can go through, for real people, for things that really matter. There’s a lot of frivolous nonsense going on right now in the courts.”

My question would be, does that frivolous lawsuit have something to do with something like spending a minimum of \$30 million in court to fight our federal government? There’s a frivolous lawsuit. How about all the costs and losses we’re facing from the cancellation of our cap-and-trade system? There are some frivolous lawsuits. But that’s not what the Premier wants to talk about. It’s clear that he has no issue with frivolous lawsuits when he’s waging them, but he wants to make sure that this government—and himself, probably, in particular—is protected from anybody who has any action against the crown. That happens very often. People should have access to that right.

One of the most frightening parts of all of this is the very fact that the government keeps claiming to be all about transparency but it is introducing these backdoor changes in an effort to be beyond the reach of citizens and the court. The Crown Liability and Proceedings Act repeals the Proceedings Against the Crown Act and replaces it with the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act.

The new act contains broad and sweeping restrictions to how and when the government can be sued. It also retroactively removes the crown’s liability in various civil proceedings.

Under section 9 of the schedule, you can’t sue the crown, as well as any minister or ministry official, for a tort claim committed by a crown agency; a corporation; a transfer payment recipient, which would be a hospital or a university; or an independent contractor. These are serious limitations on people’s access to justice. The fact that these are retroactive—there’s currently a crown ward case before the courts. Does this mean that the government is trying to protect itself from that accountability as well?

We have a quote from Toronto human rights and refugee lawyer Kevin Wiener, who said, “Perhaps the most significant element of the new legislation ... is that it eliminates any potential financial liability in most cases where someone is harmed by government policy or regulatory decisions made in ‘good faith.’

“What it means is that the people who exercise power over you can exercise that power negligently and cause you damage and no one will have to pay.”

You know that expression, “With great power comes great responsibility”? Clearly this is a government that is saying, “With great power should come absolutely no responsibility.” This is a very, very serious schedule, and we’ll be talking more about it. I think the people of Ontario are just beginning to see what is below the iceberg of this budget and how this government is in fact not looking after the people of Ontario; they’re looking after themselves. This is a budget that clearly telegraphs to the people of Ontario the need to pay close attention to the decisions that this government is making. People didn’t vote for these kinds of changes, and they deserve so much more than a government that takes action against them.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I’m proud to speak in support of Bill 100, the Protecting What Matters Most Act, introduced by the Minister of Finance. The 2019 Ontario budget is a plan that protects what matters most, including our public education system. Madam Speaker, I’m very proud of the changes we’re making to strengthen our education system.

I’d like to give the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas some figures that she should listen to. In the last year under the Liberals, the education budget was \$27.3 billion. This year, it’s \$29.8 billion. That’s an increase of 9%. On Friday we announced another \$24.7 million in grants for students’ needs, including an increase of more than \$4 million in the Peel District School Board. Moving forward, a new ministry task force on school boards will ensure that this funding is focused on the needs of the students.

A landmark \$1.6-billion investment in job protection will ensure that not one single teacher will lose their job. Another \$1.4-billion investment in school renewal this year will allow critical repairs and improvements to provide a safe environment in learning. Over the next decade,

we will invest almost \$13 billion in renewal and build new schools in high-growth areas.

Our new curriculum will prepare students for work with important skills, including skilled trades, coding, and basic economic and financial literacy.

1700

Speaker, these changes are based on over 72,000 submissions we received in the largest consultation on education in Ontario's history. They will improve our education system in a responsible and measured way.

I urge all of you to support this bill.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting to listen to my colleague talk about the changes that are coming to our public health system. There was a line in the budget forewarning us that cuts were coming to our public health system, but now it has become clearer. We have 35 public health units throughout Ontario that will be brought down to 10.

It doesn't matter how much you search; there is no body of evidence that supports regionalization of our public health units. Our public health units exist for health promotion and disease prevention, to keep us healthy, and doing this on a regional basis—if you look at us, we live in northern Ontario, and to have one public health unit for all of northeastern Ontario will be almost impossible. The needs of the people of Kashechewan, the needs of the people of Gogama, the needs of the people of Sault Ste. Marie or Wawa—it is all very different because our opportunity for health is directly linked to our lived environment.

The minister says they should focus on stuff like vaccinations, water safety, restaurant and daycare supervision. Yes, but how do we have smoke-free in restaurants? We had good people doing advocacy in public health units that convinced one city to try. Remember? They tried it in Toronto. Then they went back to smoking again in bars and restaurants. Then they came back, and then another public health unit got it in another community. Now we have it province-wide. The same thing happened with tanning beds. The same thing happened with calorie labelling.

