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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 October 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 octobre 2019

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to acknowledge this territory as a traditional gathering place for many Indigenous nations, most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

This being the first sitting Monday of the month, we also have O Canada today. This morning, we have with us, in the east public gallery, the Holy Name of Mary College School senior choir, from the riding of Mississauga–Lake-shore, to help us to sing O Canada.

Singing of O Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very, very much. Members can please take their seats.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Nathalie Des Rosiers as the member for the electoral district of Ottawa–Vanier, effective July 31, 2019. Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

I also beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Marie-France Lalonde as the member for the electoral district of Orléans, effective September 20, 2019. Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following documents were tabled:

—the 2018-19 annual report from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario;

—the 2018-19 annual report from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario;

—the 2018 annual report and statistical report from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario;

—the 2018-19 annual report from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario;

—a report concerning the review of cabinet ministers' and opposition leaders' expense claims, complete as of

August 20, 2019, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario;

—a report entitled Child Care in Ontario, Fall 2019, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario;

—a report entitled Expenditure Estimates 2019-20: Ministry of Education, Fall 2019, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario;

—a report concerning the review of cabinet ministers' and opposition leaders' expense claims complete as of October 22, 2019, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario.

VETERANS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): As we approach Remembrance Day, I want to take this opportunity to remind the members of the House of the motion that was passed on October 30, 2014, to permit MPPs to have Canadian Legion poppy donation boxes in their constituency offices, if they so wish.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is now time for introduction of visitors.

In the Speaker's gallery this morning are family and friends of page captain Neil Atkins: Peter Atkins, Faye Roberts, Claire Atkins, Ann Watson, Maria Phipps, Sarah Atkins, Anna Atkins, Crystal Hyde and Noah Roberts. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also in the Speaker's gallery this morning are the family of the Honourable Bette Stephenson and members of the former parliamentarian association here today for the association's AGM and tribute. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

BETTE STEPHENSON

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I look to the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you seek it, I'm sure you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the House provides unanimous consent to pay tribute to Bette Stephenson, first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in 1975—this House would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to the former cabinet minister on the occasion of her receiving the Distinguished Service Award conferred by the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians; and

That up to five minutes be allotted to each of the recognized parties and up to five minutes be divided among independent members.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra is seeking unanimous consent of the House to pay tribute to Bette Stephenson, first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in 1975—this House would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to the former cabinet minister on the occasion of her receiving the Distinguished Service Award conferred by the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians; and

That up to five minutes be allotted to each of the recognized parties and up to five minutes be divided among independent members.

Agreed? Agreed.

We'll go back to introduction of visitors afterwards. Who is leading off? Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Honourable colleagues, I rise in this chamber to recognize a trailblazer among us. The late Bette Stephenson was Ontario's first female Minister of Education. In this role, she left a legacy and she led the way in establishing special education in this province.

Dr. Stephenson served the people of Ontario in several other cabinet roles, including as Deputy Premier. She was the province's first female Minister of Labour. She was the first female Minister of Education, the first female Minister of Colleges and Universities, the first female Minister of Finance. Before entering politics, Dr. Stephenson—a medical doctor who was accepted into the University of Toronto's program a year before she was eligible—also became the first female president of the Ontario Medical Association. Dr. Stephenson was a strong advocate for her constituents in North York, for women and for plain-spoken common sense.

Dr. Stephenson dedicated her life to the service of others and achieved so much in public service. That is why we will soon dedicate a fitting and permanent space to honour her legacy for the ages. In the company of her family, we celebrate her memory and her legacy.

1040

Ms. Jill Andrew: It is with deep appreciation that I rise in the Legislature this morning as a member of the NDP, Ontario's official opposition, and as both the culture and women's issues critic, to pay homage to the late Honourable Dr. Bette Stephenson, who dutifully served during the Honourable Premiers Bill Davis and Frank Miller governments as a PC MPP for the then riding of York Mills, from 1975 to 1987. Dr. Stephenson also served as the second Deputy Premier of Ontario, from May 17, 1985, to June 26, 1985, while Treasurer and Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet.

Dr. Stephenson's sunrise was on July 13, 1924, in Aurora, and her sunset on August 19, 2019, in Richmond Hill, but her flame will never be extinguished.

Today we are joined by Dr. Stephenson's loved ones: her children, her grandchildren and her great-grandchildren. I am certain your lives have continued to be indelibly marked and inspired by the trail-blazing legacy of commitment, dedication and forthrightness of your

beloved family matriarch. I welcome you all to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

October is Women's History Month. While my five minutes cannot begin to paint the entire canvas that was Dr. Stephenson's illustrious trajectory in politics and medicine, she amassed a number of historical leadership firsts that in their time shook the foundation of a patriarchal culture and can never be overstated enough in their significance for today's aspiring and current girl and women achievers.

Dr. Stephenson, as you heard, would be named the first woman Minister of Labour, the first woman Minister of Education, the first woman Minister of Colleges and Universities in Ontario, the first woman Minister of Finance, the first chief of the department of family medicine at Women's College Hospital, the first woman president of the Ontario Medical Association in the early 1960s, and the first woman president of the Canadian Medical Association, the highest honour Canadian doctors can bestow on one of their own.

Dr. Stephenson was invested into the Order of Canada, later named to the Order of Ontario and honoured with the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals. She was also inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame.

From her honorary doctorates, her many chairpersonships and her memoir, *A Short Book About a Long Life*, to her even calling out Pierre Trudeau, justice minister at the time, in the early 1960s for agreeing with her that he'd decriminalize abortion by removing it from the Criminal Code but not following through on his word, I hope that we—especially the young women listening today—walk away motivated by her strongest skill set: persistence and determination.

I never knew Dr. Stephenson, and we most certainly would have had political and ideological differences, but as a wise person once told me, politicians may not agree on the "how" all the time—the way we govern—but if we can respect the commonality of our "why," the reason we are here—the pursuit of a greater good—we can at the very least see the humanity in each other and we can use politics for the good of all, not for the privileged few.

Dr. Stephenson's sheer persistence, determination and her straight talk to even the Premier of the day was no surprise. After all, she told her parents at five or eight years of age that she would be a doctor, and after all, that's what she became. When folks said there were no women doctors, she said, "Yes, there are. I don't know any, but they're out there."

As Dr. Stephenson said in her later years, "It was clear to me that persistence paid off when the cause was worthy."

Her life and legacy are unapologetically worthy. As I stand here as a black queer woman, the first to sit in the Legislature, I promise you that the cause of all girls and women's liberation—advocating for their access to education free of debt, a just legal system, job pay equity and safety, affordable child care, real affordable housing options, fully funded rape crisis and sexual assault centres, real legal aid for women and their families fleeing violence, health justice, and a provincial gender equity

strategy—are all causes that are worthy. In the spirit of Dr. Bette Stephenson, we must all advocate these causes and more with vigilance and persistence.

To my fellow colleagues in the House, especially those across the aisle—“dear hearts,” as Dr. Bette Stephenson might have said—I hope you all join me. Thank you very much, and a round of applause to Bette Stephenson’s loved ones.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It’s an honour, on behalf of my colleagues in the Liberal Party, to say a few words of tribute to Dr. Bette Stephenson, an incredible public servant and by all accounts an incredible person.

I’d like to acknowledge that her family is here and simply say that your mother, grandmother and great-grandma was a force of nature. After reading the long list of her accomplishments, I have come to the conclusion that the word “obstacle” did not appear in her dictionary, although I’m sure that for her, the lists of her firsts were far less important than the list of things that she accomplished for people—here in this Legislature, things like improving worker health and safety, reforming the education system, and making special education a more prominent role in that.

Those are a few of her enduring legacies. She knew where she had to get to, she got there, and that was good for people. She was a trailblazer for women in medicine, in politics and in public life. She was once asked if she was a feminist, and she answered, “I am a humanist—I believe the most qualified person should get the job, and if that means some men are left behind, so be it.”

I like to go through Hansard and read people’s Hansard. I’m going to put this in context because she got elected in 1975 and became the Minister of Labour a month later. We all know, when we first get elected here, even if you’ve been around, that for the first six months you’re still trying to find the washrooms, right? You’re trying to figure out where everything is. You’re getting your feet settled. But here’s her response to repeated opposition attacks: “Mr. Speaker ... I am extremely flattered that the opposition has taken the trouble to research so many of my old speeches in various other roles. I think that is an honour not usually accorded to a freshman member of this House.” What a graceful answer, and I think that probably typifies all of her Hansard.

Minister of Labour, 1975: lots of labour strife, anti-inflation work going on—not an easy job. All this and she had six children and a family as well. We all know how hard our jobs in this Legislature are on our families—what we ask them to do so we can do the things that we have to do on behalf of people. So I just want to finish by saying thank you to her family. Thank you for sharing her with us, sharing her with Ontarians and supporting her and all the things that she did to make our province better.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, we have the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It’s an honour to rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Bette Stephenson on behalf of the Green Party

of Ontario. I welcome her many family and friends and loved ones to Queen’s Park today. Undoubtedly, you are proud of Dr. Stephenson’s many contributions to medicine, politics and public service.

Dr. Stephenson was a trailblazer par excellence. Recently, I had the opportunity to have a meeting in the boardroom in the Ministry of Education, where there are pictures of all the past ministers lined up on the wall: as you would expect, for decades, man after man after man, until there was Dr. Stephenson on the wall. I was not struck so much by her being a trailblazer and the first, but by how many women ministers had followed her since and by how many openings of doors she had created over her distinguished career. I would argue that Dr. Stephenson has blazed more trails for women perhaps than any woman in this province’s history.

I believe her firsts bear repeating: the first woman Minister of Colleges and Universities; the first woman Minister of Finance; the first woman Minister of Labour; the first woman president of the Ontario Medical Association; the first woman president of the Canadian Medical Association.

1050

Her remarkable legacy includes being an Officer of the Order of Canada, receiving the Order of Ontario and being inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame. And today I want to recognize her legacy. Her contributions didn’t stop at her retirement. It included receiving the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians Distinguished Service Award.

I’m grateful for the many doors that Dr. Stephenson opened, and I thank her and her family for her many contributions to our province and our country.

Applause.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. It is now time again for introduction of visitors. The standing orders provide for five minutes. I would ask the members to keep their introductions brief and non-political.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to acknowledge some of the guests here from the Ontario Federation of Labour who are joining us in the gallery: the president of the OFL, Chris Buckley; secretary-treasurer Patty Coates; and executive vice-president Ahmad Gaied. I just want to say welcome, all of you, to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Mr. Speaker, it’s great to see you in the chair. I want to welcome page Rian Wilson from my riding of Niagara West. Welcome to the Legislature as a page. It’s very good to have you here.

Mme France Gélinas: We have quite a few guests from the health care sector and labour, starting with Fred Hahn and Candace Rennick from CUPE. We have Ainsworth Spence, Fahima Jamal and Tess Samells from SEIU, and we have Sara Labelle and Joel Usher from OPSEU. Lastly,

I saw that Clara Pasioka, a past OLIP intern, is with us. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Welcome back, everyone. I wanted to just introduce two constituents who are here with us today. Chris Cummins is the father of Charlie Cummins and they are here to witness the Legislature and particularly the pages at work. Charlie is a French immersion student in grade 7 at a Leaside school. Welcome.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'd like to introduce members of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada who are here in the gallery with us: Harvey Cooper, Allison Chase, Scott Parry, Dawn Richardson, Denese Gascho and Tina Stevens. I want to invite all members to the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada's reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230 from 5 to 7 p.m. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I have one other quick introduction. It's come to my attention that I have two constituents in the public gallery today: Mary Styles and another person who's been a long-serving friend of mine—I've known her since she was basically born—Jennifer Taylor-Livingstone.

I'd like to welcome all those guests to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm honoured to be able to rise today to welcome a name that is probably very, very well known within this House: Mr. Jim Bradley, Niagara regional chair. Welcome.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: J'aperçois dans les tribunes un homme extrêmement important chez nous, à Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Former member of provincial Parliament Jean-Marc Lalonde is here with us. From 1995 to 2011 he was the member and this is still his second home, pretty clearly.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to welcome Min Zhu. Her daughter Olivia is a page from Thornhill who attends Glen Shields Public School. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: Mr. Speaker, welcome back. I'd also like to welcome some autism parents and advocates who are joining us in the House today: Faith Munoz, Amanda Mooyer, Stacy Kennedy, Angela Brandt, Kristen Ellison and Candace Ellison.

I would also like to welcome Rosario Marchese and Cheri DiNovo back to the Legislature.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to acknowledge the presence of our friend and colleague Dr. Helena Jaczek, the newly elected MP for Markham–Stouffville. Welcome to the Legislature, and welcome back.

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to welcome a constituent of mine, Kristen Ellison, who is joined by her sister, Candace Ellison, to the Legislature today; also, a long-time family friend, Maria Phipps; my predecessor, MPP Lou Rinaldi; and an honorary constituent, former MPP Steve Gilchrist, who often visits Cobourg. Welcome to the people's House.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I am honoured to stand up and to introduce the leaders of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers who are located in my riding of York South–Weston: Jane Marsh, fourth vice-president of the Toronto local, and Abdi Haji Yusuf, secretary-treasurer of the Toronto local. Welcome.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It is my pleasure to welcome my former intern Shireen Salti, who is here today. I also notice

that Harvey Bischof and other ed workers are here today. Thank you for the work that you do on behalf of our students. And I could not not acknowledge Gerry Phillips, who is the dean of Scarborough.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I'd like to welcome my friends and supporters from the riding of Richmond Hill. First of all, I'd like to welcome my husband, Albert Wai, and also pastors from my church, the Richmond Hill Christian Community Church: Pastor Steven Folts and his wife, Patricia Folts; Pastor David Lau, Pastor Maymie Lau, and also friends Mr. Tim Schindel, Charlie Lyons, Brenda Hodgson, David Wells, John Baik, Larry Law, Lily Cheng and Cindy Shum. Welcome, and thank you for coming here.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's a great pleasure to welcome our many friends from the education sector unions who are joining us in the gallery today: Sam Hammond of ETFO; Federico Carvajal of ETFO; Paul Kossta, OSSTF; Barb Dobrowolski, OECTA; Harvey Bischof, OSSTF; Paul Caccamo, OSSTF; Pierre Côté, also of OSSTF; Joy Lachica of ETT, and many other education workers who are joining us today.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to recognize the presence of constituents of mine and also the former Speaker of this august House, Mr. David Warner.

Mr. Jamie West: Among our many guests from the labour movements joining us in the gallery today, I'd like to welcome Sara Labelle from OPSEU and of course Tim Deelstra from UFCW.

Mr. Roman Baber: I'd like to recognize my predecessor Dr. Annamarie Castrilli, who represented the riding of Downsview before it merged with Wilson Heights into York Centre. Welcome, Doctor.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'd like to welcome the 20 fantastic young women from Humewood House. I'd like to welcome Deb Singh, counsellor at the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape; Nicole Pietsch, writer and advocate, Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres; Kelly Potvin, executive director for Elizabeth Fry Toronto; Millennial Womxn in Policy, Faiza Mehboob, Rumaisa Khan, Hiba Ahmed, Shireen Salti, Laura Thompson, Laurie L. Lucciola, CUPE Ontario Women's Committee co-chair, other members Carmina Romero, Susan Gapka, Sharon Ramsey, Lauren Pragg from YWCA Toronto, Jasmine Rezaee from YWCA Toronto, Sojje Tate from Women's Habitat of Etobicoke and Julia Fiddes, Women's Habitat of Etobicoke. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you for fighting for women and girls across Ontario.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm delighted to invite to the House today one of my constituency assistants, Victoria Ashurst. Thank you for all of your hard work and for visiting today.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to introduce Kingsley Kwok, Anna Ainsworth and Edie Strachan, all members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: I'd like to welcome to the House Bill Barlow, who is the former member of provincial

Parliament for the riding of Cambridge from 1981 to 1987, and of course his daughter as well. Welcome.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to warmly welcome some folks from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada today. We have Dillon Waldron, Courtney Lockhart, Derek Pokora, Denise McGahan, Maria Amador, Mitch Reiss and Janine McDonald. Welcome, all of you. And I know they've both been mentioned, but two of my constituents, Susan Gapka and Fred Hahn: Thank you both for coming today as well.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I'd like to welcome my former MPP, my former MP and the former chair of the WSIB, Steve Mahoney. Welcome.

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Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to welcome anybody we left out.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I just wanted to welcome to the House the MPP John Parker, who is here. He's also a city councillor. Welcome.

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to welcome Michau van Speyk, who's been a tireless self-advocate for individuals with autism. I just want to welcome you back to the House. Thanks, Michau.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to welcome my mentor and, from 1985 to 2003, my MPP, Margaret Marland.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to welcome a few colleagues of ours: Ian Waddell, who served in this House many years ago and also served in the federal House, and I also see Cheri DiNovo is here as well as Karen Haslam. If I missed anybody, I'm very sorry.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Earlier I forgot to mention that we also have the parents of page Wilson with us today in the Legislature: Matt Wilson, Irene Siemiaszko and his sister, Tesia Wilson. Welcome to the Legislature as well.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I forgot a very important person, Nicholas Thompson—definitely an ally to women and girls, and president of Toronto North UTE, Union of Taxation Employees. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly, my friend.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd like to welcome a former MPP from Hamilton West, Judy Marsales. Judy is one of the few people I've heard sing at her desk. I might take a lesson from you sometime, Judy. Welcome to the House.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask for the House's attention again to address the issue of the participation of independent members. As members know, there are now two vacancies in the House because of the resignation of members previously sitting with the independent Liberal group. This has changed both the number and composition of independent members in the House. As a result, based on the previously used mathematical calculations, the following modifications to our daily practices are required.

During question period, in order to accommodate nine independent members into the previously established

eight-day rotation, I am prepared to recognize one independent member each day for a question and a supplementary question, and on every alternate Tuesday, a second independent member for a question and supplementary question.

In terms of members' speaking times during debate, in my statement on July 19, 2018, I indicated that I would permit one of the then seven independent Liberal members to speak for up to 20 minutes on second reading of any government bill or on a substantive government motion. This was based on a calculation that each independent member was entitled separately to three minutes of speaking time in these circumstances. In my March 6, 2019, statement, in response to a request from the Liberal independent members, I acknowledged that the splitting of time pursuant to standing order 24(d) was not limited to recognized parties and permitted their 20 minutes of pooled speaking time to be shared.

Consistent with those previous statements, I am now prepared to recognize any one of the five independent Liberal members to speak for up to 15 minutes during debate on second or third reading of government bills or on a substantive government motion. Furthermore, pursuant to standing order 24(d), this time may be split with other independent Liberal members.

I would like to thank the House for its attention.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker, and welcome back. I want to welcome the Premier back to the office. It's great see him back here at work and to have the opportunity to finally ask him some questions, because Ontario families have a lot of concerns about the Ford government's cuts.

I would like to start with our schools. Over the summer, the Financial Accountability Officer confirmed that the government's education cuts will eliminate 10,000 teachers from the province. Does the Premier believe the quality of Ontario's schools will improve with 10,000 fewer teachers?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to welcome the Leader of the Opposition back in the House here, and I want to congratulate our all-star Minister of Education on the way you've been handling this file.

Mr. Speaker, our government has invested over \$700 million back into the classroom. That's more money than any government in the history of Ontario. We've announced a four-year, \$200-million math strategy, because we know 50% of our grade 6 students are failing math, and one third of those teachers who are teaching that math course also failed that math test.

We are taking cellphones out of the classroom, Mr. Speaker. We're making financial literacy a key part of our math curriculum and a major component of the new grade

10 careers course, so students know how to budget after they leave school.

We're creating a new math curriculum for grades 1 to 8, which will be ready in the next school year. We are more than doubling mental health funding in schools and supporting 180 permanent mental health support staff—

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

The supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I would suggest that if you want a world-class education system, you don't get there by firing the people who deliver it, who provide it—or, frankly, by forcing students into larger classrooms and stripping them of course options.

The Premier has had five months to think about it. Is he now ready to admit that his plan to eliminate 10,000 teachers and thousands more educational workers is going to hurt kids in the classroom?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question and just express, if I may, on behalf of my family, the great humility it is to rise in this House as Minister of Education, having carriage for two million young people in the province.

Mr. Speaker, it is the aim of this minister and this government to ensure every young person in this province is able to achieve their potential. We are doing that, as the Premier has acknowledged, through increasing public expenditure to the highest level ever recorded in provincial history. We're doing this by ensuring we have the highest expenditure ever recorded in special education, in transportation and in First Nation education. We have more than doubled the mental health envelope.

Student success and their well-being are the central focus, as is keeping children in class through the labour negotiations. We will continue to focus on the success of our kids so that they can achieve their potential.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, after months of insisting that reckless cuts wouldn't hurt kids in the classroom, the Premier can no longer deny reality. Some 10,000 teachers' jobs are going to vanish in our province. Schools are already losing youth counsellors, social workers, speech-language pathologists and other educational workers and supports. Course options have disappeared so fast, as I've already said, that some students aren't even sure that they're going to be able to graduate on time in this school year. A few weeks ago, parents spent a nervous weekend not knowing if schools would actually be opening their doors on Monday morning.

Why are the Premier and this minister still insisting that the budget cuts aren't impacting kids in the classroom when we all know they in fact are?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear: We know that parents deserve predictability and peace of mind over the coming year. It is why we have undertaken to negotiate in good faith with all of our union partners. It is why we were able, through a voluntary agreement—while it is tentative—to

reach a deal with CUPE to keep children in the classrooms of this province.

It is the aim of this government to ensure that children are able to succeed, are able to achieve their potential, are able to get access to good careers in high-wage industries. That is why we've increased expenditure and investment in our children. It's why we're renewing our schools with an over half-billion-dollar investment to get new schools built and renew the existing ones. It's why we're updating our curriculum, to have greater alignment with labour market needs.

We're going to continue to support positive mental health and a progressive physical health curriculum that ensures the safety of our kids today and well into the future.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier.

The Premier spent most of the past five months either hiding or in damage control. Last year, this Premier insisted that not a single person in our province would lose their job, and that our schools, hospitals and public services would improve as he made cuts. Today, we're joined by Natalie and Britney, both teachers who have lost their jobs.

Is the Premier ready to admit to these women and the students who have lost the support that these teachers provided that his reckless cuts had consequences?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you again to the member opposite. What the Financial Accountability Officer did say is that the teacher protection fund, the \$1.6-billion allocation announced in the last budget to ensure front-line teachers remain on the front lines, is working. In fact, he said that the fund is oversubscribed, that there are more monies needed to ensure the retention of those teachers in the front line.

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Mr. Speaker, we are investing \$24 billion in school boards, to ensure that they could do best in their localities to help young people succeed, to help them graduate and get a good-paying job. We are not going to be deterred from that mission: focusing on the success of our kids, focusing on the success of our young people as they go through the journey of learning, so that they can one day get access to a good-paying job.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, it's obvious that the teacher protection fund is not working, because I just talked about Britney and Natalie, who are teachers who have lost their jobs here in Ontario.

The Ford government has scrambled this week to undo the political damage caused by their reckless cuts, but for families hit hard by cuts to their schools, waits in their hospitals or loss of public services, repackaging the same cuts on a different timeline doesn't make them any more acceptable or less painful.

Can the Premier explain to families why he is plowing ahead with an agenda of cuts, or will he finally admit that all of these cuts have serious consequences?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: To be clear, our objective in labour negotiations is to ensure that the students of this province remain in class. That is the singular priority of this Premier. He has made clear that he wants children's education not to be interrupted. He wants them to continue to be able to learn the competencies needed in the competitive global marketplace.

That is why we undertook an ambitious plan to negotiate in good faith early with CUPE, in an expedited fashion, and so far we have received a tentative agreement with CUPE that has helped ensure that we achieve that objective by keeping kids in class.

With respect to other labour partners, on behalf of millions of working families, my focus is on our students and not on strikes. Let's ensure we never compromise the success of our students, and I want a deal with our teachers.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier, on the general issue of the cuts: For five long months, the Ford government has tried to rebrand and repackage their agenda of cuts. The Premier threw his former finance and education ministers under the bus. He fired his former chief of staff. He even tried shutting down the Legislature and hiding from reporters.

But none of those changes hide the actual facts, Speaker. Students in our schools are losing teachers and educational workers who are supportive of their learning. Patients in our hospitals are watching nurses lose their jobs as beds continue to close and wait times continue to grow. Those are the things that the Premier needs to change. Those are the changes that the people of Ontario need to see, not the changes that he has made over the last little while. When are those changes going to happen?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: In fact, if I may, I just want to correct the record. In the areas of education and health care alone—in education, we are spending over \$700 million more this year than at the height of Liberal spending in 2017-18. In health care, it is under the Deputy Premier's leadership that we are investing more than \$1.3 billion more than the year prior, to help remediate the issue of hallway health care.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing all of this without raising taxes, while growing the economy, so that we are able to sustain the social services that are so consequential to the next generation of workers, innovators and patients in the province of Ontario. We're going to continue on our plan to grow the economy and invest in the services that families depend on, because that's what the families of this province have asked us to do.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Last year, in response to questions about the Ford government's \$30-million partisan campaign against putting a price on carbon pollution, the Premier said he would

stop wasting public money and resources if the federal Conservatives lost, because, to quote him, "Once the people decide ... I respect democracy...."

Last week, despite these promises, the Premier insisted that he would proceed. My question is: Why?

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you for the question. Through you, Mr. Speaker: We ran on making life more affordable for the people of Ontario. We ran on making sure we're competitive when it comes to businesses, when we're competing around the world. We didn't run on increasing gas prices by 35 cents a litre. It's unaffordable. We didn't run on making the carbon tax that will cost families another \$700 more a year. They just can't afford it.

We have a great plan. We have a great environment plan. We're going to hit the Paris accord targets of 30%. We're already at 22.5% with 10 years to go. We're leading the country in emission reductions, Mr. Speaker. We have a great plan—but that plan does not include taxing the people of Ontario, taxing businesses—making sure that we are competitive when it comes to businesses. That's why our policies created 272,000 new jobs—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the Premier might claim he has targets, but nobody's going to know if he hits them or not because he fired the Environmental Commissioner.

The Premier said that he would respect democracy, and democracy was pretty clear, Speaker: More than two out of three Ontarians rejected the Doug Ford government and their climate change denial. They said no to diverting \$30 million from schools, hospitals etc. to pay for lawyers and advertisements. They said no to threatening gas stations with \$10,000 fines if they refused to put partisan stickers on the gas pumps that don't stick.

Will the Premier abandon this obscene waste of public money, show some respect for democracy and for our planet, Speaker, and work on a plan to actually tackle the climate crisis instead of ignoring it?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition was wondering what we were doing for the last few months. Well, I'll tell you what we've been doing in the last few months.

We secured a historic transit plan that we've put forward. It's a historic deal with the federal government, with the city of Toronto and with the provincial government, called the Ontario Line, Mr. Speaker.

Our Minister of Education reached a deal with CUPE, a historic, historic deal to keep the kids in the classroom.

We invested \$116 million into road and bridge projects through our Minister of Transportation and our infrastructure minister, including widening Highway 3 in Essex. Can't wait to get to Essex.

Ontario has created 81,000 new jobs just since June—272,000 new jobs in the private sector because of the great policies this government has put forward.

And we're making new investments to fight against—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will please take his seat.

The next question.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr. Stan Cho: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the recently completed federal election was amongst the most divisive in our country's history and it has resulted in a minority Parliament. At a time of so much uncertainty in the global economy and with our nation increasingly divided, can the Premier please provide us with his thoughts on this past election?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank our all-star MPP from Willowdale.

I first want to congratulate all the candidates, no matter what political stripe they come from, that they ran. They put their name in the hat. No matter if you won or you lost, congratulations.

I called the Prime Minister and offered my congratulations to the Prime Minister, and told him, "I understand politics. Let's get down to work now." And that's exactly what we're doing. We're going to work with the federal government. We're working with municipalities right across this province.

You know something, Mr. Speaker? That is why, at this critical time, I think it's important for Ontario to step up—step up, unite the country. I've never seen the country so divided.

I had a great visit with Premier Blaine Higgs yesterday here in Ontario. We had Scott Moe on the phone. I talked to François Legault; what a great Premier for Quebec. I talked to Jason Kenney. We all feel the same way. We need to unite this country, because what is good for Canada is good for Ontario, and what is good for Ontario—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will please take their seats. Order.

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Stan Cho: Speaker, I think everybody in this House agrees that uniting the country is very, very important.

Interjections.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Speaker: Ontario has been looked upon to provide leadership and stability, and has always been a nation-builder within the federation.

A minority Parliament can present many challenges that can put priorities, like ending hallway health care, and infrastructure and job creation through economic growth, at risk.

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Through you, Mr. Speaker: Does the Premier have a plan to protect Ontario to help build a stronger Canada, despite the uncertainty in Ottawa?

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you to the MPP from Willowdale for the question. As you know, the all-star Minister of Health and Deputy Premier will assume the chairmanship

of the council of health ministers in the very near future. The minister has already indicated that she will work across party lines to provide leadership, despite regional differences.

Mr. Speaker, additionally the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation have concluded a groundbreaking agreement to expand transit right across the GTA—no longer just Toronto but right across the GTA—and we have already secured the support of the federal government for this initiative. We thank the federal government.

Finally, the Minister of Infrastructure has helped to nominate over 351 infrastructure projects right across this province to help the economy and enhance our relationship with our municipal partners. We have the responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to build a stronger, more prosperous Ontario, and can only do that with a strong, unified—

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

Next question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Premier. Families in Ottawa need to know that an ambulance will be there for them when they have an emergency, but, amazingly, under this government people can't count on that. During one day in June, Ottawa paramedics declared level zero. That means, they had no one available to transport patients, and that lasted for seven and a half hours. All those paramedics are telling us that this is becoming routine.

In a radio interview last week, this Premier blamed that situation—the crisis—on municipalities. Does the Premier understand that his underfunding of the health care system plays a huge role in this mess, and if he understands that, what is he prepared to do?

And I might suggest, Speaker: A 14% raise to this minister's top officials is an insult to those paramedics who are trying to help families in Ottawa.

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thanks very much for the question, but I think we need to start off with what's actually happening in our health care system. We are actually increasing funding by \$1.3 billion more this year from last year, so we are building on the accomplishments that have happened in the past. We're working on the future.

As you know, emergency services are going to increase, as they have last year. That funding is going to continue. We're going to invest in the technologies so we can have faster dispatch. We've also engaged Mr. Jim Pine, who is well respected in municipal circles, to work with municipalities to talk about how we bring forward the rest of the plan both for public health as well as emergency services.

We're continuing to build a strong brand. We want to make sure that every part of Ontario has quick-acting services. We want to make sure that they have the technology and the tools they need in order to do their jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary? The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Back to the Premier: Welcome back, Premier.

I want to make sure the Premier understands that this is not just an Ottawa crisis. For three and a half hours on October 20, the city of Hamilton had zero ambulances available to respond to an emergency call—zero ambulances. Our ambulances were all stuck waiting at overcrowded hospitals. This crisis is only expected to get worse when the flu season hits.

When is the Premier going to admit that cutting hospital budgets is putting people's lives at risk?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Once again, I have indicated that we are increasing health funding by \$1.3 billion from last year to this year. We've actually provided hospitals with more funding. They received a 2% increase this year—\$384 million more in funding. We have also provided some small and medium-sized hospitals—that were underfunded because of the previous government's actions and the funding formula—with 1% and a 1.5% increases. They are receiving the funding they need.

We recognize there are some issues with respect to off-loads in hospitals. We are preparing a course of action with having hospital emergency room nurses being able to take over from those loads till the ambulances can be back out on the road. We have started that plan. There's more work to do, but that is going to take a significant load off police services so they can be back out on the road doing the work they're doing and so the ambulances can be back out on the road doing the work they're supposed to do. The work is continuing and we—

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

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: My question is to the Minister of Finance. But first, I want to congratulate him on his new position—an excellent choice, given his experience and credentials. I look forward to working with him.

Monsieur le Président, comme je l'ai dit, ma question s'adresse au ministre des Finances. J'étais à Winnipeg vendredi dans le cadre du congrès annuel de la Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones. C'est un congrès qui rassemble des conseillers scolaires et des leaders de partout à travers le Canada. Malgré la nature de ce congrès, qui est l'éducation, la question sur les lèvres des Ontariens présents était : quand allons-nous ravoir notre commissaire aux services en français indépendant?

Hon. Rod Phillips: To the Minister of Transportation and Francophone Affairs.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie la députée pour sa question. Comme elle le sait et comme les membres de cette Assemblée le savent très bien, le Bureau de l'ombudsman de l'Ontario est indépendant des partis politiques et du gouvernement. Le rôle et le poste du

commissaire de la langue française ont été transférés en leur totalité au Bureau de l'ombudsman. Ça veut dire que toutes ses fonctions, toutes ses responsabilités—tout le travail que faisait le commissaire auparavant, il va continuer à le faire au sein du Bureau de l'ombudsman, qui demeure indépendant du gouvernement et de tout parti politique. C'est cela, la définition de l'indépendance : c'est l'indépendance du gouvernement et des partis politiques.

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

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Alors quelles étaient les épargnes? Parce que si c'est le même travail—et c'était la justification du gouvernement—quelles étaient les épargnes?

Ça a pris un an et demi pour que le gouvernement inclue le français sur leurs petites pancartes devant leurs lutrins, un changement qui coûtait au plus 20 \$, et ça a l'air que ça va prendre autant de temps avant qu'on ait une réponse pour savoir combien, exactement, a été économisé en transférant le bureau du commissaire.

Alors une question si simple, pourtant : est-ce la ministre peut, s'il vous plaît, nous dire combien a été épargné, ou est-ce que le gouvernement essaie encore de nous passer un sapin?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: L'ombudsman de l'Ontario, M. Paul Dubé, a confirmé, le printemps dernier, que le commissaire va détenir le même mandat et les ressources nécessaires pour continuer de promouvoir les droits linguistiques, l'établissement de relations et l'identification des problèmes auxquels fait face la communauté francophone. Je demanderais à tous les membres de cette Assemblée de promouvoir le fait que le commissaire aux services en français demeure. Il va continuer à faire le travail. Le nouveau commissaire va conserver une unité spécialisée, composée de membres du personnel actuel du Commissariat aux services en français. L'ombudsman est en train de faire une recherche pour un nouveau commissaire. Nous allons donner à ce nouveau commissaire le temps de faire son travail.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Robin Martin: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last week, the city of Toronto executive committee endorsed the province's subway plan, and I understand that city council is discussing the plan this week.

Minister, there has been a great deal of debate on the plan, in particular on the merits of the proposed Ontario Line. As you know, commuters, including those in my riding, struggle with overcrowding across TTC Lines 1 and 2. The Ontario Line needs to provide relief from overcrowding, giving us the capacity to allow for new investments in the GTA.

Can the minister please advise the House of some of the benefits of the Ontario Line?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for her question. This has

been a historic month for transit in Ontario because for the first time in many years we have a consensus on what subways to build. The Ontario Line is the centrepiece of our government's gridlock-busting network of new subway projects. The line itself is twice as long as the line that was previously considered, and it will bring rapid transit to communities like Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park, bringing new opportunities to those residents in those neighbourhoods while reducing pressures on the existing networks.

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Mr. Speaker, we need the Ontario Line, the people of Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park need it, and I'd urge everyone in this House to support it.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Minister, residents in my riding are excited about the government's plan to build four new subway lines across the city, and I'm glad to learn that the additional subway capacity will reduce gridlock and relieve pressure on the existing subway lines. But building subways is not easy. Can the minister please advise the House about what will be required to get the Ontario Line built?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you again to the member for the question. She's right: Building subways is not easy. But for the first time in a very, very long time, we have a consensus that this is the right plan. We have the endorsement of the mayor, the federal government and four of the five federal parties. That agreement is a testament to the fact that all the parties are committed to doing the right thing for commuters and getting these much-needed lines built.

But we still need two things, Mr. Speaker. We need city council to join the mayor, the federal government and ourselves as partners in this project, and we need the federal government to commit to 40% federal funding. I will be working with the Premier and reaching out to both city council and federal members of Parliament to secure the investment we need to get shovels in the ground, and I would urge all members of this House to contact their newly elected members of Parliament and ask them to back these lines and the 40% funding formula.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Premier. Welcome back, Premier. While the government was on vacation, high school students in this province were facing absolutely impossible decisions as they saw their course options disappear and their class sizes balloon. As a result of this government's education cuts, students risk not being able to even get the courses they need to graduate.

Last week, the education minister tried to put a new spin on a bad idea, but his proposal includes a poison pill that could see class size caps removed entirely. Will the Premier tell us today if he really intends to put the safety of our kids at risk by removing class size caps?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite, my critic. I appreciated very much meeting with her over the summer to discuss these very matters. Indeed, last week, the government demonstrated yet again our commitment to being a constructive force at the table to land deals to keep kids in the class. That has been the priority of this government. It has been the direction of our Premier to ensure that children's education is never impeded or never compromised.

Mr. Speaker, that was the driving force behind us landing the deal with CUPE, the voluntary agreement with CUPE that remains under ratification. It is why, last week, as the member mentioned, we reduced the classroom size number from 28, the provincialized average, down to 25. That is because we want students in the class to remain in the class all year long. We are committed to this end.

Again, my message to our labour partners, on behalf of so many students, is to focus on our students and not on strikes.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: I'm going to take that as a no? I don't know.

Speaker, it may be Halloween this week, but hocus-pocus and half measures aren't going to hide the fact that kids went back to school this fall with fewer teachers, overcrowded classrooms and chaos in their schools. Doing away with class size caps is absolutely reckless. It's a decision that's going to make matters even worse and it's going to hit our most vulnerable students. Will you commit to finally doing the right thing, abandon these changes and stop making our kids pay the price for your government's failures?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Through you to the member, Mr. Speaker: We have, through this process, been a constructive force, a reasonable force, with a singular objective in mind, and that is to ensure we land deals—voluntary agreements—that keep kids in class.

That is why, last week, we proposed to OSSTF, one of the unions, an offer—not the final offer, but an offer—through the ebb and flow of this process, because we made a commitment to parents. I want them to know and to hear us loud and clear that every member of this caucus is committed to ensuring their child's education is never compromised; to ensure they have access to a world-class education system in a province as diverse and free in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we've lowered the number from 28 to the provincial average of 25. We hope that will incent our partners to stay at the table and to land a deal with this government.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is for the Associate Minister of Transportation. The lack of movement on building better public transit has short-changed my constituents of Scarborough—Agincourt and, more broadly, commuters across Scarborough and the southern York

region for decades. Earlier this year, the Premier unveiled our government's historic multi-billion-dollar plan to get subways built across the GTA. Residents in Scarborough and southern York are cautiously optimistic that we are finally moving forward with a three-stop subway extension in Scarborough as one of our government's four priority subway projects.

Could the associate minister explain why this three-stop subway extension is the right plan for Scarborough?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, the people of Scarborough deserve to have the same public transit access as the people of downtown. I know that the Minister of Transportation has had several discussions with her parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park, about how this will benefit the people of Scarborough.

But let me be very clear, Mr. Speaker: It's three stations. The people of Scarborough deserve to be able to walk to a station so that they can get on the subway and get to downtown and home. A one-stop subway is not enough for the people of Scarborough.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Mr. Speaker, Scarborough's and Markham's commuters have waited too long for increased access to public transportation. It's reassuring to know that our government recognizes this and has deemed the Scarborough subway extension a priority project.

Could the associate minister explain what our next steps are in getting this three-stop extension built?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question. What is very clear is that the people of Scarborough have been waiting for far too long, Mr. Speaker. We know that there is a very important city council vote this week. The minister and I are very optimistic. We are encouraging all city councillors to support our plan, and of course the federal government to make their contribution of 40%. But I want to encourage all members of this House to support our transit plan. Mr. Speaker, it's time to get shovels in the ground.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Before the election, the Premier promised that he would lower hydro rates by 12%. Last week, the Ontario Energy Board published the new hydro rates for household consumers. It turns out that typical hydro rates are going up by \$24 a year.

Premier, why are hydro bills going up under your government instead of coming down?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Boy, we sure inherited a mess, Mr. Speaker, an unmitigated disaster, and we took important steps immediately over the past year and a half to reduce costs system-wide, to introduce legislation and repeal some that would guarantee that we would get to a place in the not-too-distant future where we could actually cut costs. Not subsidize them, not move them into—and saddle the ratepayers and taxpayers with further debt.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken these important steps so that we can now move forward with industrial, small business and families across the province to a cut model that will see those costs reduced after the terrible legacy of the now independent Liberal group.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I don't think in the Premier's plan he was talking about a 100-year approach to this issue, but I now understand. The time-of-use rates posted by the Ontario Energy Board now reflect the actual costs of hydro. They show that the actual costs of hydro have risen by roughly 15% over the past three years. The Premier's promise to lower hydro bills by 12% is getting further and further out of reach as hydro rates go up on November 1, not down.

1140

Premier, the people of Ontario are tired of stretch goals and unfulfilled promises. Why is this government not only failing to lower hydro bills, but actually letting bills get higher?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Let's take a look at this track record, Mr. Speaker. From 2010 to 2018, the price of electricity doubled under the previous Liberal government. That's why we passed Bill 87, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act. We repealed the Green Energy Act. We consolidated our conservation programs to protect Ontario's most vulnerable people, saving the ratepayers \$442 million. We're expanding natural gas so that across the province families are in fact experiencing an overall reduction in their energy costs.

Now, what do those steps have in common? Two things: They are putting us in a position to move toward cutting rates, not subsidizing them; and the NDP voted against every single one of those.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Donna Skelly: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. It's clear that the long-term-care system is still overburdened. Although the previous government made little progress on the file over 15 years, Ontario families don't care who's to blame; they want results.

Similarly, emergency services in hospitals are looking to the long-term-care sector to alleviate hallway health care by creating capacity for more appropriate care in long-term-care homes.

Mr. Speaker, what progress has the minister made in addressing the crisis across Ontario and, more specifically, in my region?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: The member from Flamborough–Glanbrook is correct: Ontario families want to see progress. A lack of focus by the previous government, along with limited resources as a result of out-of-control spending by the previous government, left Ontario families in a challenging situation when attempting to secure a long-term-care bed.

Recently, we announced a new allocation of almost 1,000 new long-term-care beds and the upgrading of almost 800 existing beds to modern design standards in Haldimand, Norfolk, Brant, Hamilton and Niagara. Of these, Shalom Manor has been allocated 128 beds for its new build project in Hamilton.

I'm working with our partners and across government, building a coordinated, integrated long-term-care system that delivers appropriate, dignified care when and where people need it.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Back to the minister: Investing in additional long-term care is an important step in ending hallway health care and ensuring that patients are in the right place with the right supports. Can the minister tell us more about how the government is facilitating access to beds and how individuals are supported while they wait?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Mr. Speaker, we are working across government to ensure that patients are at the centre of our health care system. The Ministry of Long-Term Care is making key investments toward furthering that goal, and they include investing \$13 million to enable high-priority beds; investing in staff; and creating excellent jobs in nursing and personal support work.

I'm working to keep spouses together, close to their families and in their communities. In just over a year, our government has made tremendous strides toward delivering on the quality of care our loved ones deserve.

In total, we will be investing more than \$1.7 billion over the next five years to build 15,000 new long-term-care beds and redevelop an additional 15,000. We are hard at work.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Premier. Welcome back, Premier.

This government is once again making life worse for families with big cuts to child care funding. Last week, the government suggested that families should be grateful that their cuts won't be as deep as promised, but the city of Peterborough is considering closing two child care centres and two after-school programs because of this government's cuts to municipalities.

My question is, should the 300 children in Peterborough who are at risk of losing their child care spaces and the 30 workers at risk of losing their jobs be grateful about these cuts?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: In fact, all families in Peterborough and across this province are benefiting from our government's historic investment in child care: a \$2-billion allocation to help build 30,000 child care spaces in schools right across this province.