They are the people who identify steps that you can take to keep people healthy. By regionalizing it, by cutting their budgets, the lives of Ontarians will suffer.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I'm glad to rise in the House today to talk about and respond to the comments from the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. I was kind of looking forward to this hour-long session just to hear exactly what the opposition's plan would be as an alternative to what we're doing, and all I can say is, we heard nothing. We had personal attacks, we had criticisms of individuals and people and trying to tear apart what we're trying to do in the province of Ontario, but there was actually nothing substantively spoken against what we're hoping to do in the budget. There were absolutely no ideas.

There was absolutely no vision for the future of what Ontario could be.

We all know that after 15 years of the former government, we are another \$210 billion in debt. That works out to about \$38.3 million a day for 15 years of spending that we were not taking in. We knew we needed to do something different, and I think the opposition completely agrees with that sentiment, too. There was money spent on programs and everything else, but no money spent that actually built anything for the province of Ontario. So here we are today, trying to get our financial house back in order.

The one thing I heard consistently while I was on the campaign trail last year was that we were living in an unsustainable, unaffordable province—that people couldn't find housing, that people couldn't find jobs and that they couldn't afford to pay their taxes. The only alternative that we've been offered from the members beside me here is to tax more and spend more. That's their only thought about this problem that we're in.

Madam Speaker, I'm hoping that the member will use her last couple of minutes to wrap up and tell us some useful information about what we can do to get Ontario back on track.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Last week, during constituency week, I held a post-budget town hall in the community of Byron in London West. I want to give a shout-out to someone who attended the town hall, Elsbeth Dodman, who had been on the youth advisory committee for the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. We talked about the title of the government's budget, Protecting What Matters Most, and then, when we talked about what was actually in the budget, Elsbeth suggested that the actual title of this document should be: "Here for a good time, not a long time."

Speaker, I have to say, I felt this was particularly apt, because not only is this a government that is clearly not going to be re-elected for a second term, but more ominously, the measures that are included in this budget are endangering all of us. They are endangering people in this province of Ontario. The cuts to public health are going to be devastating for many communities across the province, particularly in Toronto, as we know.

We are at a moment in our world when we are on the brink of climate catastrophe. We are seeing historic flooding all over in Ontario, with states of emergency being declared in Ontario and Quebec. What does this government do? They cut flood management programs that are delivered by conservation authorities. They cut plans to plant trees, which are critical to prevent flooding. They cut forest fires—we are also hearing about other changes that are going to be potentially deadly for some of the most vulnerable people in our province.

Speaker, this is a budget that does nothing to protect what really matters to the people of this province.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Here's an idea for the member from Brantford—Brant: Let's start by not punishing the most vulnerable people in the province of Ontario. Let's start by having a plan that gives hope, a plan for the vision of the people of Ontario, not a plan that says that everybody has to tighten their belt, that everybody has to face austerity—except for the friends and connections of this government. There's an idea.

Here's an idea: You listen to the young people of Ontario, who are terrified about our climate. We have 12 years to get this on track—12 years. Here's an idea: When we're facing this kind of calamitous change, don't cut the programs to the environment. Don't cut tree planting. Do not put kids' futures in peril. There's an idea.

How about we don't cut public health? How about you actually address health care, the hallway medicine you are talking about fixing? How about you actually do it by not cutting the health care budget for public health? How about you do it by ensuring what people are most concerned about: that this continues to be a not-for-profit system? How about you provide some reassurances to people that are fearful that you are now going to gut their public health care system? How about you step up and provide real answers to those people?

And finally, here's what I have to say. Here's an idea: How about you have a government that is prepared to stand up and be accountable? How about you have a government that doesn't hide behind legislation that prevents them from being accountable? How about you make sure that when you say you are here for small businesses, you don't impose all kinds of penalties on the very people that you purport to help?

There are a few ideas. But more than anything, why don't you be a government that provides hope for the people of Ontario, not just cuts and privatization?

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 100, the government's bill to implement the budget. Madam Speaker, it's a large, omnibus bill with 61 schedules, and my time is limited. So I'm going to focus my remarks today on the issue of prevention.

There's a famous expression that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and after reading Bill 100, I think the government needs to be reminded of this. This budget may be penny-wise for the government, but it's pound foolish when it comes to protecting the people and places we love in Ontario.

1710

I'm disappointed that this budget focuses so much on clickbait—signs, slogans, alcohol and gambling—while ignoring the big, collective, long-term issues that we face. It's as if the government wants to tease people with some shreds of immediate gratification and individual gain while subjecting us all to collective, long-term pain. The budget axe is focused on cutting those programs that prevent problems in the future—and will actually therefore cost us more in the future.