Every single family is benefiting from our child care tax credit, where 300,000 people will see their child care prices come down through a tax credit that provides up to 75% of eligible expenses. This is a mobile tax credit. It's an admission that families need to have the mobility to move their

dollars to where it matters most for their kids. We do not support a one-size-fits-all approach to child care. We want to give families the opportunity to invest in their children with a child care program that works best for their kids.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: Back to the Premier: These cuts are going to hurt families, no matter which way the minister tries to spin it.

Peterborough is already considering cutting child care centres and programs, and the city of Toronto—right here—is \$5 million short for this year alone, with deeper cuts coming next year. Given that a cut is a cut is a cut, a slow and painful rip of the Band-Aid isn't going to make things better, especially when you're going out of your way to make things worse next year.

Will this Premier finally commit to doing the right thing and reverse these cuts? Families deserve better.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: To the member, I want to reaffirm it is this government that is investing over \$2 billion to ensure child care is both accessible and affordable for working parents in the province of Ontario.

It is this government, under the leadership of the Premier, that is investing nearly \$400 million in tax relief for families, because we acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that under the former government, quite demonstrably, child care costs rose to the highest in the nation—juxtaposed with the lowest rate of income growth.

We acknowledge that families are working harder and taking home less. That is why we're focused on affordability, so moms and dads across this province have access to a child care tax credit that allows them to choose child care options in Peterborough and in communities right across Ontario. They deserve that choice and they deserve that money.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The next question, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. Welcome back.

A question for the Minister of Long-Term Care: The previous government allowed the wait-list for long-term care to grow to an unsustainable level, leaving over 36,000 people waiting for care and their families struggling to make ends meet.

Minister, this past September you announced the allocation of new beds in several Ontario communities, with plans for further allocations. Can you please update this House on the progress in both allocating beds and reducing the wait-list for seniors and for their families across the province?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Our government recognizes the vital service that long-term care provides Ontarians, which is why we created a ministry dedicated to long-term care. We also recognize the stresses on the system from 15 years of neglect, and that the need for long-term-care capacity in Ontario is only rising.

That's why we're taking real action to address those concerns. Over the next five years, we are investing \$1.75 billion to improve access to long-term-care beds and the long-term-care system. An additional 15,000 new beds will be created and we will be renovating an additional 15,000 beds to modern design standards. This year alone, we have allocated over 1,800 new beds and reaffirmed our commitment toward building over 6,000 previously allocated beds.

Mr. Speaker, we're making real progress that will benefit generations to come.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Communities across the province will benefit from these investments. Families want to have their loved ones cared for in the right environment. At the same time, building more beds and redeveloping older beds will help alleviate pressures on our hospital system as we work to end hallway health care.

Minister, along with the allocations you spoke about, what further action is the government taking to build more capacity in our long-term-care system?

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Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member for his very good work.

Earlier this month, our government announced plans to start accepting applications from current and potential long-term-care home operators to build new long-term-care beds and redevelop existing ones here in Ontario. This call for applications will help fulfill our commitment to create 15,000 new long-term-care beds and bring up to standard another 15,000 beds over the next five years.

With an aging population, these new and redeveloped beds will help more families and residents get the care that they need and the support that they need when they need it. We need to create a 21st-century long-term-care system that ensures Ontarians get the care they need when they need it. The Premier has made this a priority of our government, and the people of Ontario are demanding results. We will continue to focus on respecting those who have worked so hard to give us the province we now enjoy.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Enrico Miranda was a 57-year-old father and grandfather, killed last month as he was cleaning an industrial mixer at Fiera Foods in North York. Despite having worked at Fiera for over five years, Mr. Miranda was still a temp agency employee.

The WSIB act gives the government the ability to regulate temp agencies and to ensure that temp workers have the same protection as other workers in the province of Ontario, but after a year in office, the Ford government has refused to do so. My question is clear: Why?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to thank the member opposite for this very important question. On behalf of the government, on behalf of all MPPs in the Legislature,

we extend our condolences, our sincere sympathies to the family. Clearly, one lost life is too many. I've said since becoming the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development that one injury on the job, one death, is one too many in the province of Ontario.

It is inappropriate, as all members know, to discuss the ongoing investigation by the Ministry of Labour, but I want to make it quite clear that we are doing 1,500 Ministry of Labour inspections every single week in the province of Ontario. That's nearly 80,000 inspections per year, and I want all of those businesses who aren't complying by the rules to know that there's going to be a Ministry of Labour inspector at their door.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, my question has absolutely nothing to do with the investigation. Mr. Miranda was the fifth temp agency worker killed at Fiera Foods, the second since the Conservatives formed government. This is important, and please listen: He was cleaning the machine that day because he had already badly injured his finger elsewhere in the plant and had been pressured to stay on the job.

Nothing about this situation doesn't stink, and yet this Conservative government has been silent since his death. When is this government going to take action to ensure that temp workers have the protection to ensure they don't die on the job?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: To the member opposite: Again, thank you for that question. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family impacted, with his colleagues and with his co-workers.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, in our ministry, we're doing 1,500 inspections every week. Regarding this specific case, as the member opposite knows, we can't comment, as the investigation is ongoing, but I want to make it crystal clear to the member opposite and to all members in this House that we can and will do more. I'm committed to action on this particular file and all files across the province, to improve health and safety for the conditions of our workers everywhere in Ontario.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister, I know I speak for all members on this side of the House when I say that all levels of government have an important role to play when it comes to investing in infrastructure. Municipalities, the province and the federal government must work together to ensure our constituents have safe and reliable roads, bridges and transit infrastructure.

This summer I had the pleasure of sharing details of our government's infrastructure investments with my constituents. I'm delighted that our government is investing in County Road 2 in Morrisburg, and in upgrades to Lemay Street in Cornwall. These investments are important for ensuring my constituents have safe and reliable roads when they travel to and from work and home.

I'm also delighted that the government is making important investments in transit infrastructure in the city of Cornwall, allowing them to purchase conventional buses and Handi-Transit buses.

Can the minister tell the House if the province will continue these important investments?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'd like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for the question. Our government is continuing to work with municipalities, families and businesses to make smart investments in our infrastructure and keep it reliable for the people of Ontario.

To date, Ontario has nominated 144 road, bridge, air and marine infrastructure projects across the province under the rural and northern funding stream, with a total provincial investment of more than \$115 million. If all rural and northern projects nominated to date by myself and my predecessor are approved by the federal government, the total federal, provincial and municipal spend could reach up to \$592 million for Ontario communities.

But that's not all the investments we're making. Ontario is investing in 201 transit infrastructure projects in 53 communities outside the GTHA, with a total provincial commitment of \$365 million. We're investing in communities like Cornwall.

The transit projects we've announced promise to make a real difference in people's lives—and yes, Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to make those infrastructure investments.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Minister, for reassuring the House that our government recognizes the importance of infrastructure investments to the people of Ontario.

While investments in roads and bridges are important in rural and northern Ontario, some of our mid-sized and larger municipalities need investments in transit infrastructure to ensure their continued economic growth, as well as improvements to the quality of life for residents.

I know the minister has visited London and Waterloo region to announce transit infrastructure investments in those two communities, and of course, I mentioned the important investments in Cornwall in my earlier question. Minister, the investments in transit are also important in other communities throughout eastern Ontario. I understand the city of Kingston brought forward some priority transit projects for federal and provincial funding. Some of those investments include enhancements to accessibility and enhanced pathways and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists.

Can the minister elaborate on these important transit investments for the people of Kingston?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I am pleased to let the member and, in fact, the whole House know that our government is making important infrastructure investments, including in transit infrastructure, in communities across the province. In fact, if all transit projects outside the GTHA that Ontario has nominated for funding through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program are approved, the total federal, provincial and municipal investment could reach

up to \$1.15 billion for communities across Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

In Kingston, provincial investments include construction of off-road trails, sidewalks, pedestrian crossovers and intersection pedestrian signals to provide improved passenger connectivity to 22 bus routes, including express routes. We are also investing in the construction of accessible transit stations, the purchase of new buses, and transit priority technology to be installed on 80 buses to provide passengers with real-time bus arrival information.

Ontario is investing over \$14 million in provincial funding to improve public transit in the city of Kingston, Mr. Speaker—

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

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

La communauté franco-ontarienne a besoin d'une loi aux services en français à jour avec ses besoins. Malgré ça, la ministre des Affaires francophones n'a fait aucune démarche pour moderniser l'ancienne loi. En effet, la ministre a annoncé à plusieurs reprises que les consultations se déroulaient avec des intervenants de la communauté franco-ontarienne, mais elle refuse toujours d'identifier ces participants, ne donne pas de dates précises ni de date butoir.

1200

Monsieur le président : pourquoi fait-elle des réunions en secret, et pourquoi elle ne s'engage pas à moderniser l'ancienne loi?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Merci au député pour la question et pour la chance de clarifier ce qu'il vient de dire. En fait, j'ai dit même dans cette chambre que notre gouvernement allait mener une modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français dans la province de l'Ontario, pour la première fois en plusieurs décennies, parce que notre gouvernement comprend que l'accès aux services en français est un enjeu fondamental pour la communauté francophone. Mais c'est pour cette raison qu'il ne faut pas aller trop vite. Il faut faire ça de manière très sérieuse.

Je suis en train de travailler avec le comité consultatif au ministère des Affaires francophones pour développer le projet, le bon plan, pour aller de l'avant avec les consultations, pour que les consultations soient ouvertes à tous les francophones et aussi à tous les Ontariens qui veulent participer à ces consultations.

Monsieur le Président, je pense que le député va être très heureux de savoir que nous allons travailler en consultation avec tous les membres qui veulent être intégrés dans ces consultations pour développer le projet—des consultations pour la loi.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

M. Guy Bourgouin: J'apprécie la réponse de la ministre. Ça fait plus qu'un an qu'on est assis en Chambre, puis qu'elle dit qu'elle va innover la loi, mais on n'a toujours pas de loi. On a les consultations, on se fait dire—on ne sait pas avec qui elle consulte.

La semaine prochaine, je vais déposer un projet de loi visant à mettre à jour la Loi sur les services en français. Il s'agit d'un projet basé sur le rapport publié par l'ancien commissaire aux services en français. Entre autres, le projet inclut une définition inclusive des francophones, pour refléter la francophonie du XXI^e siècle; une « obligation de consulter » —et je dis bien de consulter— avec les francophones, avec la communauté franco-ontarienne; et le rétablissement du commissaire aux services en français indépendant.

Le premier ministre va-t-il écouter une fois pour toutes les demandes de la communauté francophone et va-t-il appuyer ce projet de loi?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Comme je l'ai déjà dit, le gouvernement de l'Ontario prend au sérieux les recommandations et les demandes de la communauté relative à la modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français. Nous examinons comment nous pouvons moderniser la loi de sorte que les dispositions reflètent la réalité et les besoins actuels des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. J'ai mandaté les membres de mon conseil consultatif de me conseiller sur un processus pour moderniser la loi.

C'est un dossier important et nous voulons prendre le temps nécessaire pour effectuer une réflexion minutieuse. En tant que ministre des Affaires francophones, je veux travailler de très près avec mes collègues et la communauté en vue de faire progresser les affaires francophones et de m'assurer à ce que la voix de la communauté francophone soit entendue.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Speaker, earlier this August, I had the pleasure of being joined by Premier Ford to announce important investments Ontario is making to road infrastructure in my riding of Niagara West. Our investment of \$1.67 million will include full reconstruction of 2.5 kilometres of downtown Fonthill's Pelham Street, which includes new pedestrian sidewalks, on-road cycling lanes and new street lighting. These types of investments have a significant local impact on the economic development of Fonthill and west Niagara, and it will also enhance the safety and reliability of this roadway.

Speaker, can the minister tell this House if Ontarians living in the Niagara region can look forward to more road and transit infrastructure investments like this in the future?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I thank the member from Niagara West for his important question and highlighting the investment that we have made in the Niagara region.

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, the province is investing more than \$115 million into 144 road, bridge, air and marine infrastructure projects, coming from the ICIP infrastructure program. Mr. Speaker, we are investing in communities outside the GTHA and inside the GTHA, but the member is right: There is approximately \$23.9 million in the region of Niagara for transit infrastructure projects.

In Welland, Ontario is investing \$5 million for the construction of an operations facility to store 40 conventional and specialized buses and to allow for bus maintenance and training space. And in St. Catharines, the province is investing \$3.3 million in the expansion of a maintenance and bus storage facility to accommodate their increasing demands. Niagara Falls will also see a \$1.5-million investment for the—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes the time we have available for question period this morning.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Francophone Affairs concerning the French Language Services Commissioner. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1206 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CENTRE CULTUREL LA RONDE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to congratulate Centre culturel La Ronde in Timmins, who were successful in getting the heritage fund to give them a million dollars in order to help in the reconstruction of the “centre communautaire” that we call Centre culturel La Ronde.

They have worked hard, Mr. Speaker. There was a tragedy, a fire that caused smoke damage in the building that we have been in for many, many years. In fact, I went to school there. It used to be called Holy Family. One half was English; the other half was French. Eventually, it was bought by the francophone community and it became our French cultural centre. La Ronde is the largest francophone cultural centre in Ontario and offers a lot of programming and does a lot of great things in our community. They have worked hard with a number of people at the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, the Ministry of Tourism and others in order to be able to be successful in getting what eventually became a great announcement where Minister Rickford came to Timmins, came to our centre, and we announced a million dollars for Centre culturel La Ronde.

On behalf of all of the people of Timmins, we say to Centre culturel La Ronde and everybody involved, from the application process to the final approval: Thank you and congratulations for a job well done. It's great to see projects like this moving forward in the city of Timmins. By working together, we can make great things happen.

ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS

Ms. Jane McKenna: Burlington is incredibly fortunate to have, right on our doorstep, one of the most beautiful,

wonderful places I know: Royal Botanical Gardens, the largest botanical garden in Canada. For more than 80 years, Royal Botanical Gardens has been a truly awesome ecological jewel at the western tip of Lake Ontario. Founded by the early conservationist Thomas Baker McQuesten, it is modelled on Kew Gardens in London, England.

Royal Botanical Gardens was created to serve as both a regional botanical tourism site and an environmental agency that protects and preserves forests and marshes. As a national historic site, it is revered worldwide for its 400 acres of display gardens, as well as for the stewardship of over 2,300 acres of environmentally sensitive lands and diverse ecosystems that connect to the Niagara Escarpment on Lake Ontario. It has established an international reputation as a living laboratory for science, a connecting point for children in their appreciation of nature, a leader in sustainable gardening, and the standard-bearer for ecological restoration and plant preservation. Royal Botanical Gardens also plays a vital role in educating schoolchildren about the importance of plants and nature and how they work together to protect the health and beauty of our planet.

I'm so proud and pleased that our government recently announced a major grant of \$1.98 million for 2019-20 through the repair and rehabilitation capital program to help ensure that this extraordinary local attraction and tourist destination remains world-class in every way.

I went as fast as I could, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Members' statements? The member from Oshawa.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I know it has been almost five months since we were last here, but I, for one, am glad to be back advocating on behalf of my constituents.

During the prolonged hiatus from this place, I met with many constituents and organizations. I did a lot of listening, and I am bringing their voices and concerns back with me. I have every faith that many of the members of this House would have also gotten the straight goods, and maybe an earful, from the folks at home.

I heard loudly and clearly from parents of children with autism, who deserve needs-based funding. I met with parents of adult dependants with diverse special needs who are confined in hospitals and are unable to be appropriately housed by this government in this province.

In Oshawa, we have tent cities, shocking child poverty, and an opioids and addiction crisis that is being faced by communities across the province. This government must recognize that this crisis is a health epidemic and approach it purposefully and strategically to ensure that all Ontarians have the support that they need so that they can be well and safe.

In Oshawa, we have workers facing a very uncertain road ahead. Children are heading into destabilized academic futures. Community members with financial needs

are struggling to access legal support and social programs due to cuts and freezes. Low-income seniors who qualify for your promised dental care can't get it because they can't find it. People are concerned about a changing climate and a government that won't commit. People worry that their health and long-term care will continue to be eroded. This government cannot continue to cut and freeze and undermine; it must invest.

I hope that over this next session we will see this government show some compassion, take some responsibility and commit to making things better for all of the people.

RIDING OF CAMBRIDGE

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: I would like to recognize two Cambridge community leaders who recently passed away.

Frank Monteiro served first as a police officer with Waterloo Regional Police and then was elected three times as councillor for ward 7 in Cambridge. He was passionate about his city, and he will be missed.

Pauline Hodgkiss was an educator in the Waterloo Region District School Board and gave her time to many agencies, including Argus house, Kids Can Play and the Cambridge family crisis centre.

I give my condolences to their families and I want to thank them for their public service.

As the MPP for the riding of Cambridge, I am a passionate advocate on behalf of the concerns of my constituents. I would like to recognize the government's commitment to the completion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital by providing \$1.49 million in funding.

Cambridge, North Dumfries and North Brant residents are also pleased with the announcement that our cities will not be forced into amalgamation. These are two issues that both Frank and Pauline would be very happy about.

Over the last five months, while meeting with constituents, I was often asked about how I am able to balance the demands of this job with a young family. I can think of no better job than advocating on behalf of my constituents, fuelled by the principles I hold dearest. But as I mentioned in my maiden speech, Mr. Speaker, being the MPP for Cambridge is not the most important role. My most important job is the one that I cherish most, and that is being a wife, and a mother to my three-year-old son, Victor. Thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Wayne Gates: The people of my riding, of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, have waited almost half a year for the Premier to come out of hiding so he could be in the Legislature today. During that time, hallway medicine hit an all-time high. I'm going to address that issue today since it's the most important issue in my riding.

According to the Ontario Hospital Association, the average wait time across the province in emergency rooms this summer was 16 hours. Earlier this year, we found out

that, every single day, there's an average of 24 more people in hospitals than there are beds for. In Niagara, there is an average of 55 people waiting to be moved out of emergency beds but have nowhere to go. The government knew about this, and what did they do to fix it? They took a five-month break.

So I say to the Premier today: We're in a health crisis in Niagara. We have the oldest population in the country. We also have young families moving in. We can't wait any longer. We need our hospital in Niagara Falls to move to Stage 2 so it can finally be built after years of delay. We need health services expanded in Niagara-on-the-Lake and at Douglas Memorial in Fort Erie.

The Conservatives should not have stopped this Legislature from doing the important work it was doing. But now that we're back, I'm ready to make up for lost time and immediately get to work on the health care crisis in Niagara. I hope the Premier and his caucus will join me.

ÉLECTION FÉDÉRALE

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Première journée de retour en Chambre après cinq mois dans nos comtés, il y a tellement de choses qu'on pourrait souligner aujourd'hui : des évènements, des personnes qui ont été reconnues.

Mais je pense que l'évènement le plus marquant qui nous touche tous et toutes est l'élection fédérale qui vient juste d'avoir lieu. Alors, je tenais à souligner le travail et le courage de tous les candidats et de toutes les candidates à l'élection fédérale partout à travers le Canada, parce qu'on sait à quel point c'est difficile et que ça prend énormément de sacrifices de se présenter aux élections, de mettre nos noms sur le bulletin de vote. Alors, merci à tous ceux qui ont mis leurs noms de l'avant.

J'aimerais souligner plus particulièrement les candidats qui ont été élus dans ma région, donc dans l'est ontarien, alors la région d'Ottawa. C'est certain, chez nous à Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, mon cher ami Francis Drouin a été réélu—mon ami, mon partenaire politique chez nous, dans le comté, alors j'étais bien heureuse de cette victoire. Ensuite, Marie-France Lalonde à Orléans, une ancienne collègue qui va très bien représenter les gens d'Orléans; Mona Fortier à Ottawa–Vanier; un autre que je connais très bien, Eric Duncan, à Stormont-Dundas; Ottawa-Centre, Catherine McKenna; Ottawa-Sud, David McGuinty. Alors, j'en passe. J'ai bien hâte de travailler avec tous ceux et celles de la région d'Ottawa.

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EVENTS IN AURORA–OAK RIDGES– RICHMOND HILL

Mr. Michael Parsa: It's a pleasure to be back in the House and great to see my colleagues from all sides.

I have to tell you, the last few months have been incredibly eventful in my riding of Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill. From the always-fun Aurora street festival to the Cosmo music festival to the Christian Horizons annual summer picnic, there was always something going on.

However, as a diehard hockey fan, there are two events that I must share with all of you. This summer, the Stanley Cup came to both the town of Aurora and the city of Richmond Hill. I'd like to give a big shout-out to the Stanley Cup champions, the St. Louis Blues, specifically to Jordan Binnington of Richmond Hill and Robert Thomas of Aurora. I would also like to congratulate both these champions and their teammates on their amazing accomplishment. For hundreds, if not thousands, of fans, including myself, to be able to see and touch the Stanley Cup—twice—was a dream come true.

I'd like to thank Jordan and Thomas for bringing the cup to Aurora and Richmond Hill, and I'd like to wish them all the very best next season. I hope that they finish a respectable second and third behind the next Stanley Cup champions, the Toronto Maple Leafs.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to ask my colleagues: Have your constituents been complaining about the lack of access to personal support workers? Because mine have. Not a week goes by that I don't have a burnt-out, exhausted family come and talk to me about the lack of PSWs in home care and long-term care.

Mr. Robert Hyslop is a 78-year-old veteran from Azilda. He had his hip replaced this summer. His physician prescribed home care—the assistance of a PSW—for his recovery. Unfortunately, none were available, so his 76-year-old wife, Marie Claire, tried to provide for his care. Marie Claire has issues of her own. She has high blood pressure. She had a stent installed in her heart two years ago. She helped Robert the best she could to get dressed, get washed and get to the washroom, but they needed help that never came. If Marie Claire had fallen or her husband had fallen, we would have needed more beds at our local hospital, which is full to the brim.

Another constituent, Bonnie Krieger, from Capreol, received a call from the LHIN advising her that there are no PSWs in Capreol, so her husband Larry's hours of care are being reduced from 21 hours of care to two hours of care per week. His needs have not changed. Bonnie works 40 hours a week, Mr. Speaker. How is she supposed to make up the 19 hours of care that her husband needs? Is she supposed to quit her job and go on Ontario Works? I don't think so.

The Mike Harris government created this crisis in home care by introducing competitive bidding. This situation is untenable and needs to change.

MUNICIPALITIES

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Earlier this year, our government launched a review of Ontario's regional governments, including the Halton region and its municipalities. Our government wanted to hear the opinion of local residents about how their municipal governments could work better to help them become more streamlined, provide better services and respect taxpayers' dollars.

The review, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said, had no predetermined outcomes. Indeed, he was clear that amalgamation was not the purpose of the review. But it led to many people being concerned about the real possibility of amalgamation. Residents in Oakville and Burlington from across my riding were clear: Their municipalities worked well; they didn't need change. On their behalf, I, along with my colleague from Oakville, tabled many petitions in the Legislature and worked with the minister making sure they were heard.

Speaker, we listened. We heard the voices and needs of my community of Oakville North–Burlington, and I am proud to stand here in the Legislature today and state loudly that there will be no amalgamation in Halton. Let me repeat: There will be no amalgamation in Halton.

Our government was elected with a mandate to create jobs, respect taxpayers' money and provide quality services. I know that the municipalities in my riding have the same goals, and the best way to meet these goals is as the city of Burlington and the town of Oakville.

PERSONS DAY

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: It's wonderful to be back in the Legislature today after a very productive summer.

October 18 was Persons Day in Canada. This day in history transformed the lives of women across our great country. In 1929, women became officially recognized in the legal definition of "persons." This was a historic decision that shaped the political and cultural landscape of Canada.

I remember learning about the Famous Five in school and feeling encouraged and inspired. These women from Alberta fought for the freedom and liberties that other women and I can enjoy today. They lived during a time when women did not have a voice and were not persons in the eyes of the law—an experience that has never been a reality for myself, other women serving in the Legislature today and women serving in the Senate today.

Ontario now has the highest number of female MPPs of any provincial Legislature in Canada.

One of my mentors, the former MPP for York–Simcoe Julia Munro, made Ontario history as well, serving as the longest MPP in Ontario's history. As we continue to celebrate women like her and as we continue to celebrate Women's History Month, we cannot forget the Famous Five, who not only won the right to serve in the Senate, but for all women to participate equally in all aspects of life in Canada.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: I beg leave to present a report on Real Estate Services, section 3.11, 2017 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the

Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Fife presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Catherine Fife: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I am pleased to table the committee's report today, entitled Real Estate Services, section 3.11 of the 2017 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the committee: Peggy Sattler, who is Vice-Chair; Toby Barrett; Goldie Ghamari; Michael Gravelle; Jim McDonell; Norm Miller; Christina Mitas; Suze Morrison; Michael Parsa and Kinga Surma.

The committee also extends its appreciation to officials from Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations of the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee and staff in the legislative research service.

I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: I beg leave to present a report on Cancer Treatment Services, section 3.02, 2017 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I am pleased to table the committee's report today, entitled Cancer Treatment Services, section 3.02 of the 2017 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the excellent members of the committee for their dedication and their work on this report.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Cancer Care Ontario. The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee and staff in the legislative research service.

I would encourage all members of the House to read this important report.

I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

1320

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BETTER FOR PEOPLE, SMARTER FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2019 LOI DE 2019 POUR MIEUX SERVIR LA POPULATION ET FACILITER LES AFFAIRES

Mr. Sarkaria moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 132, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking various Regulations / Projet de loi 132, Loi visant à alléger le fardeau administratif qui pèse sur la population et les entreprises en édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et en abrogeant divers règlements.

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): Does the minister care to give a brief statement explaining his bill?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This bill improves upon our open-for-jobs policy of making Ontario more competitive. Economic competitiveness is the primary source of a rising standard of living for Ontarians; it's fundamentally about productivity. When regulations are serving the public interest, and when they are effective, they enable competitiveness, translating into higher incomes per person.

BUY IN CANADA FOR MASS TRANSIT VEHICLES ACT, 2019 LOI DE 2019 FAVORISANT L'ACHAT DE VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT COLLECTIF AU CANADA

Mr. Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 133, An Act to promote the purchase of mass transit vehicles that meet certain conditions in respect of Canadian content and assembly / Projet de loi 133, Loi favorisant l'achat de véhicules de transport collectif satisfaisant à certaines conditions relatives au contenu canadien et à l'assemblage au Canada.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd like to invite the member to give a brief explanation of his bill.

Mr. Michael Gravelle: The bill requires that certain public bodies that purchase mass transit vehicles may only consider eligible bids that meet certain conditions. These conditions include a requirement for at least 60% of the

part of the bid price relating to materials, overhead, labour and profit to be an account of materials, overhead, labour and profit originating in Canada. The final assembly of the mass transit vehicles must take place in Canada.

I appreciate first reading support and look forward to debating it on Thursday.

1191650 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2019

Mrs. Martow moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr18, An Act to revive 1191650 Ontario Limited.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

A&ONE FASHION JEWELLERY WHOLESALE LTD. ACT, 2019

Mr. Babikian moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr13, An Act to revive A&One Fashion Jewellery Wholesale Ltd.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

CARIBBEAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE CARIBÉEN

Mr. Coteau moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 134, An Act to proclaim the month of October Caribbean Heritage Month / Projet de loi 134, Loi proclamant le mois d'octobre Mois du patrimoine caribéen.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I invite the member to give a brief explanation of his bill.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, Ontario is home to a very vibrant Caribbean community, a diverse group representing 42 Caribbean nations, regions and territories. That is why today I am proud to introduce a bill that, if passed, would recognize October as Caribbean Heritage Month.

Mr. Speaker, if this bill is passed, it would provide an important opportunity to remember, to celebrate—and educate future generations about—Caribbean Canadians and the important and inspirational role that they have played to build this country and this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the guests in the audience here today.

LA FRANCOPHONIE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to promote the maintenance and development of La Francophonie of Ontario / Projet de loi 135, Loi visant à promouvoir le maintien et l'épanouissement de la francophonie ontarienne.

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 care to give a brief explanation of his bill?

M. John Fraser: Je présente le projet de loi de notre ancienne députée et collègue, Nathalie Des Rosiers, avec quelques modifications rédactionnelles mineures. Le projet de loi remplace la Loi sur les services en français par une autre loi intitulée Loi de 2019 sur la francophonie. Les choses importantes dans ce projet de loi :

L'Assemblée législative effectue ses travaux dans les deux langues. Les règlements sont bilingues.

Les tribunaux judiciaires et administratifs doivent pouvoir fonctionner en français. Les décisions importantes sont publiées dans les deux langues.

Les municipalités peuvent décider de fonctionner dans les deux langues. La loi reconnaît le caractère bilingue d'Ottawa.

Et la chose très importante est le rétablissement du bureau du commissaire indépendant aux services en français.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the notice for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice with respect to private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the notice for ballot item number 84 standing in the name of Mrs. Tangri be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is moving that the notice for ballot item number 84 standing in the name of Mrs. Tangri be waived. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1330

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order? The member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just a friendly reminder to my colleague the government House leader: I would ask that, in advance of these UCs, there actually is a copy of it that is sent over to ourselves so that we're aware of it. I know we've talked about it at House leaders', but we need to see them in writing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Technically, I don't think that was a point of order, but we appreciate the intervention of the member nonetheless.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the following changes be made to membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mr. Sandhu replaces Mr. Crawford, and Mr. Smith, Peterborough-Kawartha, replaces Mr. Downey; and

On the Standing Committee on Estimates, Mr. Crawford replaces Ms. Dunlop, Ms. Triantafilopoulos replaces Mr. Lecce, and Ms. Khanjin replaces Mrs. Martow; and

On the Standing Committee on General Government, Ms. Ghamari replaces Mr. Smith, Peterborough-Kawartha; Mr. Bailey replaces Ms. Kusendova; Mr. Sabawy replaces Ms. Hogarth; and Mr. Harris replaces Mr. Kanapathi; and

On the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, Mr. Bouma replaces Mr. Baber, Mr. Thanigasalam replaces Mr. Ke, Mr. Coe replaces Ms. Khanjin, Mr. Gill replaces Mr. Roberts, and that Mrs. Fee be removed; and

On the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Mrs. Tangri replaces Miss Mitas; Mr. Crawford replaces Mr. McDonnell; Mr. Cho, Willowdale, replaces Miss Surma; Ms. Andrew replaces Ms. Morrison; and Madame Gélinas replaces Ms. Sattler; and

On the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Ms. Triantafilopoulos replaces Ms. Dunlop, Mr. Coe replaces Mr. Romano, Mr. Bouma replaces Mr. Sarkaria, Ms. Kusendova replaces Ms. Park, and that Mr. Babikian be removed; Mr. Singh, Brampton East, replaces Ms. Singh, Brampton Centre; and Ms. Morrison replaces Miss Taylor; and

On the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, Mr. Smith, Peterborough-Kawartha, replaces Mr. Calandra; Mr. Anand replaces Mr. Rasheed; Mr. Barrett replaces Mr. Coe; and Mrs. Martow replaces Mr. Sandhu; and

On the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Ms. Kusendova replaces Mrs. Tangri, Mr. Babikian replaces Mr. Anand, Mr. Harris replaces Mr. Sabawy, Ms. Hogarth replaces Ms. Triantafilopoulos, and Mr. Kernaghan replaces Ms. Begum; and

On the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Rasheed replaces Ms. McKenna, Mr. Kanapathi replaces Mr. Coe, Mr. McDonnell replaces Mr. Harris, Ms.

Skelly replaces Miss Mitas; and Ms. Singh, Brampton Centre, replaces Mr. Singh, Brampton East.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that the following changes be made to membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mr. Sandhu replaces Mr. Crawford; Mr. Smith, Peterborough–Kawartha—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr. Jeff Burch: I have a petition from CUPE Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts represent an all-out attack on municipalities, health care, schools, universities and social services; and

“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts are harming families, children and the most vulnerable across Ontario, making the services we all rely on less accessible and accountable; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will strip workers of their charter-protected right to free collective bargaining; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will force front-line public sector workers to accept contracts below inflation, compounding cuts that make the delivery of services more difficult;

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

“That the government of Ontario stop dismantling our social infrastructure, properly fund our public services, withdraw Bill 124, and support communities, not cuts.”

I affix my signature and hand it to page Bernat.

FOOD SAFETY

Ms. Lindsey Park: It’s my privilege to rise today to present the following petition on behalf of my constituents.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many small businesses in Ontario, including many craft breweries, desire to provide a safe and pet-friendly space for their patrons; and

“Whereas approximately 40% of Canadian households have at least one dog and many members of those households like to socialize with other dog owners in pet-friendly spaces in our communities; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario ought to amend regulations to enable business owners the flexibility to allow patrons with dogs on their premises, where food is not being prepared; and

“Whereas many jurisdictions throughout the world allow patrons with dogs to frequent open marketplaces and

patios of restaurants and bars. Canadian provinces like New Brunswick, British Columbia and Alberta have all taken the lead in amending provincial regulations in order to give business owners the option of allowing dogs on their premises;

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

“That the government of Ontario amend regulations to enable a private business to permit individuals to bring dogs that are supervised in areas on their premises where no food preparation is taking place.”

I affix my name to this petition, and I hand it off to page Christian to table with the Clerks.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’d like to thank the hard-working members of CUPE Ontario and the hundreds of Ontarians who signed this petition. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts represent an all-out attack on municipalities, health care, schools, universities and social services; and

“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts are harming families, children and the most vulnerable across Ontario, making the services we all rely on less accessible and accountable; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will strip workers of their charter-protected right to free collective bargaining; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will force front-line public sector workers to accept contracts below inflation, compounding cuts that make the delivery of services more difficult;

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

“That the government of Ontario stop dismantling our social infrastructure, properly fund our public services, withdraw Bill 124, and support communities, not cuts.”

I’m proud to affix my signature, and I will give it to page Omar to take to the table.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas all animals are capable of aggressive behaviour; and

“Aggressive behaviour can be found among many breeds or crossbreeds of dogs; and

“Evidence shows that DNA is never a predictor of aggressive behaviour in dogs; and

“Breed-specific legislation ... is not an effective or cost-efficient solution to reduce aggressive behaviour of dogs; and

“The solution to preventing dog-related incidents is best addressed through comprehensive training and education programs, breed-neutral legislation promoting responsible ownership;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support a bill repealing breed-specific

language from the Dog Owners' Liability Act and Animals For Research Act and instead implement a comprehensive educational prevention strategy that encourages responsible dog ownership of all breeds."

FOOD SAFETY

Ms. Lindsey Park: It's my privilege to rise and present another petition today. On this one, I want to thank the member for Pickering-Uxbridge for collecting these signatures from residents of Durham region and all across Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, states that 'every room where food is prepared, processed, packaged, served, transported, manufactured, handled, sold, offered for sale or displayed shall be kept free from live birds or animals'; and

"Whereas low-risk food premises serving only beverages and/or only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods have for many years in this province allowed customers to be accompanied by their pet dogs for their convenience and social benefit; and

"Whereas the decision whether or not to allow dogs on site should be driven by the business needs of such premises, so long as sanitary and safe conditions are upheld;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create an exception to Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, for low-risk food premises serving only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods, for the benefit of all Ontario pet owners and the businesses that serve them."

I affix my name to this petition and hand it off to page Kiran to be tabled with the Clerks.

1340

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a pleasure to take my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin. This is a petition from people in Algoma Mills, Mindemoya and Whitefish Falls to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, titled "911 Emergency Response...."

"Whereas, when we face an emergency we all know to dial 911 for help; and

"Whereas access to emergency services through 911 is not available in all regions of Ontario but most Ontarians believe that it is; and

"Whereas many Ontarians have discovered that 911 was not available while they faced an emergency; and

"Whereas all Ontarians expect and deserve access to 911 service throughout our province;

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

"To provide 911 emergency response everywhere in Ontario by land line or cellphone."

I completely agree with this petition, put my name to it and present it to page Owen to bring down to the Clerks' table.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Andy Artingdale, who is from my riding and has been collecting these petitions. His wife has MS. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northeastern Ontario has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis (MS) in Ontario; and

"Whereas specialized MS clinics provide essential health care services to those living with multiple sclerosis, their caregiver and their family; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is recognized as a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Immediately set up a specialized MS clinic in the Sudbury area that is staffed by a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of multiple sclerosis, a physiotherapist and a social worker at a minimum."

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

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition here entitled "Don't Take Away Social and Economic Rights for Women and Marginalized People." It was shared with me by the Ontario Federation of Labour, and I'm actually very pleased to see my very, very dear friend Anne-Marie Sanchez as the first name on the list. It reads:

"Whereas Bill 47 erased many of the legislative gains achieved through Bill 148, the fairer labour laws and working conditions that had a particularly positive impact on women and marginalized people;

"Whereas statistics show that women, particularly women of colour, are most likely to be employed in precarious work, and the Bill 47 amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and Labour Relations Act, 1995 create conditions that lead to a growth in precarious employment while also eliminating protections for millions of Ontario workers;

"Whereas Bill 66 further erodes women's and marginalized people's social and economic rights; and

"Whereas the Ford government continues to remove, cancel or freeze funding for other supports, programs and regulations that would increase women's equality in the workforce and beyond;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to, at the very least:

"—reinstate paid sick days, the scheduled increase to a \$15 minimum wage, legislation to increase pay transparency, regulations that support equal pay for equal work, and all other worker protections gained under the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act;

"—reverse changes to daycare regulations that allow more children per caregiver;

"—reverse the retroactive cuts to funding for the Ontario College of Midwives;

"—reinstate funding increases to sexual assault centres;

"—restore the round table on violence against women; and

“—restore the child and youth advocate commissioner’s office.”

I fully endorse this petition and will affix my signature to it and provide it to page Mackenzie to deliver to the table.

EDUCATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled “No More Cuts to Education.” It was delivered to my office by students in Waterloo.

“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 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 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....;

“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.”

It is my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Pearl.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition in support of my bill to stop the unfair tolling of highways in Durham region.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

Support Bill 43 to “remove the tolls from the 412 highway and protect the planned 418 highway from any future tolls.”

I support it; it’s in support of my bill. I will affix my name and send it with page Owen to the Clerks.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jill Andrew: I proudly stand on behalf of student unions, the Canadian Federation of Students of Ontario, including students from my very riding of Toronto–St. Paul’s, George Brown campus at Casa Loma.

“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 couldn’t be more proud to affix my signature on these petitions.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The time for petitions is over.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING A SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC SECTOR FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 VISANT À PRÉSERVER LA VIABILITÉ DU SECTEUR PUBLIC POUR LES GÉNÉRATIONS FUTURES

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to implement moderation measures in respect of compensation in Ontario's public sector / Projet de loi 124, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre des mesures de modération concernant la rémunération dans le secteur public de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and welcome back to everyone in this Legislature.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to make the case for Bill 124, the proposed Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019. Before I begin, I want to say that I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the honourable member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

1350

I'd like to start by reminding my fellow members how we got to where we are today, the impetus for our action, and then I'll talk about where we propose to go with the bill currently before this House for consideration.

Here is the case for change. Here are the hard facts.

Fact: Over 15 years, the Liberals more than doubled the Ontario debt load.

Fact: Currently, Ontario owes \$1.5 million in interest on its debt every hour.

Fact: That means we're paying \$36 million every single day to sustain this debt without paying a penny back.

Fact: Public sector compensation represents roughly half of all government expenditures, totalling \$72 billion annually.

These facts are why we are here today.

The proposed legislation we are talking about today, the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, would enable the government to manage public sector compensation growth in a reasonable, fair, sustainable and balanced way.

Hon. Doug Downey: Hear, hear.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Absolutely.

It would help restore the province to a position of fiscal sustainability and demonstrate respect for taxpayer dollars. That is the very reason we are here today: to move forward and take a measured approach to fiscal sustainability.

I will be discussing the proposed legislation in greater detail shortly, but first, how we got here.

I want to bring the House back to a speech I delivered at the Canadian Club in April of this year on the challenge before us.

When our government took office, we knew the previous government was at odds with the independent Auditor General about the state of the province's financial deficit. In her review of the pre-election report on Ontario's finances, she concluded that the numbers were not a reasonable presentation of Ontario's finances. She followed up by saying, "In essence, the [previous] government is making up its own accounting rules." So we knew the deficit wasn't what the previous government said it was, but we didn't know how bad the picture truly was. That is why our government struck an Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry to review the government's accounting methods and advise us on the actual state of the province's deficit.

Thanks to the commission's diligent work, we received a clearer picture of the province's financial landscape. In short, the situation was dire and sombre. From the day we took office, the commission calculated the province's deficit for 2018-19 would be \$15 billion. We needed to act to rein in expenses wherever possible and work together to spend taxpayer dollars smarter. This required our government to take some immediate action, as well as some long-term strategic planning.

To start, we needed to have a frank conversation about what was actually fuelling the deficit. We needed to understand where Ontario's dollars were being spent, and how.

This is our rationale for action, Madam Speaker.

In July of 2018, we announced that EY Canada would conduct a detailed, independent analysis of government spending. The goal of this line-by-line review was to identify where our government could spend smarter and more efficiently.

We also took time to consult with the public through the Planning for Prosperity consultation, receiving more than 26,000 ideas for action, which were incorporated into their recommendations.

In September of 2018, we announced the results of the line-by-line review. It identified bold ideas to transform government programs and services, not for the sake of change, but to ensure sustainability, to ensure value for money and to ensure those programs do what they were intended to do: to serve Ontarians.

The report meticulously analyzed spending between 2002 and 2018. It found that the province's total operating expenditures had increased by \$46.4 billion even after accounting for inflation, a spending increase of an incredible \$2,226 per person in our province. This report also outlined how transfer payments, funding amounts that are passed from the government directly to organizations on the front lines like hospitals and schools, had grown by \$46.3 billion, representing 99.8% in total real growth in operating expenditures.

The picture the EY line-by-line review painted was deeply concerning. The Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry and the EY line-by-line review were

exercises we needed to undertake to move forward with responsible fiscal planning. They set a foundation for us to chart a path forward that would allow us to improve how we measure value for every taxpayer dollar spent. Based on that evidence, we moved swiftly to introduce a number of common-sense initiatives to help reduce unnecessary spending: things like cutting telephone land lines, reducing printing costs, freezing hiring for non-essential staff, and placing new restrictions on travel, meal and hospitality expenses for public servants.

One of those initiatives—one of my favourites—was cutting land lines. In the Treasury Board Secretariat alone this initiative is projected to save hundreds of thousands of dollars. This may seem like a drop in the bucket, but the people of Ontario know that it's only finding savings in nickels, dimes and dollars that you can change the household budget for the better.

This has been my focus as the President of the Treasury Board—to make taxpayer dollars go further for the people of Ontario, and to protect vital jobs and services—but I can't do it alone, and our government cannot do it alone; everyone needs to do their part, Madam Speaker. That's why I'm now going to speak about the moral imperative. I've heard members of the opposition question why we are so focused on restoring the fiscal health of the province. I want to make it clear to them here today that we view this not just as a financial imperative, but as a moral imperative. This isn't just a tag line; it's about the type of province we want to build together.

Without fiscal sustainability in the province, our loved ones are treated in hospital hallways, our schools fall into disrepair, our public services go unfunded and our neighbourhoods are less safe. Without fiscal sustainability in the province, we will continue to pay billions of dollars per year on interest.

For 15 years, the NDP sat by and effectively co-signed more than \$200 billion worth of additional debt. They cheered on as the Liberals' spending continued out of control. "More spending, more deficits," they called, and they are still making those calls even today. "Don't worry," they say. "We can solve higher spending by raising taxes," instead of addressing the foundational issue. Their permanent solution—the easy solution—is always to raise taxes.

I have to ask all members of the House: Is it acceptable that in the last 50 years, the province achieved a surplus in only nine fiscal years? Is it acceptable that after a decade of uninterrupted economic recovery, Ontario is still in a deficit situation thanks to the Liberals? Is it acceptable that Ontario's annual interest payments are larger than the annual budget of most provincial ministries, including what the province spends on colleges, universities and student aid combined? Is it acceptable to kick the debt can down the road, leaving our children and grandchildren to pick up the tab? Madam Speaker, the correct answer is no, no, no and no. Our government finds this unacceptable, and I reject this generational inequity outright. That is why we are determined to transform government to ensure sustainability for generations to come.