First, I just want to take a moment to say that my heart goes out to everyone experiencing flooding in the Ottawa

region, the Muskoka region, the Kashechewan First Nation and all parts of Canada. This is just more evidence that climate change is here and it's getting worse. I want to thank the emergency responders and volunteers helping people deal with the flooding.

If you think about it, Madam Speaker, the floods and storms that we're experiencing right now, that at one time were thought of as once-in-a-lifetime events, are increasingly happening every few years. Yet as the spring flood season kicked off, we learned that funding for conservation authority programs to prevent flooding had been cut in half. We learned that the tree-planting program, which helps combat climate change and helps prevent flooding, was eliminated. Obviously, the new licence plates in Ontario do not apply to trees.

I was particularly surprised about this cut to the tree program because members opposite unanimously supported a motion to expand the program to plant 150 million trees in our province to celebrate our country's 150th anniversary. I'm alarmed that the members opposite changed their tune on this program so quickly. They once stood behind tree planting; today they don't.

I want them to keep in mind that planting trees through this program provides \$82 million a year in ecological services to the province of Ontario. No government can consider itself fiscally responsible if it's going to pull the plug on disaster preparedness and prevention, especially as the climate crisis accelerates.

Annual liabilities across the country from Canada's disaster relief fund have grown from, on average, \$100 million a year to now close to \$2 billion a year. We need to prevent these tragedies from happening in the first place, yet this budget cuts \$514 million from the two ministries most responsible for protecting our environment and the places that we love.

At a time when we know that a changing climate is leading to additional and new disease outbreaks and will likely lead to further public health challenges, this budget cuts funding for public health, which plays such an essential role in preventing illness and promoting health. It's strange, frankly, for a government that says it's committed to ending hallway medicine, to cut the public health agencies that are keeping us healthy in the first place so we don't need to go to a hospital.

A big part of prevention is taking care of our most vulnerable children, yet this budget cuts a billion dollars from programs for our most vulnerable youth. It increases class sizes for people in middle schools and high schools. It cuts funding for libraries, which are so important to building the long-term vibrancy of our communities. It cuts access to justice for our most vulnerable citizens. In short, it's back-loading problems onto future governments, onto the backs of our children and grandchildren, and we should be honest with the people of Ontario. This wouldn't have been needed if they had had the courage to cancel the government's unfair hydro program, a program that's costing us around \$3 billion a year: \$3 billion that could have been spent on preventing problems, \$3 billion that could be spent on health care and education and other

public services instead of on a program that primarily benefits the wealthiest in our province.

Madam Speaker, I know we can do better, and I would argue we must do better, for present and future generations.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member from Guelph for his very passionate speech and his remarks. I can tell you, during the constituency week last week I had an opportunity to meet with many of my constituents, local businesses and families, and to attend events. One thing we heard over and over was my constituents thanking the government in terms of how responsible and thoughtful this budget was and really protecting what matters the most, Madam Speaker.

The other thing that we've heard loud and clear, not just during the campaign but since—and what's being addressed in this budget, is the deficit that we inherited from the previous Liberal government, the debt that the previous Liberal government managed to rack up over their previous 15 years' worth of mandate. Any time you're spending \$40 million more than what you're bringing in in a day—no family can sustain their home budget, no business can operate under those circumstances, and Ontarians understand that. Part of the reason why we received a strong mandate last June was to address some of those very issues.

I can tell you that my constituents in my riding of Milton especially are thrilled that we're addressing those issues—not only addressing them, but addressing them in a very responsible way. Madam Speaker, you know any time when parents find out that not only they but their kids are also born with approximately \$25,000 worth of debt on their backs—unless we do something right now, it will be our future generations that will be burdened with it.

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

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank the member for Guelph for, in a five-minute period of time, mentioning all the things that were wrong with the Protecting What Matters Most budget, and also the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for going thoroughly through it and probably not getting to all the things that are wrong.

I think the issue, Speaker, is that its title is Protecting What Matters Most and I think what matters most to the opposition is different than what matters most to the government. What matters most to us is health care, our people, long-term care, and it's about education. What matters most to them seems to be tailgate parties, licence plates and forcing people to put stickers on gas stations.

The member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas talked about the Day of Mourning. Although it's the day after the Day of Mourning, we're all wearing pins for it. It's a good opportunity to remind everybody that the Day of Mourning came from Sudbury. It was an idea that union activists had in Sudbury: mourn for the dead; fight for the living. It was such a good idea that it spread around the world. We stopped counting after about 100 countries, but

all around the world they celebrate this. It's important and it speaks to our values as New Democrats. It speaks to our values in Sudbury that we care about people.