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Earlier this year, I spoke in this place about how we should see the treasury for what it is and what it is meant to be: a shared resource, an endowment for future generations that must be carefully tended to and managed. As President of the Treasury Board, it is my singular focus to ensure that this government's promise to get the province's finances back on track is realized. Let me be clear: The drive to build a strong fiscal foundation is a province-building moment. It's an opportunity to do government differently, because when we do, we get more than just financial stability; we get a province that works now and in the future, and that's something I think we can all get behind.

Let's talk about the fiscal imperative and the public accounts. We have taken and are embedding a new culture of fiscal accountability across all of government. I will defer to my colleagues to talk about some of those things in more detail when they address this House. But let me be clear: We began to see the positive impact of embedding effective, efficient and smarter decision-making in everything we do. We knew that we were on the right path. While we have not reached our destination, we are heading in the right direction.

Just last month, we tabled the public accounts of Ontario. The public accounts show that the 2018-19 deficit has fallen from a projected high, as identified by the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry, of \$15 billion back in August 2018 to \$7.4 billion as at March 31, 2019. The deficit fell, in part, due to higher revenues and lower expenses. I'm happy to report that the Financial Accountability Office agreed with our assessment.

Our government took office on the promise that we would spend Ontario taxpayers' dollars smarter and clean up 15 years of fiscal mismanagement. I'm proud to say that our plan is working. Since our government took office, employment has increased by over 270,000 jobs. After years of negative credit ratings under the previous government, Ontario's credit rating has been returned to stable.

We are pleased with the results of the 2018-19 public accounts. In particular, for the second year in a row, we received a clean opinion from Ontario's Auditor General. Our inherited deficit decreased in 2018-19, in part thanks to higher-than-anticipated revenues, reflecting strong business profits, a growing job market and higher consumer consumption, as well as lower-than-expected expenses.

While we've made historic investments in health care and education, we found efficiencies, reduced wasteful spending and enhanced controls by maintaining a restriction on discretionary spending across government; by putting an end to March madness, which saved more than \$150 million alone; and by implementing an Audit and Accountability Committee with parliamentary assistant Rudy Cuzzetto, who is here and will speak about it later.

This is the kind of accountability and smart decision-making Ontarians expect from their government. It's the kind of accountability that was lacking in public finances

for the last 15 years, and it's the kind of accountability that comes from a government doing things differently.

While the public accounts show we are making progress, we are far from finished. The government still has a significant deficit and an enormous amount of debt. Like a household budget, Ontarians know that only paying half of your credit card payment does not mean you're doing well financially.

We are being honest with Ontarians. As a province, we have a long road ahead to get our financial house in order, but we are committed to staying the course, because if we don't balance our budget, get our spending in order and reduce our debt, the long-term stability of our province and the services people depend on every day will be put at risk.

As a result of decisions made by the previous government, Ontario owes \$1.5 billion on its debt every hour. That's \$36 million a day. Let me repeat that statement. As a province, we are paying \$36 million on interest payments alone, every single day. That's \$36 million we could be investing directly back into improving the lives of people across this province. It's money that we could use to bring stronger education programs, better health care or updated and modern infrastructure.

For us, spending smarter means recognizing that every dollar government spends was taken from a hard-working Ontarian. It means we need to maximize the value of that dollar, looking at government expenditures in new and more critical ways and finding efficiencies that protect the long-term sustainability of public finances.

This is about rebuilding a province that allows the people of Ontario to flourish. This is about building a future where, when our kids finish school, instead of struggling to find a job and putting their future on hold, Ontario's bright young minds can put their creative talents to use and lead the world; a future where we enjoy world-class infrastructure and public transit, letting us get home to our families faster after work, no longer wasting hours a day on a hot subway car or standing in the cold waiting for a bus.

When we do government differently, we get more than just financial sustainability; we get a province that works for you.

Ontarians knew there was a way that government could spend their hard-earned tax dollars smarter. They knew that their government could be focused on putting the interests of people first.

We're proud of the responsible approach we're taking: spending smarter and treating Ontarians' money with respect.

Let me now talk about public sector compensation. As I mentioned earlier, we have a rare chance to truly transform government and embed fiscal responsibility and smart decision-making in everything that we do. As I've said, the EY line-by-line review of all government spending gave us a road map of government expenditures when we entered into office. It allowed us to see where and how we were spending and laid a foundation for us to identify opportunities to make smarter decisions about how

taxpayer dollars should be allocated, including when it comes to spending on public sector compensation.

I mentioned this earlier, but it's worth saying this again: Public sector compensation represents roughly half of all government expenditures for the government of Ontario, totalling \$72 billion annually and employing over one million people across multiple sectors. So in order to truly ensure that government was spending smarter, we needed to look at public sector compensation in a way that would ensure we managed the growth in a thoughtful and measured way.

I want to be very clear: Our government values the important role that public sector workers play in delivering programs and services to the people of Ontario. However, the landscape that we had before us, along with the moral imperative to act swiftly to ensure the sustainability of government programs and services, meant that we needed to make thoughtful choices about how to move forward. That led to consultations and Bill 124.

When it came to public sector compensation, we put together a plan—a plan to consult and to listen. On April 4, 2019, I announced that we would commence a new series of consultations with our public sector employers and bargaining agents. Our goal was to engage in a conversation about how compensation growth could be managed in a way that results in public sector wages that are reasonable, fair and sustainable. We put a number of options on the table for feedback. These options included: voluntary agreement to wage outcomes, lower than the current trend; trade-offs that would lead to reductions in compensation costs; and consideration of legislative measures.

We held these consultations with our public sector stakeholders from April 5 to May 24, 2019. During that time, 23 in-person sessions took place. These sessions were attended by 68 employer organizations in sectors covering more than 2,500 collective agreements and 57 bargaining agents, who collectively represent over 780,000 workers across all sectors of Ontario's public service. In short, all major bargaining agents attended and participated. Employer participants included colleges, universities, school board trustee associations, the Ontario Hospital Association and agencies. Bargaining agent participants included the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Service Employees International Union, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers' Federation.

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In addition, 47 written responses were also received. This included responses from the health care sector, namely Health Shared Services Ontario, on behalf of 14 local health integration networks, the Ontario Nurses' Association and SEIU Healthcare; and the education and post-secondary education sector, including the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Ontario Council of Educational Workers, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, the Coalition of Post-Secondary Workers of Ontario and the University of Toronto Faculty Association.

In total, we heard from employers and bargaining agents representing over one million employees across the public sector. It was with this information in hand that we decided to consider legislative measures while in tandem further exploring some of the ideas that were put forward during the consultation period.

On June 5, we introduced the proposed Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act. We also announced that we would continue to consult on the proposed legislation, and did so throughout the summer. These consultations informed decisions we made on amendments which Parliamentary Assistant Parsa will explain in further detail during his remarks.

If passed, the proposed legislation would enable the government to manage public sector compensation growth in a way that allows for reasonable wage increases while protecting our front-line workers and services. It would help to restore the province to a position of fiscal sustainability and demonstrate respect for taxpayer dollars.

The proposed legislation includes requirements that would allow for up to a 1% increase to salary and overall compensation for unionized and non-unionized employees in the Ontario public sector. The act would apply to the Ontario public service; provincial authorities, boards, commissions, corporations, offices or organizations in which a majority of directors, members or officers are appointed or chosen by the province, including Ontario Power Generation, the Independent Electricity System Operator and Ornge; school boards; colleges and universities; hospitals; and non-profit transfer payment recipients who received more than \$1 million in annual funding in 2018.

I have said this before, and I think it is vital to reiterate again: It's important to understand what the proposed legislation would do as well as what it would not do—and what it would do, I'll start with. This legislation, if passed, would—and this is a key part that the opposition seems to have been ignoring—still allow for salary increases above 1% if it is in-range movement and the increase is authorized under a collective agreement or compensation plan with regard to the employee's length of time and employment, an assessment of performance, or the employee's successful completion of a program or course of professional or technical education. It would set requirements that could allow for up to 1% increases to salary rates and overall compensation for unionized and non-unionized employees in the Ontario public sector, and it would apply for a period of three years, upon the expiry of existing collective agreements.

As to what this this legislation would not do if passed: It would not impact existing collective agreements; it would not impede the collective bargaining process; it would not impose a wage freeze; it would not impose a wage rollback; and it would not impose job losses.

The proposed legislation represents a fair and time-limited approach that applies across the provincial public sector. If passed, employees would still be eligible for compensation increases and they would retain the ability

to move through established salary ranges. They would also be able to negotiate terms and conditions. As I have said, compensation plays a major role in how the province can manage expenditures, representing half of all expenditures for provincial employees and totalling \$72 billion annually.

I want to reiterate that our government values the important role that all public sector workers play in delivering programs and services to the people of Ontario. In my role as President of the Treasury Board, I have seen the professionalism of public sector employees and how they have worked with us throughout this process.

We have made strides to make smart decisions and embed a culture of effective and efficient government in everything that we do. The proposed Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act would continue to build on that work, taking a fair and balanced approach.

We have stated clearly and often that our government is committed to protecting front-line workers and the vital services that they deliver. Enhancing this legislation would help to protect those very things.

But let me talk a little bit also about other ideas, and benefits pooling in particular.

We have reiterated that our government listens, and we have been clear that our goal has been to ensure that the province is fiscally sustainable while protecting vital services Ontarians rely upon. We also know we cannot achieve this goal with one blanket approach. Parliamentary Assistant Parsa will talk about some of the actions we have taken over the past year to achieve this goal during his remarks momentarily. But I would like to take a moment to talk about how we are acting on one of those things we heard in the consultation process.

During these discussions, both employers and bargaining agents expressed an interest in exploring a centralized benefits pooling model. By way of background, generally employers provide group life, health, dental and disability insurance coverage to employees and eligible dependants as part of their total compensation package. Plan design, coverage and governing terms may vary by employer within these four primary categories. Costs also vary, based on the level of risk associated with each employer's package.

Insurance pooling is effectively a practice where a group of employers can join together to secure better insurance rates and coverage terms by virtue of their increased buying power as a bloc. Currently, public sector group benefits administration is largely decentralized, and most broader public sector employees have independent policy holders or sponsor arrangements with an insurer.

By exploring a single-policy-holder model, we found that we could leverage the existing government program framework. Participants could access economies-of-scale benefits. Inclusion in a larger pool could insulate individual employers from adverse rate fluctuations, and we could provide flexibility for employers. Participants could elect to harmonize to a common plan design or maintain autonomy over their own plan design.

Ensuring such a pooling arrangement, with voluntary entry terms, could enable participants to access economies-of-scale advantages, cost savings and administrative efficiencies, along with enhanced, modernized plan design and better coverage terms for employees.

Because we are committed to working collaboratively with employers and bargaining agents to protect front-line services and public sector jobs, and to make Ontario fiscally sustainable, we decided that this was an idea with merit that we should pursue. So on October 9, we announced our intention to do just that. We are now consulting on this idea, to explore stakeholders' needs, find common objectives, define participant parameters, and develop a viable governance framework and strategy for implementation.

Through a benefits pooling model, we see the potential to spend smarter, address inefficiencies and duplication, and make it easier to leverage group buying power.

When we set out our intention to consult on the proposed Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, we were clear that we were consulting with the broader public sector in good faith and would consider all ideas that were put on the table. Madam Speaker, we have done just that.

In conclusion, since taking office, we have worked diligently and carefully to protect the vital programs and services that the people of Ontario rely on, like health care and education. Based on the evidence that we had before us, we've had to make some hard choices, but we have also been creative in how we do business. We have modernized and we have transformed.

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I've been clear: Our goal is to restore sustainability in our province's finances. We want to build an Ontario that works for everyone, and we are doing so in a way that is reasonable, fair and sustainable. We owe it to ourselves, our children and our grandchildren who live with the consequences of the decisions we make every day.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me the time to lay out our plan and how we are proposing to protect the sustainable public sector for future generations. I will now turn the floor over to my colleague Parliamentary Assistant Parsa.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you, Minister Bethlenfalvy, for your introduction and for the thorough review of why we're here today and why the proposed Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act is so important.

Here are the facts: From 2003 to 2018, the previous Liberal government increased Ontario's debt by nearly two and a half times, to \$360 billion. It's the highest subsovereign debt in the world. No other state, province or municipality in North America, or in fact in the world, is as indebted as we are here in Ontario. To put that in perspective, our debt is larger than the GDP of 75% of the world's countries. That means it's larger than the annual

GDP of New Zealand, Finland, Portugal and Vietnam, just to name a few.

As Minister of Finance Rod Phillips asked in a recent speech to the Empire Club: What did Ontario get for all the deficit spending? What assets do we have on the province's balance sheet to show for it? Here are the answers: Ontario has overcrowded hospitals and hallway medicine. Ontario has some of the worst traffic jams in North America. Ontario has declining math scores in our public schools.

Here is something else that Ontario got from its spending: a mandatory, unavoidable \$13-billion drain on the province's yearly budget. That's beyond unacceptable, Speaker.

As Minister Bethlenfalvy outlined in his remarks, when we took office there was an immediate need for action to protect the vital services Ontarians rely on and the workers needed to deliver them to Ontarians every single day. We had to restore sustainability to our province's finances by making smarter choices, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Our government has taken necessary steps to protect our hospitals, our transit system, our roads and our schools. As the minister outlined, the \$36 million we spend every day on servicing the debt is money that is not going to services we need. We burn \$1.5 million an hour, \$25,000 a minute or \$417 a second. In the time that it takes to buy a coffee, Ontario is charged the price of a new car to service the debt. That is a staggering amount of money going down the drain every single day, every hour and every minute.

This was allowed to go on year after year with no end in sight by the previous Liberal government. They left Ontario vulnerable, with a debt burden that gives us no fiscal room to respond in the event of an economic downturn. I'm sure my NDP colleagues would agree that something must be done here.

Today I'd like to talk about how we're achieving our goal of fiscal sustainability and smart governance in partnership with the public and our stakeholders. I'll talk about how we consulted in good faith, listened and acted accordingly.

As the minister mentioned, the proposed act is the result of thoughtful and inclusive outreach to employers, public sector bargaining agents and the general public. It's proof of our willingness to consider every idea that has been put before us.

On April 4, we announced our intention to consult on managing public sector compensation, a central part of the conversation on managing provincial expenditures. As Minister Bethlenfalvy outlined, public sector compensation represents roughly half of all expenditures, totalling \$72 billion annually and employing over one million people. Clearly, this is an area we couldn't ignore, so we began a series of consultations, with a focus on our public sector bargaining agents.

As Minister Bethlenfalvy outlined, and despite what our critics have insinuated, we held good-faith consultations on the proposed bill throughout the spring and summer.

The minister outlined who we spoke to, but I'd like to expand and talk about how we engaged with those groups and what we spoke about. During these consultations, we asked four specific questions. We first asked, "Are there any aspects of the collective agreement in your organization that affect the ability to manage overall compensation costs?" The question was meant to explore elements of the collective agreement that could help—or hinder—our ability to achieve sustainable compensation growth, and whether provisions that would work well in one sector may have unintended consequences in another.

The second looked at how opportunities to manage compensation growth could take different forms. For example, the September 2018 line-by-line review of government spending highlighted growth sharing, or gains sharing, as a way to manage compensation growth. Specifically, we asked, "Are there any tools to manage compensation costs that you believe the government should consider?"

The third question stated that, while no decision has been made, the government was considering legislated caps on compensation increases that could be negotiated in collective bargaining or imposed in binding arbitration. We invited feedback and asked for participants to give their thoughts on the approach.

The final question we asked looked at different approaches to managing compensation growth and overseeing collective bargaining in other jurisdictions or provinces. We asked, "Are there any tools applied in other jurisdictions which you think would work in Ontario? If so, what is the proposal and how does it work?"

I want to underscore that the employers and bargaining agents we talked to raised a number of issues and proposals for the government's consideration. Our questions generated responses, and we have taken them very seriously. The feedback we received through in-person sessions and written proposals was tracked, assessed and directly informed our government's proposed approach.

It's important to give everyone an idea of these issues raised during these good-faith consultations. To list a few, our government was told of the importance of the free collective bargaining process, the benefits of centralized collective bargaining, opportunities to achieve cost savings by pooling benefits, the importance of protecting public services and the workers that deliver them, and the complexities and unique features of each sector.

Furthermore, the employers and bargaining agents raised a number of key proposals. For example, our government heard about changes for governance and oversight of collective bargaining. We were told about enabling access to centralized benefits plan administration to reduce costs and take advantage of economy of all scales. Also flagged for our attention was the need for increased management flexibility on scheduling and contracting out.

Speaker, we gathered that information, we carefully assessed it and we used it to guide our current plan of action. Let me reiterate: We are a government that listens. Unlike the previous Liberal government, which ran out of

ideas years ago and ignored promising avenues for innovation, our government has asked hard questions to generate good ideas so that we can build a better Ontario together.

As Minister Bethlenfalvy stated earlier, we introduced Bill 124 on June 5. The bill would enable the government to manage compensation growth while allowing for reasonable wage increases and protecting front-line services. Minister Bethlenfalvy has said this before, and I think it's important to say it again: We must be clear about this legislation would mean and what it would not mean. It would establish a framework allowing for up to 1% increases to salary and overall compensation for unionized and non-unionized employees in the Ontario public sector. These provisions would apply for a period of three years upon the expiry of existing collective agreements. Existing collective agreements would not be ripped up, and this legislation would not impede the collective bargaining process or the right to strike.

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The Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act would not impose a wage freeze, a wage rollback or job cuts. Employees would continue to be eligible for compensation increases and retain the ability to move through established salary ranges. They would still be able to negotiate terms and conditions of employment. This is a fair and time-limited approach that would apply across the provincial public sector.

When we proposed this legislation, we committed to continuing to consult over the course of the summer and welcomed further feedback on our path forward. Our goal throughout this process was to be inclusive and to listen. I wish the opposition would finally hear us and accept the plain fact that we have done so successfully.

Following the introduction of the proposed bill, the government wrote to all stakeholders who participated in the spring consultations and invited them to review the draft measures and continue to provide feedback on the proposed approach. For an additional 15 weeks over the summer, we received input from employers, partner ministries, bargaining agents and other stakeholders. The additional feedback we received included questions, comments, ideas and proposals. Each idea was thoroughly reviewed and vetted. In that review, we saw questions about who is exempt from the proposed legislation and questions and comments about the impact of the legislation on interest arbitration. This feedback gave the government an opportunity to respond to those questions and concerns. It allowed us to maintain a dialogue on what the proposed legislation meant, and it allowed us to further assess ideas or proposals for policy and legislative impact.

As we worked through the feedback, we asked ourselves: What is the policy issue? Does the issue require amendments to the legislation? What are the other impacts or considerations? Can the issue be addressed without legislative changes, and, if so, what other policy lever could be used to deal with the problem?

I want to underline that we consulted in good faith. Not only did we open our approach to consultations, but we

followed up, we assessed and reassessed at every step, and we incorporated feedback.

In fact, as a direct result of these consultations, we intend to propose changes. These changes prove once again that the opposition is out of touch with the people of Ontario.

Although our government announced these consultations loud and clear, the opposition found a way to miss it. However, even then, surely someone, some stakeholder must have told the NDP that they had participated in the consultation process.

We are a government that listens. We are committed to restoring the province's fiscal health, and we are building Ontario together.

Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to explain some of the amendments our government intends to bring forward at the committee stage, should the act pass second reading. These are amendments that were informed by both internal deliberations and the public consultation process. They would, if passed, clarify the intent of the legislation and ensure it is consistently and equitably applied to workers in the Ontario public service and the broader public sector.

There are six issues in total, and I'd like to go through three of them now.

The first amendment would, if passed, exempt Indigenous communities and Indigenous community-run organizations from the proposed legislation. It would exempt organizations like First Nations police services and create consistency with our approach to exempt municipalities. We recognize the unique circumstances of our Indigenous communities and the public sector workers within them. It was never our intent to include them with this legislation, and this amendment clarifies the intent.

Another amendment would allow exceptions to address conversions from single-employer pension plans to jointly sponsored pension plans and create regulatory power to add exceptions in other circumstances. We recognize that the flexibility to deal with specific circumstances is appropriate, and the amendment would grant the minister more discretion while maintaining consistency, oversight and accountability. It would also spell out the circumstances under which the minister could consider an exemption. One circumstance would be a change in a pension plan type. This amendment would allow increases in salary rates above 1% if they are fully offset by increases in employee pension contributions, where employers are moving from a single-employer pension plan to a jointly sponsored pension plan. We are building a flexible system to manage compensation growth, and the amendment could allow for additional exceptions if they support long-term cost savings.

The last amendment I'll discuss would clarify that agreements reached and signed in good faith on or before June 5, 2019, but not ratified by that date, would not be reopened by the proposed legislation. It would push out the moderation period for agreements resulting from arbitration awards brought down between June 5 and passage. It would also provide a new regulatory authority

to push out the moderation period for negotiated agreements reached between June 5 and the passage of the legislation.

We have been clear that we respect the collective bargaining process, and this legislation does not interfere with the ability of public sector bargaining agents to collectively bargain or to rely on a collective agreement reached before this bill was introduced. This amendment would clarify that any signed agreement, such as collective agreements, memoranda of settlement or memoranda of understanding, which was signed on or before June 5, 2019, but was either not ratified at the time or was to take effect at a later date, would not be reopened by the proposed legislation.

Arbitration awards from the summer won't need to be reconsidered. Moderation periods for employees covered by those awards will be pushed out, because arbitrators could not presume the will of this House and they applied the law that was in force at that time.

Lastly, negotiated settlements reached prior to passage and ending before December 31, 2021, can be reviewed and their moderation period pushed out by minister's regulation, to start upon expiry of the agreement.

Officials at Treasury Board Secretariat have worked diligently to prepare these amendments to the proposed bill, guided by internal deliberations and feedback from stakeholders, experts and the people of Ontario. We believe these important amendments would strengthen this proposed legislation and clarify the government's intent.

I want to thank everyone who sent in their feedback to the government and made their voices heard. I want to reassure you that we have been listening. We look forward to reviewing amendments submitted by the opposition parties and to having a robust debate on the ways we can further strengthen this bill.