It's not enough to mourn for the dead. You've got to fight for the living, because if you don't remember how people got killed, you forget about stuff like Walkerton. We made cuts in the past with the previous Harris government and we killed seven people in Walkerton. I know they say it's fearmongering. It's scary as hell when you kill seven people. We should be embarrassed about it.

We talk about public health. You're going to cut public health from 35 to 10. You're going to leave people just abandoned and stranded for that. In your bill, you also talk about dental care for the poorest seniors. You have to make less than \$19,300. You're going to get dental care, but you're going to have to go to public health to get it. Except you're cutting public health down to 10, so how are they going to find it?

Speaker, our values are different. We're protecting what matters most to the rest of Ontario.

1720

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: I have been listening to some of the speeches, and it really is quite remarkable. I think the opposition have forgotten—or they've chosen to forget—that we are the most indebted sub-sovereign government in the world. Do we, as a result of the incredible spending that we got opposite, have the best education system in the world? No. Can we? Yes. That's what this budget leads us in the direction of.

We are the most indebted people in the world. Do we have the best health care system? No. Can we? Yes, because we're going in that direction.

But what the opposition want to do, their only solution—they have no other solutions other than raising taxes. We hear from the member from the Green Party that he has magically found a way to make \$2 billion and solve every problem in the world: Kill the fair hydro, raise people's hydro rates by enormous amounts, and we'll solve all the problems. That's just not the way it's going to work.

You listen to the members opposite; they're not enthusiastic about anything. The whole world is coming to an end. But I'll tell you who it is coming to an end for: parents who work very hard and have to send their kids to daycare and can't afford it; parents who have to send their kids to extra tutoring and can't afford it; parents who have to spend money to get to work on public transportation and transit systems that aren't there for them—and all of this in the context of being one of the poorest sub-sovereign governments and people in the entire world. That's what should frighten the people opposite.

When you talk about being able to pay for things going forward and investing in the future, that's what should frighten you—the fact that we are so poor because of decisions that governments have made, supported by the members opposite. That's what should frighten you.

Finally, we have a government that has said, "Enough." We're going to bring things back into balance so that we

can actually pay for what matters most today and tomorrow.

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

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I want to remind the government that they also gave big tax cuts in this budget, and I think that their loss of revenue also comes from not wanting to actually raise revenues.

I want to focus on two little points. I think in this budget, it's important to read the details, and that's what I do. I read every schedule that is attached.

Schedule 11 and schedule 17: I spoke this morning about schedule 17 and the danger for our democracy having a government that prevents people from accessing compensation when the government does something wrong. That's against the rule of law. I hope that the government will review this because this is dangerous not only for now but for the future.

I want to speak just briefly on schedule 11, which is the abolition of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. In my practice, I represented many victims of crime who needed a hearing to be heard, and this will prevent them from having a hearing. So be careful of not recognizing the need of people to be heard and to be validated.

The other part I want to say is that there are—I reviewed all the decisions that are over \$5,000 for pain and suffering. An 82-year-old woman needed more than \$5,000 in pain and suffering because there was no other way of compensating her loss. Finally, the last person was a man who had been doused in gasoline before being set on fire, and they gave him \$10,000 for pain and suffering. I don't think \$5,000 would do justice to this person.

This government should be about doing justice for people. It's important not to forget that some people actually need to be compensated and need to be heard. I hope that you will consider going back to the board and reviewing schedule 11 and schedule 17. I think those are dangerous pieces of legislation, and I hope that you will review them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all the members for participating in the debate. I know that the members from Milton and Markham–Stouffville talked a lot about fiscal responsibility and the need to address Ontario's budget deficit. I agree with them; we do need to address the deficit. I want our good, hard-earned tax dollars to fund good public services, to have the money to invest in the things that matter to people and their communities.

But I want to remind the government of what the member from Ottawa–Vanier just reminded us: in the fall economic statement, a very large tax cut to the wealthiest people in our society. I want to remind that that took money away from programs like health care, like education, like access to justice.

I want to remind the members opposite that when they were in opposition, they spoke about how fiscally irresponsible the Fair Hydro Plan is. You know what? We

can provide some support for low-income individuals, people with modest to middle incomes, rural and remote communities, but why are we taking 25% off the electricity bills of the wealthiest people in our province? They're the ones who benefit the most from this plan. That is money that the Financial Accountability Office says—between \$40 billion and \$90 billion over the next two decades—can go to getting our fiscal house in order while, at the same time, funding good, public services.

I want to thank the member from Sudbury for reminding us that budgets are about priorities. It's about what matters. It talks about your values. My values are to invest in protecting the people and places I love in this province—not on tailgate parties, not on booze, not on gambling. That is what we need to think about as we vote on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on a point of order.

Hon. Steve Clark: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the notice date for ballot item 65 of private members' business.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Mr. Clark is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Steve Clark: I move that the notice for ballot 65, standing in the name of Ms. Sattler, be waived.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS MOST ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2019

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

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 100, Budget Measures, and I'll mention I'm yielding part of my time to the member from Markham–Unionville.

As we know in this House, this past April 11 marked the Doug Ford government's first budget. It's very important to realize that looming over this process is not only a large structural deficit in the last fiscal year of the previous government, leaving behind a \$15-billion deficit after 15 years of overspending, but they're also leaving behind a massive public debt of more than a third of a trillion dollars. Speaker, that's 3-4-7 with nine zeros behind it. So at \$347 billion, Ontario—and we just heard this mentioned—is the most indebted subnational government anywhere in the world.

The member from Guelph, who just spoke, relayed several homilies. I always recall my grandmother indicating to me when I was at a very young age, “Neither a borrower nor a lender be.” In modern business and modern governments that could be unrealistic, but I just dread the thought if my grandmother’s advice was to come to fruition.

This \$347 billion has to be paid back. It is owed. You have to pay back your debts. Nobody here has any idea how to pay back \$347 billion. Interest payments alone—\$13.3 billion last year. As we know, it’s the fourth-largest item in this 2019 budget, only after health care, education and social services. Again, that’s money not going to our hospitals, our schools, our vital infrastructure.

Now, Speaker, interest rates began to rise in 2017-18 and there is an increasing risk the government will have considerably less flexibility in coming years to foot the bill for some of these key services.

1730

Some will know—I think it was last Wednesday, April 24—the Bank of Canada held its overnight rate at 1.7%. There was a feeling it could increase. They indicated the global economy has slowed; the Canadian economy has slowed. Oil prices are not good—trade policy problems. Essentially, in the coming budget year there will be five more announcements from the Bank of Canada. Which way it goes is dependent on the US economy, of course; dependent on inflation; dependent on our nation’s gross domestic product; and with respect to where the housing market may be going.

The Bank of Canada in the recent past has raised its key lending rate five times between April 1, 2017, and October 24, 2018. When our province refinances debt at a higher interest rate than it paid on that maturing debt—it’s a bit of a no-brainer—then the average interest expense will rise. This means more money going towards interest expense; therefore, add that to the increasing annual deficit and, ultimately, the debt.

I think, as we all know—some people may not realize it—the debt is nothing more than accumulated deficits over the years. In 2018, both Moody’s and Fitch credit rating agencies revised their rating outlook for Ontario’s debt from stable to negative, reflecting their assessment of increased credit risk. While Ontario’s credit rating—this is different from the credit outlook—remains unchanged, the four main credit rating agencies cited a number of concerns regarding Ontario’s credit outlook: again, the high and rising debt burden, the projection of ongoing deficits—we’re going to see deficits for the next five years in this budget—and that ever-present risk of an economic downturn. Anyone who’s spent any time studying economics would know that economies go in cycles.

Very clearly, Ontario’s deficit and debt represent lost opportunity for all of us in Ontario. It’s a fiscal albatross around the neck of those coming along in the future, and I consider it a very worrisome situation that leaves us extremely vulnerable to what I consider that inevitable economic downturn.

Speaker, the budget for fiscal year 2019-20—I think this bears repeating. We are doing our best in this massive

document to restore accountability, restore sustainability and restore trust in Ontario’s finances. Through the Report of the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry, we learned the previous government left Ontario a deficit of \$15 billion, as I mentioned. The report uncovered how the previous government continually and systemically, almost insidiously, abused our collective trust, wasted resources and recklessly was spending the province to the brink of a fiscal cliff.

The mess that we’ve inherited cannot be overstated. All of us are now seeing the results of 15 years of this mismanagement that is unsustainable, is downright irresponsible, and that has put our children at risk.

Post-budget, I know there were an awful lot of people concerned about government spending—the spending announcements that we’ve made, given the deficit and the debt—and, of course, there are people concerned about cuts. That’s the nature of budgets. That’s the nature of fiscal planning. Essentially, that’s the nature of economics. Economics, in my definition, boils down to the allocation of scarce resources.