Speaker, we've been clear that our goal is to restore fiscal stability to Ontario's finances while ensuring our government is effective and efficient. We remain committed to fixing the mess that the Liberals left over their 15 years in power. Introducing the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act is only one part of this work. As we all know, transformation cannot be achieved in silos. Everyone needs to do their part, and our government has stepped up to the plate.

For example, earlier this year, Minister Bethlenfalvy announced that our government was taking steps to address March madness, the excessive and unnecessary spending that typically takes place at the end of the fiscal year, when ministries try to spend whatever is left over in their annual budgets. I'm talking about spending on things like iPhones, new office furniture, excess office supplies and extra video equipment.

From mid-February until March 31, 2019, we took action to limit spending to existing commitments and to the things that are needed to fulfill our core services. We told ministries not to enter any new funding commitments without direction to do so from the Treasury Board.

By implementing year-end expenditure management, discretionary spending controls and targeted measures, the

government saved 150 million of taxpayers' dollars in the last fiscal year, Madam Speaker.

We advanced our commitment to restore trust and accountability to the province's finances and to spend Ontario's money smarter. This is a concrete example of how we are doing government differently. We built on the foundation we laid when we entered office and delivered on our promises. We improved how our government measured value for every taxpayer dollar it spends. In the process, we started a desperately needed culture change in government after 15 years of Liberal mismanagement.

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We understand that getting a handle on our fiscal state requires both short-term action and long-term planning. Part of our government's commitment to fiscal responsibility and smarter spending includes looking closely at how we do business. We need to find new ways to operate that enable us to modernize and work efficiently.

Earlier this year, on March 18, we announced a plan to save \$1 billion a year by implementing smarter supply chain practices and reducing inefficiencies across government. For far too long, smart supply chain practices were being ignored in Ontario. We saw a tremendous opportunity to leverage the volume of purchasing across the Ontario public service and broader public sector, ensuring purchasing was more competitive and achieved the least best value for taxpayers.

We looked at our supply chains and how we manage the flow of purchases across all of government. We are working with stakeholders to begin using leading supply chain practices to find the best way to centralize the province's public sector supply chain system and streamline back-office processes. We will leverage the government's buying power to realize significant savings, improve outcomes for end users, provide consistent access to high-quality products and provide greater value for money for the people of Ontario.

This initiative has a projected savings of \$1 billion per year. It's about responsible public administration that respects the millions of taxpayer dollars that are invested in the Ontario public service and the broader public sector, from health care products like pacemakers and bandages to technical items like computers and IT hardware.

Supply chain centralization requires long-term thinking, and we have put key initiatives in place to ensure it happens. Ontario is committed to building a modern and integrated public sector supply chain system that will drive significant cost savings and streamline processes while making it easier for businesses of all sizes to work with government. At the end of the day, we're changing the culture of government, a change that is a long time coming and desperately needed. We're doing it in a way that helps us find solutions to Ontario's biggest challenges so we can focus on the programs and services we all rely on. Madam Speaker, we're doing it for the people of Ontario.

For far too long, Ontario has been operating unchanged and unchallenged. As businesses have modernized to meet the changing needs of their clients, their government has needlessly lagged behind. Inefficient and outdated

processes mean government can't respond to the people's needs in a timely and cost-effective way. So throughout this past year we've gone across the province hearing directly from you, and we've listened. From round tables to kitchen tables, these conversations have guided every decision we've made about our government's finances. We introduced the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act because our goal has been to build a smart and sustainable system that puts the people at the centre of everything we do.

We know Ontarians think that government is too slow, too complicated and too bureaucratic. We have an opportunity to change the culture of government, to focus on outcomes and improve the customer experience for all Ontarians. Ontario is ready for change and ready for smarter government. This is why Premier Ford and our government announced that we will be implementing a variety of smart initiatives to streamline and improve services, fix inefficiencies and build government that's responsive to the people. We are, after all, Madam Speaker, a government for the people.

Some of these initiatives are familiar and some are new, but what they all have in common is a focus on outcomes and improving the customer experience. Together, these smart initiatives will change government for the better in four key ways. They will modernize services and make use of our digital and shared service models. They will find ways to deliver programs and services more efficiently. They will ensure that government funding is directed to those who need it most. Finally, they will maximize the value of government assets and put them to their most productive use.

We're working across ministries to identify savings throughout government. We're breaking down silos and taking a holistic approach to how government functions. We're looking at the Ontario public service and the broader public sector through a results-driven lens to find efficiencies, root out duplication and maximize the quality of services at every opportunity. Together, these projects represent an immense opportunity to build a smarter government and protect our public sector now and for future generations.

Speaker, I can't tell you how excited I am about this, and I am looking forward to our government's rollout of these initiatives. Minister Bethlenfalvy and our entire government have a plan, and it is working. Everything we do is aimed at ensuring the fiscal health of our province. It's at the forefront of our decision-making because, without it, the long-term sustainability of our social services would be in question.

As I've mentioned, the province's economic situation demands that we take action to do things differently and to do things smarter. We have been clear in our mandate that we are committed to doing just that. We are the only party in recent Ontario history to do so. We have taken important steps to direct government spending towards the vital programs and services that Ontarians rely on.

In December 2018, we announced the expansion of the Transition Exit Initiative, an option enabling many

employees to apply for voluntary exit from the Ontario public service. In tandem, we implemented the Voluntary Exit Program, a new initiative that expanded voluntary options to those in the Ontario public service who had not previously been eligible. These initiatives support our government's goal of creating a culture of efficiency within the Ontario public service, a culture that places the focus on protecting front-line services and workers while ensuring that we're doing all we can to spend smarter. Both the Transition Exit Initiative and the Voluntary Exit Program gave employees more choice and flexibility regarding their individual career paths. It shows our commitment as a government to choice and fairness. These policies also provided the flexibility to redeploy resources towards priority areas where they were needed most.

Between December 2018 and February 2019, the government received approximately 3,300 applications. I'm delighted that as of March 31, 2019, approximately 2,400 of those applications had been approved. The results are clear: The estimated total savings of these voluntary exit options are estimated at approximately \$317 million by the end of 2021-22. The ongoing annual fiscal benefit of those programs is estimated to be approximately \$215 million.

Speaker, I've talked about the various types of savings today, referencing small and larger amounts. Our government is achieving these savings by using the tools available to us, listening to new ideas and offering employees more choices regarding their career journey. This is the culture change our government is creating. This is undoing the damage from 15 years of Liberal mismanagement. Ensuring the sustainable economic health of the province and making smarter choices means being creative and implementing policies and initiatives that will make a real difference for the people. We've taken appropriate, effective, concrete action to protect programs, jobs and services. And, most importantly, we've done so in a way that is measured and focused. We remain committed to finding the most efficient and effective way to run the province, enable smarter transformation and allocate resources where they are needed most.

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Our government has been clear that, in order to restore sustainability to our province's finances and transform government, everybody needs to do their part. And while that includes making difficult choices, it also—

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's very interesting to hear the Treasury Board president weave a narrative on Bill 124 which runs counter to so many opinions on this piece of legislation. Of course, this piece of legislation was tabled 145 days ago, when we last sat in this House. It has been hanging over every collective agreement bargaining process since that time.

We have a legal opinion from Goldblatt Partners, and they say, "Bill 124 contains an unusually lengthy set of rules that appear designed to limit the ability of both individual workers and unions to challenge the legislation itself or decisions made under it.

"With respect to direct challenges to the law, Bill 124 removes the jurisdiction of either the Ontario Labour Relations Board or labour arbitrators to inquire into either the constitutionality of the act or its consistency with the Human Rights Code."

Of course we're concerned about this piece of legislation. It goes on to say that "Bill 124 also contains a number of provisions designed to prevent persons from seeking legal remedies."

It also gives the minister the ability to void collective agreements or arbitration awards—"to be exercised in the minister's 'sole discretion.'" So of course he feels okay about it. All of this power just came to the minister. If the Liberals had tried these tricks in the last sitting, the Conservatives we used to serve with would be outraged by this move.

It's interesting to hear the parliamentary assistant say that they have to make smart choices. What has this government done? They're spending \$30 million fighting the federal government on pricing pollution, which the Supreme Court of Canada has determined is within the constitutional mandate of the federal government, and spending \$100 million ripping up the Beer Store contract to put Coors Light in corner stores. Talk about priorities in the province of Ontario—you are lost, lost, lost.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'm happy to have the opportunity to join the debate today on Bill 124.

As we have heard from the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, Ontario's debt is currently at \$360 billion. It's the largest subnational debt in world. That's over \$25,000 of debt for every, man, woman and child in the province, and it continues to grow every minute of every day.

The risk of interest rate hikes is also a significant challenge. Consider this: An interest rate increase of only 25 basis points would cost Ontario taxpayers an additional \$100 million a year in interest payments. Madam Speaker, if your household was spending \$1,000 more than your income every month, what would you do? I'll tell you what you would do: Most Ontarians would do exactly what our government has been doing. We need to approach the province's budget like the majority of families would approach their own household budget in this situation: with a meaningful debt reduction strategy. Like any family, we must live within our means, pay down our credit cards and spend smarter.

Of course, the first step in getting our fiscal house in order is to in fact stop digging, and that's exactly what we're doing with Bill 124. Rather than leaving our children and grandchildren vulnerable to economic downturns with a legacy of debt they need to pay off, we must act now to ensure our public services are available to meet the needs of future generations.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to respond to some of

the comments that were made by the President of the Treasury Board and the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Whenever people on that side of the House, the government members, stand up to talk about Ontario's financial and economic well-being, the only thing they ever talk about is reducing public sector salaries. They're so uncreative, Speaker. We're actually adding to Ontario's deficit and debt by some of the measures they have taken—eliminating the higher-income surtax. These are things that are going to increase the size of our debt.

Now what they are doing, like the Liberals before, is, they are attacking front-line public sector workers. We know where that went with the Liberals with Bill 115, when the Liberals tried to remove collective bargaining rights from education workers in this province. The Supreme Court ruled clearly that it was not legal for the government to do this.

What we see with this government is, they're taking a modified but very similar approach and going after public sector workers in this province. These are the people who deliver the most vital services that Ontarians rely on. They're people who work in long-term-care homes. They're people who work in children's aid societies and ensure child welfare. They're people who work in school boards and colleges and universities. They're people who work in public hospitals. These public services need to have stability. People need to have confidence that these services are going to be there when they need them. Instead, this government is throwing these services into uncertainty, opening the door to chaos and further undermining those services that people need to rely on.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Madam Speaker, it's an honour to rise to speak in favour of Bill 124.

Our government took office on the promise that we would clean up 15 years of waste, scandal and mismanagement. As the minister noted earlier, we inherited a \$15-billion deficit, according to the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry. The public accounts show that this has been cut in half, to \$7.4 billion, as of March 31, 2019. And for the second year in a row, we received a clean audit opinion from the Auditor General. Since last June, employment has increased by over 270,000 jobs right here in this province of Ontario. And after years of credit downgrades under the previous government, Ontario's credit rating is finally improving.

I'm proud to say that our approach is working. We're getting this province's finances back on track, and Bill 124 is an important part of this process. Some members opposite propose that we raise taxes instead. But the one thing we heard over and over at the doors last year is that life has been getting harder and less affordable for Ontarians.

Speaker, my constituents of Mississauga–Lakeshore believe it is very important that our government get our fiscal house in order, and I know that other members here heard the same thing as well.

We will focus on spending restrictions and not raising taxes. That is what Bill 124 will deliver.

Once again, I urge all members to support this very important bill for the people of Ontario, our children and the future generations of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I return to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for a two-minute reply.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Waterloo, Oakville North–Burlington, London West, and of course my colleague at the Treasury Board from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Speaker, the actions that we're proposing to take with Bill 124 are profoundly necessary. Ontario pays \$36 million in interest on its debt every day. It's costing us an average of \$1.5 million every hour. Public sector compensation accounts for roughly half of all provincial expenditures, totalling \$72 billion annually.

To restore fiscal sustainability and protect the services Ontarians rely on, we must act. Bill 124 would enable the government to manage public sector compensation growth in a reasonable and balanced way.

To understand the state of Ontario's finances when we took office, we struck the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry. We learned that the situation was dire and we immediately began to lay out long-term strategic planning. In July 2018, we announced that EY Canada would conduct a detailed independent analysis of government spending. The review identified where government could spend smarter and measure value better for every tax dollar it spends.

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Members of the opposition may question why we're so focused on Ontario's fiscal health. Without the fiscal health of the province, our loved ones are treated in hospital hallways, our schools fall into disrepair and our neighbourhoods are less safe. The economic sustainability of Ontario is both a moral and fiscal imperative. This is a province-building moment. It's an opportunity to do government differently, and the facts are clear, Speaker, that we are on the right path.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is exciting to be back, isn't it? I'm excited. I was looking forward to the Premier's new tone in the House. I thought that would be something that we could look forward to. I was tired of the high-fiving and the back-slapping and the standing ovations, and do you know what? Credit to you—it was about 15 minutes before you were able to not contain yourself when we had our first standing ovation. Keep it up with the tone. I think that's really important.

But I'm here to say that it isn't your tone that's the problem; it's your regressive policies. We have been away for five months—five months' time for all of us to do some reflecting. In that time, the government might have taken note of some of their poll numbers that don't show that your popularity is improving. In fact, it continues to slide. It's not your tone. There was a recent poll that showed only

26% people of Ontario approve of the Premier's performance. That's not very good. Another poll showed that during the recent federal election, 63% of respondents said that Ford's policies made them much less likely or somewhat less likely to vote Conservative at the federal level.

Let me reiterate: You can say what you want quietly or politely, but it's the same words and the same policies that have gotten you into this trouble in terms of your popularity with the electorate.

After five months, I guess we expected maybe a real change from this government, but—what do they say in French? “Plus ça change, plus ça reste le même.” We have the same thing here. We've got the same Premier Ford cut-first-ask-questions-later schemes that have already shown that they are hurting Ontario families.

The thing that hasn't changed is that we still have families with children with autism marching on Queen's Park. In fact, they've been living with months and months of uncertainty. I think it's 18 months that they still haven't heard from the minister what their policies are going to be to address their concerns. I heard a woman today, a mother, saying, “Tick-tock, Todd. It's time for us to get a response to what these services are going to be like.” Time is marching on for these families.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: “Tick-tock, Todd.”

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, “Tick-tock, Todd.” I thought it was good.

We have a government that tried to rip away services from municipalities—like child care, public health and paramedics services—after budgets were passed. We know that the government has backpedalled on that, but he has only delayed those cuts. They're not going away. They're coming sometime soon.

We've been hearing all across the province some of the concerns that we have that are ongoing in our health care sector, child care and our education sector. I rose in the House this morning to ask a question of the Premier about what they were planning to do about code zeroes we've had in Hamilton and Ottawa. Just in the last week, code zero events, which mean that at any given time—in fact, in Hamilton, it was three and a half hours where there was absolutely no ambulance available to take people to the hospital. Those are some pretty serious concerns, and so you would think, after five months of soul-searching, coming back with this new tone and understanding the slide in their polls and understanding the crisis that we're facing in many of these sectors, that we would have something on the books that was more important than this, but no. In fact, top of the batting order, the first thing we're dealing with, is Bill 124, one of the most regressive pieces of legislation that you can imagine in the province of Ontario.

Bill 124 targets who? It targets our public sector workers. Really, what do our public sector workers do? They work in our schools. They work in our hospitals and our long-term care. Some public sector workers are school bus drivers. They're EAs. These are the front-line service people. These aren't your top-of-the-line bureaucrats.

These aren't these hugely well-paid public servants that most people think of. These are front-line, hard-working Ontarians who are delivering, day in and day out, and, I would say, in a heroic fashion, considering the conditions of these systems. They deserve praise. They don't deserve to be attacked by this government.

To set the tone for what this government is doing to our public sector workers, I'm just going to read something that came from our leader, Andrea Horwath, that she released following the first time that Bill 124 was introduced in the House. It is as appropriate now as it was when this bill was introduced—in June, was it?

“Doug Ford's wage cap will hurt Ontario families by setting the stage for disruptions to the front-line services they count on, like education and health care. Public-sector workers are the people who make our province work by caring for our loved ones, keeping our roads safe and teaching our children every day.

“This is exactly the kind of behaviour we have come to expect from” this “government. We saw it when” the Premier “ripped away services from children with autism before consulting with families. And we saw it” again when the Premier “tried to retroactively cut provincial funding for municipal services like child care and land ambulances and public health.

“Now we see it when he goes after people like child care workers, school bus drivers, nurses and children's mental health workers without any attempt to negotiate.

“Ontario families and the people who make our province work deserve so much better” than this. “This government must consult before making any decisions, not cut first and ask questions later.”

And that's what we are seeing again with this government.

The stated purpose of Bill 21—pardon me, Bill 124; that was a little rollback in time—is that the government wants to ensure that increases in public sector compensation reflect the fiscal reality of the province. That begs two questions—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Then that begs two questions that the minister might be prepared to answer, which are: What really is the fiscal reality of this province? And why is this government attacking the public sector?

Hon. Bill Walker: Sadly, with you propping them up, it's dire.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The Associate Minister of Energy will come to order.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Let's just talk about the fiscal reality in Ontario. We heard a lot of numbers from the government on the other side. It would be hard to blame people in Ontario if they started to shut their ears to these numbers, because this is a government that throws numbers around. Really, people's confidence in what this government says around finance is kind of dropping, just like your poll numbers are dropping.

We did have a commission of inquiry that stated that the deficit was \$15 billion. I sat on that commission. We

heard evidence over and over again that was already in the public record. But, in fact, this \$15 billion was a target, most people believe—I'm not as cynical—that was set like that as an excuse or a leverage to cut services. Lo and behold, that's what we are seeing before us.

This moving target of a deficit—at some point, we had a deficit that was \$3.7 billion larger than 2018-19, so you increased the deficit. In fact, now we see, based on the FAO numbers, that the deficit in fact is \$4.3 billion less than projected in the budget. This may seem like good news, but this really begs the question: What is the deficit, and how is this government measuring it, and what is it that you are using this deficit for, as an excuse to do what?

I would like to also add that these deficit numbers represent a significant decline in revenue. If we're talking about the fiscal reality and dealing with the fiscal reality, as Bill 124 is talking about, we need to really look at your policy decisions and how your policy decisions have negatively affected the finances of the province of Ontario.

Let's start with cancelling the cap-and-trade program. Let's talk about \$1.9 billion in forgone revenue, with no plans to replace that revenue—\$1.9 billion in a plan that was returning revenue to the province and addressing our climate crisis. There is nothing to replace that on behalf of the government.

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We have a government that also likes to spend a lot of money on things that they think are important. We here on this side think that the public sector is important, that those workers are important. But this is a government that did not bat an eye when it came time to spend \$30 million on a partisan campaign against a price on pollution. So not only are you taking \$1.9 billion in lost revenue; you're going to spend money fighting this in court. That's \$30 million that we feel, and we believe that you should feel, would be better spent in schools, better spent in our hospitals and in our long-term-care centres, not on lawyers. But as we have said before many, many times, this appears to be a government for the lawyers.

Instead of being climate change deniers and spending taxpayers' money on this—and not dropping a court challenge, as the Premier had promised—this government, rather than picking on public sector workers to try to reduce their deficit, should look at what they are spending and what they are doing with their policy decisions. People see this government wasting taxpayer dollars. You can talk a good game about putting money back in the taxpayer's pocket or you can talk about all of this, but when it comes right down to it, you are wasting significant taxpayers' dollars, and doing it in such a—I don't know; it's hard not to mock you when it comes to some of the things that you're doing. Stickergate is a perfect example of a government that's prepared to waste money.

Ms. Suze Morrison: They don't even stick.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. You are spending all kinds of money threatening gas station owners with fines to put up your—really, “government propaganda” are the words we use. The irony of this is, these are stickers that don't even stick. You can't make this up. It would be funny if it

wasn't such a serious waste of time and resources, and on top of that, an infringement on gas station owners' civil rights, that they are being forced by this government to put this kind of compelled speech on equipment that they own. It's again a perfect example of the irony of what this government says, the fancy words, the pretty words, and in fact what they are doing.

Some of the other revenue that this government has turned away is with the sale of Hydro One. When Kathleen Wynne previously sold Hydro One, we saw a reduction in the revenue that the province of Ontario receives from Hydro One. This is a government that has no plans to replace that revenue or bring some of Hydro One back into public ownership, which is something that the people of Ontario made perfectly clear that they wanted to see. They wanted to see a public asset like Hydro One return to public hands. Not only do we not own that now, but we have lost the revenue that that was generating.

We also have a government that—despite all the rhetoric, despite sitting in a financial commission of inquiry where they wanted to get to the bottom of Kathleen Wynne's unfair Fair Hydro Plan—is continuing on with the Fair Hydro Plan. That cost to subsidize hydro bills is \$4.2 billion. That's a lot of money that could be spent in our schools, in our hospitals, in our long-term care. All the while, hydro bills are not going down; hydro bills are continuing to go up. It seems to me that the Premier promised very vociferously that hydro bills were going to be going down 12%, but we're all going to see on November 1 that hydro bills, in fact, are going to go up. So why—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry will come to order.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I think the Minister of Natural Resources didn't get the memo about the new and improved tone in the House, but we can work with that, I think.

So why target the public sector? Why the public sector? Why are you picking on the workers who keep our roads safe, our families safe, educate our young folks? Why is this a target? I guess some people would say, “Because it's an easy target,” which would be something that might make sense with this government's previous legislation. But I would like to say that front-line workers' salaries are not responsible for Ontario's deficit. I just listed all of the things that this government is doing, forgoing revenue and wasting taxpayers' dollars. That is something that probably has a greater impact on our deficit than the salaries of front-line workers.

I would have to say that the notion that public sector workers are overpaid and make exorbitant salaries is not really the case, and I think that needs to be clearly addressed. The Minister of Labour's own data shows that workers' wages in the public sector have not kept up with inflation for the last 10 years, and so what Bill 124 is only going to make what is already an untenable situation for most workers in the province worse.