Speaker, if we fail to act, if we don’t get spending under control, we won’t be able to protect the public services that I summarized. It does require making some unpopular decisions, even though the budgets for key ministries like health and education are going up, not down, in spite of what we’re hearing from the opposition and in spite of what we may be reading in some of the media. I can attest from 23 years in this Legislature. I have never seen a health budget go down. I have never seen an education budget go down. It doesn’t happen.

People expect us to protect the important stuff. They want us to continue to strengthen education, and obviously, public health care; to protect the social services for those who are the most vulnerable. But it has to be done in a thoughtful, measured, forward-looking plan.

We have set goals in this document, obviously: to restore fiscal balance in a responsible way, the budget will be balanced in five years; to protect what matters most, as I mentioned; and to make Ontario open for business, open for jobs. For example, there’s no new taxes, there’s no tax increases. This can be done. That’s doable. Again, in my 23-year career, I have never voted for a tax increase. I’ve never voted for a new tax.

I don’t have much time left at all. I have a document here that summarizes \$26 billion in much-needed tax relief for individuals, families, businesses:

- \$3 billion in tax increases that were planned by the Liberals are not going to happen under this present government;

- we canceled the cap-and-trade carbon tax and our Liberal Prime Minister is bringing one in. That’s going to cost us another \$10 billion;

- \$2 billion is the price tag for LIFT, the Low-income Individuals and Families Tax Credit;

- helping families through the Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses tax credit—that’s a \$2-billion expenditure;

- canceling \$150 million in fee increases for hunting and fishing licences, registration licences for vehicles;

—introducing the Ontario Job Creation Investment Incentive, something I hear the opposition really not talking much about, resulting in almost \$4 billion in corporate income tax relief and delivering early on our government's commitment to cut corporate taxes. That creates jobs. That boosts industry; and

—increased funding of almost \$4 billion for electricity tax relief.

All of this is being done with no new taxes and without jacking up taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: First and foremost, Madam Speaker, I would like to echo the member for Haldimand–Norfolk and thank our Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board, along with all the Ontarians who we consulted, who helped to produce the 2019 budget—a job well done.

I'm proud to stand behind the budget, which I believe delivers what our province desperately needs to thrive and grow. We're ensuring that balancing the budget is not an end in itself, but rather a necessity in order to protect what matters most: our health care, education and other key public services.

In addition to balancing the budget and protecting our critical public services, we will be bringing \$26 billion in relief to individuals, families and business over the next six years without raising taxes. Our plan restores trust and sustainability in our province's finances for generations to come while bringing real relief to families and businesses today.

As a father with two children in public school, the part of this budget that excites me most is funding increases into the education system. We are investing record amounts in capital funding into our education system, which will be used toward fixing our crumbling schools.

We are proposing changes to class sizes that would better align Ontario with other jurisdictions across Canada. From kindergarten to grade 3, there will be no changes.

Students in grade 4 to grade 8 will see a minimum average increase of one student per classroom. Secondary students will see an average class size of 28 students. This change will align Ontario with other jurisdictions in Canada.

1740

This proposed change will be phased in over four years. The government is currently consulting with our education labour partners on the proposed change to class sizes. This consultation will continue until May 31, 2019. The ministry has reflected the proposed change in the GSN so that school boards are able to prepare their budgets for the upcoming school year. Once the class size consultation has concluded, the government will move forward on next steps, including confirming potential changes to regulations in time for the 2019-20 school year.

Some of the critiques we have been hearing over and over from the opposition are that large classrooms will lead to lower test scores and worsen the quality of

education. I wonder how much of this statement is based on facts versus fiction. If we simply look at the data provided by the Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA, which is an international assessment that's also adopted by Statistics Canada, Ontario mathematics scores fell below the national and international average in the last 15 years. In 2003, Ontario's score in PISA was 530 and ranked number 10. In 2015, in the report released in December 2018, Ontario's score was 509. We fell from 530 to 509. In the rankings in 2003, it was 10th; now it's 17th. More important than this, the class cap in 2003 was 24; now it's 22.

In addition, some of the high-scoring national and international jurisdictions reveal some important data: Number-one ranked Singapore—class size, 33; Hong Kong—class size, 27; number three, Quebec—32; Macau, China—27.7; Japan, ranked number six—28.6; Korea, ranked number eight—28.6; British Columbia, which is our west coast—30; Alberta, number 14—no cap, but targeted at 27; Ontario—22, but we ranked 17th.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, also commissioned a report on education in member and non-member states alike that showed that although a heavy emphasis is placed on smaller classroom sizes, it does not itself determine higher scores.

I'd like to read a passage found in the Education Indicators in Focus report: "Reducing class size is not, on its own, a sufficient policy lever to improve the performance of education systems, and is a less efficient measure than increasing the quality of teaching." In fact, many jurisdictions experienced a decline in student performance as they decreased class sizes. Ontario is one of the examples. So the rhetoric we have been hearing from the opposition just goes to show that they haven't considered the facts, numbers and data when they make such bold assertions.

Let's talk about the teacher-student ratio. Our government is protecting what matters most by delivering an education system that puts student achievement at the centre of everything we do. Sometimes we argue that class sizes are already too large; however, again, let's look at some data. Within the 72 publicly funded school boards in this province, there are more than 628,000 students enrolled in secondary schools and around 39,000 teachers. This ratio works out to be approximately a 1-to-16 teacher-to-student ratio. The fact of the matter is that our classes are not large and are actually much smaller compared to other provinces in this country and in other jurisdictions globally. We also understand that some teachers may feel worried that our recent announcement may lead to their involuntary dismissal. However, the modernization of our education sector is being achieved in a way which will not result in teachers losing their jobs.

Lately I had a conversation with a surplus teacher. The teacher told me that the reason why the teacher was surplus was because of resignations, requests of leave, enrolment of students and also collective agreements—nothing to do with the reformation of education, nor the budget.

We are investing a landmark \$1.6 billion in teacher job protection. This funding will make sure not a single teacher will lose their job as a result of the newly proposed changes to class sizes or e-learning.

Through the budget, we recently announced that we are investing more in education in 2019 and 2020 than the previous government committed for 2018 and 2019. We are building on our plan, Education That Works For You, and introducing new measures that will help make sure Ontario students are leaders in education once again. We are pleased to say that we are continuing to invest in school repair and maintenance. We are increasing funding for special education and Indigenous and French-language funding. Unlike the previous government, we believe success and appropriateness of programs are determined by outcomes.

Speaker, we were elected on a mandate of bringing change and redirecting the path that the province was previously going down. Ontario used to be the economic driving force of this country, but after years of mismanagement, we treaded further from this historical reality. Now we can reverse this trend. The 2019 budget is a step in the right direction, and the people of Ontario know this. Above all else, the 2019 budget will give us a place to stand, give us a place to grow and call this land Ontario.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm quite honoured to stand and participate in this debate, especially while we're talking about the impact of the change that's coming with this budget bill. In order for me to speak to this, I'm just going to outline three things that happened to me during our constituency week.

First, I had an opportunity to spend some time with my colleague from Waterloo, MPP Catherine Fife, at an event called Leading Women, Leading Girls. It was really fascinating to be there, because the funding for that program had been cut in this budget. She still continued with the program, and I had an opportunity to watch mothers who had nominated their daughters. I watched Indigenous women leaders in the Waterloo region who were receiving awards and being recognized for the work that they did in the community, but this budget will not allow that to continue. We will keep working to find ways to recognize these women.

But it did remind me that in my time exploring the budget, I also noticed that pay equity was being lost in this budget. Now women thinking about entering into the job market have to do so knowing that they will not be making as much as the men who are doing the same work. The only way that we can make the change to make up for—the government enjoys talking about the last 15 years under the Liberals; the only way to make up for that is to legislate that change. We can't rely on people to just change their mind, because that didn't work with the Liberals. It certainly won't work with them. That was one of the things that was fascinating about the change.

The other thing that I'd love to speak about is strategies for Black youth in particular. I was at a special education

voices conference, and Black youth were asking for a job strategy. So my question to the government is whether or not these changes will be found somewhere in the next rendition of this budget.

1750

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

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I'd like to make some comments on the member from Haldimand–Norfolk's statements before. You mentioned about the \$347-billion debt and the former government spending \$47 million a day more than we were taking in. I had the opportunity to speak at the Shriners and Knights of Columbus evening when I was home for the constit break. I had a gentleman come up to me after and he said, "We need to remember that there's a difference between needs and wants, and what we need is strong education and a strong health care system." That's what budget 2019 focuses on, making sure that these systems remain sustainable.

To the member from Markham–Unionville: Thank you for the musical finale. You also talked about class sizes. Having been a former Georgian College faculty member—our class sizes were 52 students. My daughters recently completed their first year at U of T, and they had class sizes as high as 1,600 students. Are we creating independence and confidence in our students in saying that 28 is too many? No, because 52 will be a shot when they walk in to that—or 1,600.