These, again, are low-wage front-line workers, often part-time workers, often women. These are the workers in the services that we rely on, providing vital services, and these are the very workers that Bill 124 is attempting to attack. Reducing the deficit on the backs of these workers is outrageous. These are workers who keep these systems afloat. Despite the cutbacks from this government, despite cuts in funding, they're there holding this together with a hope and a prayer—and this is who the government decides to attack.

I think that one of the biggest outrages of this bill is the fact that this is a government that has signalled, loud and clear, that they don't respect and they don't value the services of these workers in the province of Ontario. We need to properly fund public services, and treat these workers with dignity and the respect that they have earned by the hard work that they put in every single day.

I think it's important, again, if we look at what sectors we are talking about and who these workers are who are now facing these unjust cuts and this unjust violation of their bargaining rights. The health care sector is a sector that Bill 124 applies to. So, who are we talking about in the health care sector? We're talking about the nurses in our hospitals, who work in those hospitals every single day. We're talking about the nurses in our emergency wards, who are dealing with the code zeroes that I talked about. These are nurses who are delivering dignified care in the best way they can in those undignified circumstances that patients are finding themselves in—hallway medicine. These are the very workers who this government has decided to attack.

On top of that, this is a government that seems to continue to seem to know all the answers. They really don't like to consult. I think that they know what is best for everyone, and clearly they've shown that they think they know what's best for everyone. But I think it would be important if I were to read a statement from the president of the Ontario Nurses' Association, who has severe criticisms of this legislation. They went on to say:

"There was no meaningful dialogue or exchange of ideas or options prior to this announcement. The government refused ONA's request for further information...."

"Health and social service sector workers have seen below-inflation wage increases, and nurses have been working with record-low staffing levels, which equates to less than adequate numbers of nurses at their bedside."

We know this; we hear these stories every single day, day in and day out. I hear them from my constituents in Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas who call to talk about their experiences having to wait for an ambulance, having to wait in a hallway. I shared with you that I had an experience with my father, who had to spend almost four nights in a hallway, and the only thing that made that experience bearable was the care of the nurses in those hospitals.

This is not a public sector worker who deserves to be treated like this. These are public sector workers who deserve to be respected, who deserve to be consulted and deserve to be listened to. This is a government that is

planning to upend our health care system. Not only is this a government that is underfunding this health care system, providing essentially inflationary cuts to our health care system; not only is this a system that is underfunded; now we're going to make sure that the workers are underpaid as well. That is no way to deliver health care to the people of Ontario, and it's not what people expected a government in the province of Ontario to do. After years and years of raising the alarm about hallway medicine, we have a government that is going to make this horrible situation even worse with this regressive legislation.

You know, it's so hard to believe that I can stand up here and talk about cuts to the wages of people who work in our long-term-care homes, or cuts to the wages of the people who deliver home care to our seniors. It's almost unfathomable that this is a government that thinks these workers deserve to be treated in this way.

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We're primarily talking about personal support workers, and as we all know—and you hear it from your constituents and we hear it from ours—the home care system and our long-term-care homes in the province of Ontario are hanging by a thread, and the only way that this even continues to be tenable is because of personal support workers who work unpaid hours, who work extraordinarily long hours, who put in the extra care because they care about their patients. As one worker said to me, "With these patients, these are people we know. We know their families, we know their stories, and we're more than likely to spend the last few minutes of their life with them." So they care about this system, but it's quite clear that this is a government that doesn't care about them and doesn't value what they do in those long-term-care homes. Our seniors and the people that tend to them do not deserve to be treated in such a callous way and such a heavy-handed way by this government.

In my riding of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas we have Wentworth Lodge, a long-term-care facility, and we had an occasion to meet with some of the staff there. I think of Jean Kirby, someone who has worked long and hard many, many years at Wentworth Lodge providing the kind of dignified care that we would all expect and hope would happen when our families and loved ones need to be in long-term care. Some of the stories that they told us about trying to keep the system afloat are just outrageous; they are unbelievable. They actually said that because they are so short-staffed, and because their staff is really so physically and emotionally exhausted from trying to work in such a broken system, they have to make all kinds of compromises that they never expected would be asked of them. They have to start getting residents up and out of bed at 4:30 in the morning. They're waking seniors up out of bed, they are getting them dressed and they sit them in the hallway, all so that they can manage to get them all down to breakfast on time. Is this seriously the kind of system and the kind of worker that this government thinks deserves to be cut? It's unbelievable—

Interjection: Shame.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is shameful. It is absolutely shameful. So these are our seniors.

Let's talk about our children in the province of Ontario in child care centres. We know how important early years are for children. We know how expensive child care is. We know that in the city of Toronto, for example, it can cost upwards of \$20,000 a year to be able to pay for adequate child care. That is, in fact, if you can actually find adequate child care. There are not enough spaces in the system to begin with, and now what we are doing is taking a system that's already strained and already overburdened and we are penalizing the child care workers, the workers in child care centres.

We heard this morning about cuts in Peterborough. We heard that they are closing child care centres and laying off 30 child care workers in the city of Peterborough. How can this be? How can that be an acceptable response from this government when we have been hearing all the pleas to make sure that there is availability of child care spaces, that child care is in fact affordable, that child care is critical to economic development, that we get families back to work, that kids get a good start, an early start in life, and that they have increased prospects for outcomes later in life? Child care is not something that we should be doing on the cheap, and we certainly don't want to be treating child care workers like they are not valued, not respected and not important in the lives of our children. Again, it's an outrageous suggestion on the part of the government that these are the people who need to tighten their belts. Child care workers who work part-time, low-wage jobs: That's where you are looking to find savings to reduce your deficit? It's outrageous.

Another area in education that this bill will touch on, and it touches on so many areas, as we have said, from the workers—honestly, school bus drivers. School bus drivers must be responsible for this deficit in the province of Ontario, so get after those school bus drivers. They're really the problem here.

But another area that this government seems to be looking to find some savings—on the backs of some hard-working people in Ontario—to reduce their deficit, are people who work in universities and colleges. I'm not talking about tenured professors; I'm not talking about faculty staff. I'm talking about teaching assistants, who themselves are often students. So, in university, we have teaching assistants. At McMaster University I've had the pleasure of speaking to the teaching assistants who are members of CUPE 3906. I was shocked to find out that teaching assistants on average make about \$11,000 a year. These are the people that assist our students in university. They do some of the marking. They allow universities like McMaster to attract the kind of research dollars that McMaster is known for. I think McMaster is renowned as a research university. This research would not be possible without the assistance of these teaching assistants. They're vital to the university sector and they're vital to McMaster University.

It just happens to be that CUPE 3906 is in the middle of bargaining. Actually, they are not in the middle of bargaining; they were at the bargaining table when this bill was introduced. So it's kind of interesting to see what the

impact was on this bargaining session when this bill was introduced.

To explain that, I'm going to read a letter from the president of CUPE Local 3906, Nathan Todd. This was an open letter to McMaster's board of governors to bargain a fair agreement with academic workers. The letter starts:

"We are writing today to urge you to mandate your negotiating committees to bargain according to current legislation in the ongoing CUPE 3906 unit 1 and unit 3 collective bargaining negotiations.

"As you are aware, the Ford government presented Bill 124, 'an act to implement moderation measures in respect of Ontario's public sector,' for first reading on June 5, 2019. On that day, our unit 3 post-doctoral fellow bargaining committee was meeting with the employer's negotiating team, when the employer suddenly pulled their monetary pass at the table. The employer required more time to understand the implications of the bill....

"Since June 5, we have invited the employer to work with us to stand up against Bill 124's incursions on free collective bargaining rights. We believe that the employer agrees with us when we say that Bill 124 prevents the employer from bargaining contracts that McMaster workers deserve."

Here is a clear example of collective bargaining that was happening in the province of Ontario at McMaster University in Hamilton, and this bill has had nothing but a negative impact on achieving a negotiated settlement at the bargaining table.

We all know—I heard the Minister of Labour say it—that 98% of all collective agreements settle at the bargaining table. That's a pretty good record for the province of Ontario. We should be proud of that. We should be proud that we have stable, predictable negotiations in sectors that deliver critical, important services. Instead, we have a bill that has clearly proven itself to be essentially a stick in the spokes. You've taken a system that is working well for all of us and have introduced this bill, with no regard to the impact that it has on free, fair collective bargaining in the province of Ontario.

I'm not even getting to the point where we are talking about how this is a gross violation of people's Charter of Rights and Freedoms; we'll get to that part. But this is a clear example in the university and college sector where this bill has done nothing but create chaos and uncertainty, in systems that do not need to be in chaos or living in uncertainty—any more than you've done with other sectors, to be honest with you.

This brings us to what most people would think really is the not-so-secret target of this act: education workers. We know that this government has had education workers in their sights since election day, if not beyond. We know this government has done nothing in the education sector except create chaos. They've done nothing to reassure parents that the systems are going to be better for kids. They have done nothing at all to improve education in Ontario. They have made it so much worse.

1530

We have seen cuts to the education budget—education inflationary cuts. Now we see increased class sizes. Now

you see them; now you don't. I don't know; it depends on who the minister of the day happens to be. We have seen the cancellation of all kinds of classes.

In fact, in my constituency, I've had students and parents call to say that they are not sure if they or their child will be able to graduate this year because of courses that they require—and I'm not talking about courses that may be optional courses. I'm talking about core courses, like core math, core English.

How is it possible that a student in Ontario has to change their entire education path and trajectory because they can't take a fundamental, core English class or a core math class? How is that, in any way, an improvement on the system that we have? It's not. It's taking it from bad to worse.

Now we hear from the FAO, who says that this government's policy decisions will result in having 10,000 fewer teachers in the classroom. I don't know about you, but there's not one parent in the province who said to me that they think we should have fewer teachers in the classroom. And there's not one student who would say, "Yes, put me into a class with 28 to 30 students. I don't mind. It doesn't impact my outcomes." Forty students—the sky's the limit. Nobody asked for this.

So now, not only have you defunded the system, not only have you created chaos for students trying to finish their degrees, but you are attacking the very people who work in the system: the teachers, the educational assistants, the school bus drivers, the support staff—all the supporting adults who spend their day with our students in high school. This is who you've decided to target with this regressive bill.

It's not like we couldn't have foreseen this. It was clear that there would be disruption based on this government's decisions or job action. This is all based on decisions and choices that this government has made. This government made it a mission to destabilize our classrooms for our kids and to target education workers and teachers, and now they're putting a cap on all of this with Bill 124, which is ostensibly to reduce the deficit—but this is the only place that you look to reduce the deficit. You look at the workers who work every single day in our schools, in our hospitals, in our long-term-care systems. That's who you target to reduce the deficit. It's really quite transparent that this is an attack on education workers, it's an attack on workers in the province of Ontario, and it is certainly an attack on people's Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the province of Ontario.

Today, I did listen to Mr. Bethlenfalvy, President of the Treasury Board, with really good-faith listening, if there is such a thing. In the spirit of the new tone in the House, I really wanted to hear how, in fact, this minister thought that this was a good idea. I really wanted to hear what his plans were. The bill is really silent on some critical pieces of how this is going to be implemented, so I spent quite some time listening to what the minister had to say.

It's really quite shocking to me that this is a minister who thinks this is good news. I've heard him say it in interviews, I've heard it in a press release, and we heard it

from him today—that this is good news for public sector workers. Well, yes, I'd have to say that's probably new news for public sector workers. Honestly, how is it possible that this is good news for the province of Ontario?

Our new House leader put out a statement talking about the priorities for this government, and one of the priorities of this government was that they were going to continue to put—let me see if I have it here in my pile. Really, it's the same old, same old. But essentially this is a minister who said that, of all the things, we are going to put money back in people's pockets. Well, I would say for about a million public service workers in the province of Ontario, this is not putting money back in their pockets. This is the Treasury Board sticking their hands right into their pockets and taking money away to pay for your policy decisions, to pay for the revenue that you've forgone and to pay for your tax cuts to the wealthiest and to wealthy corporations. Instead of rewarding the public sector workers of Ontario for striving to do a good job in the systems that you have allowed to degenerate, this is a government that intends to take money right out of the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. This is the same old, same old. You can talk about a new tone but it's your aggressive, punitive policies that are really the order of the day.

I will repeat myself: Of all the things that we have to deal with in the province of Ontario—code zeroes, the opioid crisis, the housing crisis, hallway medicine, our crisis in our jails in Ontario—this is the thing that you put forward on day one of a new government? It speaks volumes about the kind of government that you were and the kind of government that you will continue to be: one that does not put workers first, that doesn't put average Ontarians first and that makes decisions, in fact, that hurt the people of the province of Ontario—not just workers, but the people who rely on the services that these workers provide every single day.

Of all the things that Bill 124 is, it's an attack on workers, a signal from this government of how little they respect and value the work of our public sector workers, and it's a bill that shows that they have no creative solutions to address the deficit problem.

It's a pretty easy target to look at some of the lowest-paid workers in the province of Ontario and say, "Hey, I know what, here's how we are going to reduce the deficit: We're going to claw back some money from you. We're going to claw back money from hard workers who are already seeing increases that are below inflation." For 10 years, public sector workers' increases have not kept pace with inflation.

This is a government that, because they don't consult, is just like an echo chamber. I don't think they understand that there are other options. The easiest option is to target the most vulnerable workers in Ontario, vulnerable workers who are serving our vulnerable population. That doesn't sound like a new, kinder, gentler government; to me it sounds like the same old, same old.

I would just like to be pretty loud and clear and remind the government that, guess what? The Charter of Rights

and Freedoms is still a thing. I know we have a new Attorney General. Congratulations on your post. I guess we won't be seeing you on the finance committee anymore. My guess is that you accepted this position just so that you didn't have to fly with us to northern Ontario, and I respect that. But what I would like to say is that you weren't here when this government presided over an attack on our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is a government that, in the most unprecedented way, was going to invoke the "notwithstanding" clause, and to do what? To exact the Premier's vindictive punishment on the city of Toronto.

The new Attorney General was not the Attorney General at the time, so I guess I can give you a pass for that, but what I would like to say is, you are now currently in the big chair, and this is a bill under your watch that has been rightfully characterized as a massive attack on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of workers in the province of Ontario.

The President of the Treasury Board likes to bang on about how this is good news for the province of Ontario. What I would have to say is that what this is is just good news for the President of the Treasury Board. Because this bill, just like bills the previous government has introduced, gives ministers unprecedented discretionary powers that I think the average Ontarian would be shocked and surprised to hear that a sole minister possesses in the province of Ontario.

1540

There are many problems with this bill in terms of the way that it penalizes workers. But more than anything, this is a bill that should just be written off solely because it is an attack on our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is a government that likes to chip away at these, chip away at these—but people are noticing. People notice that this is a government that does not respect people's rights. They don't respect their bargaining rights. They don't respect their human rights. The government has come to be known, internationally, as a government that doesn't respect the rule of law.

We had the beer bill that was going to rip up duly signed contracts with multinational companies. This government was prepared to rip up that bill. And in the most unprecedented way of all, we had the American association of chambers of commerce write to this government to warn them off of this, to let them know that this would be seen by the United States of America as an attack on duly signed contracts. This attack on contract law, this willy-nilly attack that this government didn't take seriously, has damaged our reputation on the international stage. It, again, is another signal that this government thinks they have all the answers.

This government thinks that the rules don't apply to them. And, quite clearly, they think the law doesn't apply to them.

The highest law of the land, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, is something that applies to you. I would like you to know that the people of Canada and Ontario respect and value the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This is a government that—each bill that you put forward shows that you do not understand the rule of law and that you don't respect contracts and that you do not respect the fundamental rights of the people of the province of Ontario.

By the way, this will not improve your slide in the polls. It is what is branding you as a government. It's not your standing ovations; it's not your high-fives or your claps on the back; it's not your salty takes on anything; it is the fact that you do not respect the people of Ontario, you don't respect their work, you don't respect their rights in the workplace, and you don't respect the rule of law in the province of Ontario. This is something that will not be easily erased by this government.

There are many specific problems with this bill, but the fact that it gives the minister extraordinary discretionary powers is something that I would like to spend some time discussing. Section 20, the minister's order, says that the Treasury Board minister can invalidate any collective agreement. So one person, the President of the Treasury Board, can invalidate collective agreements. Does that sound like a democratically elected province of Ontario government? What does that sound like? I will just say it as a rhetorical question. What does that sound like to the people of Ontario—that a minister can invalidate any collective agreement in the province? Any collective agreement that isn't consistent with this act in the eyes of one person—the minister of the Treasury Board can force them back to the bargaining table. This is not free, fair collective bargaining. This is not bargaining in good faith. This is the government with their thumb on the scale, ensuring that they get the outcome they want. It is a pretense of collective bargaining. It is no longer what we recognize and understand collective bargaining to be in the province of Ontario, let alone in the country of Canada.

I think it's important to note that, as written in the analysis of this bill, it is quite clear that if the minister asserts his right in this case to avoid compensation, this just increases the argument that the entire collective agreement could be void. So then where do we end up in the province of Ontario? Now we have workplaces governed by collective agreements that are not clear whether these collective agreements still stand. And if you don't think that this is going to create chaos and confusion in important workplaces, you are wrong. This is the kind of extraordinary power given to a minister that has unintended consequences, or intended consequences, but this is not a government that has foreseen, has looked to see, how this would be applied and has looked to see what the outcomes will be, because they have all the answers. They know how this is going to work. Either that or they seem to be addicted to chaos, but that's a whole other argument altogether.

I like the fact that they tried to insert in this bill that neither the labour relations board nor arbitrators can find that this 1% wage cap is in violation of the charter. I find it pretty hilarious that Premier Doug Ford thinks he can write a bill that overrides the charter of freedoms, but we'll see how that goes. This is certainly going to result in a

charter challenge, and then we're going to end up where this government seems to like to be: not in the House, because we've had five months. They don't seem to like to be here doing their work. The Premier likes to do I don't know what, because we haven't seen him for five months. But it's clearly a government that likes to be in court, because you have lots of court challenges. Some don't go very well and cost the taxpayers of Ontario millions of dollars.

Yet again, this is a government that's just going to roll the dice on challenging our charter. And because it's not your money, because it's the taxpayers of Ontario who will pay for the lawyers, they will argue a charter challenge—which won't go on for a short period of time, by the way; it will go on for a long period of time. So because it's not your money, send in the lawyers. What does this government care? They win, they lose; it doesn't seem to matter to them. It doesn't seem to matter that you're spending money, wasting resources, time and effort distracting the people of Ontario from what really matters to them on an unnecessary court challenge—unnecessary because, as the Minister of Labour has said, as the Minister of Education has said, 98% of all collective agreements are reached at the bargaining table. So why has this government not even attempted to negotiate in good faith? Why is this government running willy-nilly, like a chicken with its head cut off, to infringe on our Charter of Rights, to disrespect the people who work in our public sector and, at the same time, spend big bucks on a court challenge that you may or may not win?

Believe me, again, this is going to reflect badly, if it hasn't already, on this government that seems to be so arrogant, doesn't listen and thinks they know all the answers. I would just remind the government that the tragic flaw in all Shakespearean heroes is hubris, and you guys have it in spades.

Some of the extraordinary measures that the minister of the Treasury Board, Mr. Bethlenfalvy, has given to himself, which is kind of interesting, are that the minister may make regulations and any regulation that would have precedence against any statute. This includes the ability of Management Board—which is cabinet, in case we didn't know—to direct and pursue compliance. This includes the ability of cabinet to compel access to bargaining mandates, again interfering with collective bargaining, not to the benefit of a good outcome but just to muddy the waters, to get your fingers in there to access bargaining mandates.

They would like to see submissions to arbitrators, and this may even include access to this document, may even include political staffers in the minister's office, which I guess is only fair. If the minister is going to grab all kinds of these special powers for himself, why not share it with some of his political staff in his office? But I'm sure this will not be looked well upon by judges who look to see how, in fact, this government has spent any time at all—any time at all—considering the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for the citizens of Canada, let alone we've also heard of human rights violations that will not bode well in the court of law.

We've talked about the powers that this minister has given to himself to void collective agreements or arbitration awards. Really, it says that these are to be exercised in the minister's sole discretion, that these major decisions are going to be exercised in the minister's sole discretion. This sounds, really, not like a democracy, if you ask me. This is heavy-handed and is actually quite concerning for the people of Ontario and certainly for us as well.

1550

We already have seen some of the slashing of people's access to legal recourse. We know that the Ontario legal aid society has talked about the cuts to legal aid. This is a government that really does not respect people's ability to access justice.

So, true to form, true to brand, Bill 124 also contains a number of provisions designed to prevent persons from seeking legal remedy for losses that result from the operation of this law. Specifically, Bill 124 provides that compliance with the act is not constructive dismissal, either under common law or under provisions of the Employment Standards Act. Acts done in compliance with the act do not constitute an expropriation or the tort of injurious affection. What these are are provisions that ensure that people's right to legal recourse is diminished under this bill.

This is not the first time that this government has spent a lot of time ensuring that people's rights in the province of Ontario to access to justice are diminished. It's a recurring theme, just like the recurring theme in this government is that they don't respect the rule of law, they don't respect contracts, they don't respect our Charter of Rights, they don't respect human rights and, clearly, they don't respect the individual's ability to access justice before the courts. Only the government seems to be able to reserve that right for themselves.

I find it ironic, and that's not the word I want to say, but I'm trying—you know, new tone—to be as respectful as possible. But this is a government, as an employer, that has decided that they are going to give themselves the right to impose—to put the thumb on the scale, as an employer—the kinds of conditions that their workers face in the province of Ontario. But the private sector does not have this right. You've given it to yourselves. You've given it to yourselves, yet you've allowed the private sector what they think is their right. So I find it kind of ironic that this government will talk about their role as a government, but it's actually in your role as an employer that you have taken these extraordinary measures unto yourselves. If that, in itself, isn't something that is disturbing, the outcomes of this bill certainly will be.

Finally, just let me end with this: I think the people of Ontario will be shocked to hear that no complaint under the Employment Standards Act may be made or investigated in respect of any provisions of Bill 124. We've already seen a government that has gutted the Employment Standards Act. This is a government that does not seem to like workers. One of the basic provisions under the Employment Standards Act is that we can investigate

any of these provisions. This government has inoculated themselves, insulated yourselves, from accountability for what you're doing and what you're doing for the people of Ontario. I think it is completely shameful that this is the way that you behave.