I was hoping to have the opportunity to speak this afternoon about Bill 100 and talk about the skilled trades portion of it, as I have been an advocate for skilled trades for men and women in Ontario. As a daughter, sister and granddaughter to tradespeople, a college educator and now a representative for businesses that rely on the trades, I've seen how these careers can uplift individuals, their families and the communities they serve. I am proud to belong to a government that acknowledges the importance of tradespeople in our economy and the growing demand for their work and that is dedicated to supporting their needs. Budget 2019, Protecting What Matters Most, builds upon this commitment by proposing an improved apprenticeship and skilled trades system that is modern and empowering to our workers. We want to become the economic engine of Canada once again, and Ontario must invest in these men and women who can spark growth in this province.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to talk really quick on the environment. Arbor Day was this week and I had the privilege of planting some trees. But then I got a text that said that your government cut the program for planting trees in the province of Ontario. And when did you do it? You did it on Arbor Day, the very day that every community around the province is planting trees to save our environment. Climate change is real. I'd like to know who your PR guy is. I don't know who would ever do that.

Then I've had the privilege of sitting here for five hours listening to this debate. You talked about education. There are cuts in education, and there will be job loss.

Public health care: Health care is going to be privatized, with P3s.

Cutting the public health—think about this. Didn't you guys learn anything from Walkerton?

Interjection: Apparently not.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Nothing. Are you kidding me?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Through the Chair, please.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, I'm telling the truth. It happened. Seven people died there. And today, as I'm standing up here, they're still suffering from drinking that water—still, all these years later.

You're cutting legal aid by 30%. What are we gonna do?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I just would remind the member to direct your comments through the Chair, please. Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Oh, I'm sorry.

Legal aid: What are you going to do there, dial 1-800-DOUG-FORD to get assistance?

The 407: I've listened to all you guys all day today talk about how we're in debt. Well, guess what? You decided to balance your budget, under Harris, by selling off the 407 for \$1.7 billion. Do you know what it's worth today, my friends? Thirty billion dollars. And you know what? You have to take out—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: It would be nice if I could hear myself talk, but if you guys want to heckle, go ahead. Because it's the truth.

Do you know what you've got to do now to drive down the 407 in the province of Ontario, Madam Speaker? You have got to take out a mortgage so you can afford to drive on that highway that we used to own.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: I've been attentive to the comments by my friend regarding the way our government does business. What I'm very excited about in Bill 100 is specifically the provisions on crown liability that came up earlier today during the debate and earlier in question period. Specifically, I want to clarify a piece of misinformation that's going around the House that is really worth focusing on.

There's a suggestion by the independent members and some of the members of the opposition that this government is looking to limit liability as can be broached by the government, but it appears to me that no one has actually bothered to read the actual section that speaks to this issue. The section here is section 9 of schedule 17, and it says:

“The crown is not liable for torts committed by,

“(a) crown agencies;

“(b) crown corporations;

“(c) transfer payment recipients; or

“(d) independent contractors providing services to the crown...”

The whole point is that, here, the government is coming and saying, “Look, if there's someone else responsible for this wrong, such as a crown agency, a crown corporation, typically an institution, an entity that is not judgment-proof, an entity that is clearly able to satisfy any wrong that it has done, then leave the government alone, leave the taxpayer alone and go after the crown agency instead of embroiling this government in needless litigation, making it spend money in legal fees, creating uncertainty for the taxpayer.”

So when my friend from Ottawa–Vanier suggested this morning that there's no recourse against the crown, no, that is incorrect. There's recourse against the crown when the crown is liable, but there's no recourse against the crown when other people are liable, and there's no exposure to taxpayers when the crown has nothing to do with the tort committed.

I'm proud to support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the comments from various members, if I can say that on behalf of the member from Markham–Unionville.

There's no question we've all been getting phone calls and emails. People are unhappy that we're not balancing the books right away. They're unhappy with some of the reductions in spending. They're unhappy with the increases in spending. Only when it's getting at a tax reduction or perhaps the tax increase that didn't happen, oftentimes we don't hear from them.

It really boils down to a question of balance: balance based on economics, as I mentioned. You're dealing with the allocation of scarce resources, and that's the bit that's counterintuitive when—I don't know how much money did the previous government borrow in the last 20 years? Something like \$200 billion. You don't have to make any decisions there. You just walk out with a credit card and spend. It's all about balance. We see that reflected in the debate from all sides during this afternoon.

What's key is to get the numbers right. Theoretically, the numbers don't lie. That really wasn't the case in recent years. We have to restore trust and accountability. What matters most—again, knocking on doors over many, many years—is health care, is education. Those are the things that really matter. No cuts with those particular ministries. Has there ever, ever been a cut to the Ministry of Education in anybody's memory? Has there ever been a cut to the Ministry of Health in anyone's memory?

The challenge is, we owe \$347 billion. This money has to be paid back. Nobody has presented an idea or a plan to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. *Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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