I also think it's completely shameful that this is what's before us today, that this is the thing you think is most important: gutting the rights of workers in the workplace, forcing workers to take a 1% increase to already-below-inflation wages. Vulnerable workers, part-time workers, women, people who are bus drivers—this is who you're after. This is your first on the hit list: “We're going to get back into the House after five months of listening to our constituents, and the first thing we're going to do is make sure that the hard-working people in the province of Ontario don't get increases.” It's shameful.

First of all, it's quite clear that this talk of the tone is just that: talk, because it's very difficult to change—what is it? Something can't change their stripes or spots or something. But this is a government that has quite clearly shown their character, and it continues to be shown in the House this afternoon. If the government and specifically the Premier has not already shown how he does not value the work done by public sector workers, this bill makes it abundantly clear.

When the Premier was making cuts to our public health, when they were talking about amalgamating public health units and making changes that he didn't consult on, one of the things that I thought was pretty funny is that the Premier said, when we talked about public health—he didn't even really seem to understand what it was that public health workers did. I think that the famous statement was that he said, “Oh, public health. Aren't those the people that put little stickers on restaurant windows?” Which is two things: (1) It shows that he doesn't understand or respect the work of public sector workers; and (2) I would just like to remind the Premier that at least those stickers stuck. That was a pretty good thing.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I made you laugh, Jamie. That's worth it all.

So what have we got here? We've got a bill that penalizes public sector workers. We've got a bill that violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Basically, what we have now from this government is a one-two punch on our public services—public services that every single person in this room has relied on, and will rely on in the future. We have cuts to service delivery. We have inflationary cuts to hospitals. We've got inflationary cuts to schools. We've got a Premier who's downloading millions of costs to the municipalities—no plan on how the municipalities are going to handle those cuts or those downloading costs. My guess is, we're going to have what we call the Ford tax: They're either going to have to cut services at the municipal level, or they're going to have to increase people's property taxes. I don't see how that's putting money back in your pocket—again, money coming back out of the pockets.

These cuts to our municipal services that the government proposed, without any consultation, in the middle of a budget year: They've been rolled back. The Premier has rolled those back, but only temporarily. I guess the public outcry was a shock to the Premier. It was a shock that people, like municipalities, actually do budgeting. They actually do put some rigour into their budgeting, and they have some predictable outcomes, which is different from what this government has done. So those cuts are coming, but they're just on hold for now. So now, after all these things that you have done to gut the actual system and the services, you are attacking the very workers in these systems who keep this system running.

It continues to be so easy to mock the names of your bills. If I could give you any friendly advice, don't make them so easy to make fun of. What they say is just laughable to the people of Ontario. Sustaining the public sector for future generations: Well, my guess is that future generations of students—those are our current students. They care now—not future generations. Students right now, this current generation that can't access courses—that's what they care about right now. We have students, young people all across this province, this country, across the world, who are calling on governments like your very own to take action on the climate crisis. Yet what we have is a government that denied our motion to declare a climate crisis in the province of Ontario. That's the future generation. The future generation is talking to you right now, and you're not listening.

I could hardly find it bearable to listen to the President of the Treasury Board talking about this being a moral imperative. It's just outrageous to hear him talk about cutting the salaries of public sector workers as a moral imperative. It's beyond the pale. This comes at a time when we've seen nothing but cuts and downloads to the services that we rely on.

This is a government that—one of its first acts was to give some pretty big tax gifts—some tax cuts, some tax giveaways, almost a billion dollars in lost revenue—to profitable corporations and the top income earners. There's your moral imperative: Let's make sure that the lowest, most vulnerable people in the province, who are either working in our public sector services or relying on them—let's make sure that they're penalized. But at the same time, we're going to give a tax cut to profitable corporations and the high-income earners.

This also comes at a time when this is a government that has given a 14% increase to the top bureaucrats in the province of Ontario. And if you do the government's bidding: additional compensation for performance. So if these bureaucrats do what this government wants from them, there's more money there. I don't know what that sounds like to you, but it certainly—I'll just leave that as it is.

1600

So this is really good news for public sector workers? A million public sector workers are not going to see increases for three years. Do you think that inflation is going to stay down for three years? Do you think that the

taxes—the municipal taxes, the residential tax bases—are going to stay down?

Hydro bills are going up. We don't know by how much, but my guess is, the hydro bills are going to go up higher than this 1% freeze that this government has put on workers.

We had people all around the Legislature this morning saying to the government that this is unacceptable. I heard them playing Chumbawamba. I can't believe I get to stand in the House and quote Chumbawamba: "I get knocked down, but I get up again" is what I heard over and over again.

And you can take this to the bank: Public sector workers, despite all you're doing to make their jobs impossible, to penalize them, to make sure that their paycheques get smaller and smaller, care about the people that they serve. They care about the people in long-term care and the seniors there. They care about children. It's not clear whether this is a government that cares at all.

To summarize, we have a regressive bill that takes money out of the pockets of people. It violates their Charter of Rights. There's not one thing that's proposed in this bill that looks at fixing the crisis in these systems—not one thing. So you can be sure we will oppose this bill and we will stand with the workers in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's a pleasure to be back in the House and be able to speak on Bill 124. I would like to thank the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

I will start out by saying that I really enjoyed going up north. I don't know why you were saying that the Attorney General didn't enjoy it. We had a great trip up north.

I want to remind the members opposite that we have more debt than any subsovereign government in the entire world, more than the GDP of a lot of countries. We inherited \$350 billion from the previous Liberal government in overspending. So we have a problem. I think we can all agree on that; we have a problem.

Before I go on to discuss the rationale for Bill 124, I just want to set the record straight on a few things that the member opposite stated:

(1) We are not cutting health care. We are adding \$1.4 billion more in health care than the previous Liberal government budget.

(2) We are not cutting education. We're adding approximately \$700 million more in education funding over the next year.

(3) We are building long-term-care homes—which, again, the previous government did nothing on this file for 15 years, and we have a serious problem there.

(4) Workers still have their same constitutional right to negotiate as they always did.

Before I go back to Bill 124, I would like to ask the members opposite what they would do if they were in the personal financial situation where they were spending far more than they were making and money was flying out.

Would they raise taxes? I think we've shown that that doesn't work. The federal government did that, and they brought in less revenue. Ontario is the highest-taxed jurisdiction in North America, period. Would you prefer we increase taxes?

Would you lay off workers? We prefer not to do that.

We prefer to take the third route, which is to reduce expenditures, have a sustainable future for the public service, and bring in a more efficient government. That's why I'm excited to support Bill 124.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I am delighted to rise to take part in this debate. I want to thank my colleague the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for how eloquently she has spoken about this bill.

This bill hurts the workers. It's basically cuts to services, workers and communities, in hospitals, in schools, in public health. Also, it cuts legal aid in the province's budget—extremely disturbing.

This government and the Conservatives here have made a commitment that no cuts would be made to front-line services, but that's exactly what this bill will do. It will create more cuts and it will certainly have a direct impact on front-line services and, of course, jobs.

Community legal clinics, as you know, are small, storefront offices in the very communities of this province, with no bureaucracy and no administrative fat to trim. They are managed by lawyers who appear in courts and tribunals on behalf of members of our communities. This bill further cuts that, and they're doing it every day. They are non-profit organizations governed by volunteer boards of directors drawn from the legal community. Everyone in every one of 72 community clinics in Ontario deals directly with clients, and cuts of this size will substantially decrease the services that clinics provide to communities. This bill exactly is that. What it means is, it simply creates cuts and hurts the workers.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: Speaker, following six weeks of good-faith consultations, the government introduced the proposed Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act on June 5, 2019. My honourable colleague from across brought up vital services in her speech multiple times, and I could not agree more. Speaker, do you know what Bill 124 does? It protects those vital services by ensuring that they are sustainable programs and services that we will rely on today and well into the future.

Speaker, Ontarians finally have a government that will protect and ensure the viability of the services they need now and in the future. Ontarians now have a government that increases health care funding by an unprecedented \$1.3 billion over last year; invests a billion dollars to create 30,000 new child care spaces in school over the next five years; the CARE Tax Credit, which will provide about 300,000 families with up to 75% of eligible tax expenses; \$700 million in education funding increases; and, of course, the building of subways everywhere in the GTA.

Madam Speaker, our government is working very hard for the people. That's what we got elected on doing. We will make sure that the programs and the vital services that they rely on today and in the future will be sustainable for them now and for a long time.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'm happy to be standing here to stand up for public sector workers. For over 25 years, I represented public sector workers. I know this government is no fan of unions, but those people have unions, and in our Constitution we have the right to collective bargaining. The workers you're talking about, and that my colleague was referring to, are just some of the people. They are not high-paid help. They've already lost jobs because they were put on contracts and they were contracted out. That's already occurred under this government's watch: Front-line workers have lost their jobs.

What I want this government to consider is that collective bargaining works. We know it works. There's no reason that we would want to solidify power in one person's hands over the collective bargaining process. As the one member had stated, there are innovative solutions to problems. There are ways that we can come to efficiencies and a better public service, but it is not by imposing wage restraints. They didn't work in the past. You lose some of your best people because they can't afford to work on their jobs. That's what we've seen with PSWs and with child care workers. They love their work, but have to leave because they can't afford to work for the wages that are being presented. And now you want to cap them at 1% increases so that we'll have an even more severe shortage.

I encourage you to rethink this bill.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd just like to say to the member from Oakville: I loved travelling to the north. I think what the Attorney General and I were referring to is that we didn't necessarily love travelling together. How's that, just to make that perfectly clear?

Interjections.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yeah.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I just have to say that this really is kind of a lazy bill. I could also say that it's mean-spirited. If you want to protect services, you don't just say, "I know what we'll do; we will just cut the salary of the people who work in this system." These are the people who are keeping this system afloat.

This is a bill that proposes absolutely nothing—nothing—to improve the services. The only thing it approves is a wage freeze for those hard workers in our public sector, and the only other thing is that it's a guaranteed violation of the people's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

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There's nothing in this bill to talk about how you actually are going to protect these services. As we've heard, we are losing public sector workers. People are getting laid off in these sectors every single day, and this bill has absolutely no solution. The only thing you're proposing is what seems to be the only tool that you have, which is to cut people's wages—cut, cut and download.

The Minister of Long-Term Care this morning spoke in the House about improvements that were going to be made to long-term care. She talked about beds, beds, beds. "We're going to increase beds." She must have said the word "beds" 25 times in a few minutes. But I did not hear her, one single time today, say anything about the workers.

These aren't just beds that sit in a room. These are beds that are attended by hard-working, caring professionals in long-term care—the very same people that you are planning to penalize.

So I would say to this government: Really, make this bill better.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'm proud to speak today in favour of Bill 124, the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act.

The previous government and the previous finance minister—whom I defeated—were spending \$40 million more than Ontario collected in revenue every single day. This was reckless and it was unsustainable. In total, as my colleagues the President of the Treasury Board and the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill have explained, between 2003 and 2018, Ontario's debt increased nearly two and a half times. That means that the previous Liberal government nearly tripled our provincial debt.

Ontario's debt is currently \$360 billion. It is the highest subsovereign debt in the world. No other state or province or municipality on earth is as indebted as we are here in Ontario.

As Minister Bethlenfalvy outlined, the money we spend on servicing our debt is money that is not going to those services that the people of Ontario rely on. The debt servicing cost is \$1.5 million every hour, or \$36 million every day. That is a staggering amount of money that is essentially being flushed down the toilet.

There is a clear need to take a bold idea to transform programs and services, not for the sake of change but to ensure sustainability, to ensure value for money and to ensure that those programs do what they were intended to do: serve the people of Ontario.

To reiterate a point made by the President of the Treasury Board, the task of restoring the fiscal health of this province is a moral imperative. Without fiscal health in the province, our loved ones are treated in hospital hallways, our schools fall into disrepair, our public services go unfunded and our neighbourhoods are less safe. This is an outcome our government finds unacceptable. That is why we are determined to transform government to ensure sustainability for future generations to come.

Currently, Ontario owes \$1.5 million on its debt every hour. That means we're paying \$36 million every single day on our debt. That's \$36 million we could be investing directly back to improving lives across our beautiful province of Ontario. It's money that we could be using to build stronger education programs for our children, better health care, or updated and modern infrastructure. According to the Financial Accountability Office, the province spends more on servicing its debt than on all post-secondary education in a year. Can you believe that? More than on all post-secondary education in one year.

Our government has taken several steps to control unnecessary expenses and to provide assurance that tax dollars are being treated with respect. This includes the important creation of the Audit and Accountability Committee, which I am proud to be a member of. This single committee has already brought a new level of accountability that will ensure that Ontarians are receiving the best value for their money.

The government also quickly took a coordinated approach to manage expenses, to ensure that programs are effective and affordable and meet the needs of our Ontarians in this province. As part of this expenditure management, restructuring has been implemented for all ministries across Ontario's public service. The restructuring includes a hiring freeze which exempts jobs in essential front-line services; a pay-for-performance compensation arrangement for executives, managers and non-bargaining staff in the public service; a freeze on discretionary spending; cancellation of subscription-based services; and restrictions on travel, meal and hospitality spending in this province.

Bold steps have been taken to address March madness spending that too often happens at the end of the government's fiscal year. March madness is unnecessary discretionary spending that increases the amount that the government spends at the end of a fiscal year. To address this, the government has worked to further control spending by directing all ministries to limit spending to commitments under contract, legislation and/or requirements to fulfill core services up to March 31, 2019. We realized cost savings of \$150 million in two months. Can you imagine that? We saved \$153 million in two months.

All these expenditure management exercises are to put the taxpayer at the centre of everything this government does. It's about putting a structure in place that ends a culture of waste and creates a culture of efficiencies. The government's approach will ensure that tax dollars go to the services on which the people of Ontario depend. We have already seen significant cost savings because of these measures.

Madam Speaker, our government is on the path to balance, but much more has to be done. As the President of the Treasury Board and the member from Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill have said, Bill 124 is a reasonable and necessary step to put our province back in the black.

As the President of the Treasury Board stated earlier, we introduced proposed legislation on June 5. The proposed legislation would enable the government to manage

compensation growth in a way that allows for reasonable wage increases while protecting front-line services. Minister Bethlenfalvy has said this before, and I think it is important to say it again: We must be clear about what this legislation would mean, as well as what it would not mean.

The legislation would establish a framework that would allow for up to a 1% increase to salaries and overall compensation for unionized and non-unionized employees in Ontario's public sector. These provisions would apply for a period of three years upon the expiry of existing collective agreements. Existing collective agreements would not be subject to these provisions, and this legislation would not impede the collective bargaining process. I want to repeat that once again: Existing collective agreements would not be subject to these provisions, and this legislation would not impede the collective bargaining process.

The Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act would not impose a wage freeze, a wage rollback or a job cut. I'm going to repeat that once again, as well: The Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act would not impose a wage freeze, a wage rollback or a job cut. Employees will still be eligible for a compensation increase and retain the ability to move through their estimated salary ranges. They will still be able to move through their salary ranges, which is excellent.

When it comes to public sector compensation, we put together a plan, a plan to consult and to listen. On April 4, 2019, Minister Bethlenfalvy announced that we would commence a new series of consultations with our public sector employees and bargaining agencies. The goal was to engage in a conversation about how compensation growth would be managed in a way that results in public sector wages that are reasonable, fair and sustainable. Numerous options were put on the table for feedback. These options included voluntary agreement to wage outcomes lower than the current trend, a trade-off that would lead to reductions in compensation costs, and consideration of legislative measures.

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Consultations were held with public sector stakeholders from April 5 to May 24, 2019. During that time, 23 in-person sessions took place. These sessions were attended by 68 employee organizations in sectors covering more than 2,500 collective agreements, and 57 bargaining agencies that collectively represent over 780,000 workers across all sectors of Ontario's public service. In short, all major bargaining agencies attended and participated.

Employers participating included colleges and universities, school board trustee associations, the Ontario Hospital Association and agencies. Bargaining agencies participating included the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Service Employees International Union, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

In addition, 47 written responses were also received. This includes responses from the health care sector,

namely Health Shared Services Ontario, on behalf of 14 local health integration networks, the Ontario Nurses' Association and SEIU Healthcare; and the education and post-secondary education sector, including the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Ontario Council of Educational Workers, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, the Coalition of Post-Secondary Workers of Ontario and the University of Toronto Faculty Association.

In total, we heard from employers and bargaining agencies representing over one million employees across the province's public sector. It was with this information in hand that we were directed to consider legislative measures while in tandem further exploring some of the ideas that were put forward during this consultation period.

On June 5, we introduced the proposed Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act. We also announced that we would continue to consult on the proposed legislation, and did so through the summer. These consultations informed decisions we made on amendments.

If passed, the proposed legislation would enable the government to manage public sector compensation growth in a way that allows for reasonable wage increases while protecting the front-line services. That is the most important: to protect the front-line services. It would help to restore the province to a position of fiscal sustainability, and demonstrate respect for the taxpayers' money that we were voted in here for.

The proposed legislation includes requirements that would allow for an increase of up to 1% to salaries and overall compensation for unionized and non-unionized employees in the Ontario public sector. The act would apply to:

- the Ontario public service;
- provincial authorities, boards, commissions, corporations or organizations in which a majority of directors, members or officers are appointed or chosen by the province, including Ontario Power Generation, the Independent Electricity System Operator and Ornge;
- school boards;
- colleges and universities;
- hospitals; and
- non-profit transfer payment recipients that received more than \$1 million in annual funding in 2018.

Something else which came out of these consultations was pooling of employees' benefit plans. We listened to bargaining units, which brought their desire for this option to our attention, we heard how important it was to them, and on October 9 we announced our intention to start consultations with stakeholders to identify the best arrangement for them.

Out of these consultations also came concerns which have been addressed in the amendments that Parliamentary Assistant Parsa spoke to. These amendments, if passed, clarify the intent of this legislation and also ensure the legislation is consistent and equally applied to the public sector workers in the Ontario public service and the broader public sector.

The six amendments which Parliamentary Assistant Parsa explained will :

- exempt other levels of government such as municipalities and Indigenous communities;
- allow exceptions to the compensation framework for approved voluntary exit programs;
- allow exceptions for employers moving to joint pension plans, and regulatory power to add exemptions in other specified circumstances;
- clarify that the minister's powers apply to in-scope employers who are part of a multi-employer agreement;
- clarify that agreements signed in good faith before June 5 would not be reopened by the proposed legislation, and more clearly define how agreements reached between June 5 and the passage of this legislation will be treated;
- clarify that the municipal exception applies equally to the city of Toronto by adding reference to the City of Toronto Act, 2006; and
- eliminate the title "masters" from section 7 of the proposed legislation.

Officials at the Treasury Board Secretariat have worked diligently over the summer to prepare these amendments to the proposed bill. Guided by internal deliberation and feedback from stakeholders, experts and the people of Ontario, the government has drafted six amendments to be introduced, should the bill pass second reading and move to committee stage. We believe these amendments would strengthen the proposed legislation and further clarify the government's intent. These are important amendments, and I want to thank everyone who sent their feedback to the government and made their voices heard by their representatives. We look forward to receiving amendments submitted by the opposition parties in this room and to having a robust debate on why we can further strengthen the bill.

We have been clear that in order to restore sustainability in our province's finances and transform governments, everybody needs to do their part. And while it includes making hard choices, it also includes ensuring there is a dialogue around every decision, so everyone has a say. Because our government is working to protect roads that everybody uses, hospitals that our friends and families have received care in, and the schools our children attend.

When we say that we are the government that listens, that means we engage, we ask questions and we take steps forward with our partners. Throughout this process, we have done just that. Through our proposed amendments to the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act and by exploring ideas put forward during this consultation process, we have demonstrated that we are listening, and, as Minister Bethlenfalvy outlined, we are doing so in a way that is reasonable, fair and sustainable. We understand the importance of this decision today in order to protect tomorrow.

I would like to reiterate a few of the issues that we spoke to. Under the Liberal government, our debt-to-GDP ratio went from 27% to 40%, a number not seen before in Ontario's history. At nearly \$360 billion, we now have the world's largest subnational debt, larger than other

province, state, or city in the world. The interest alone on our debt costs us \$1.5 million every hour—or \$36 million every day and over \$13 billion every year. That’s almost \$1,000 per person in this province.

I want to bring out some history here. Ontario has been a province since 1867, but well over 90% of our net public debt was accumulated in the years since Bill Davis left office in 1985. Here are the figures. In 1985, our net public debt was about \$29 billion. At that time, this was 15% of our GDP. Over the next decade, the Liberal and NDP governments tripled the debt, to \$102 billion. By 1995, it was 30% of GDP.

Hon. John Yakabuski: They’re triplers.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: They are.

Our last PC government reduced this to 27% over the next eight years, but the debt still grew to \$139 billion. Over the last 15 years, the Liberal government nearly tripled the debt again. It now stands at \$360 billion, over 40% of GDP. Almost 20% of this was added by the NDP from 1990 to 1995. Over 60% was added by the Liberals over the last 15 years alone. This was not fair—the largest accumulator of debt in Ontario’s history.

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This is a fair, considered and time-limited approach across the province’s public sector to provide reasonable wage increases to protect front-line services here in this province, to help restore the province’s financial position and respect taxpayer dollars. This is exactly what Bill 124 would provide, and it is long overdue.

As I was campaigning during the election in Mississauga–Lakeshore, I found that at every door I would go to, everybody would be complaining about the debt and how life was getting harder and harder throughout the province of Ontario. That is a fact, especially in my riding. I did run against the finance minister, whom everybody knew in that riding. He used to cook the books.

Interjection.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: The chef; correct.

Interjection: He’s no longer here.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: He’s no longer here. Thank God he’s not. He was spending \$40 million a day more than he was bringing into this province. That was shameful.

I thank everybody, and I hope everybody will support this bill today.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry will come to order. Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It has been an interesting first day back, listening to the other side talk about Bill 124. But I think the name of the bill is a bit different than I think it is. It should be called Bill 124, the anti-union, anti-community bill, because this is what this is about. This is an attack on workers, it’s an attack on families and it’s an attack on communities.

I want to say to the member—and I apologize; when you’re in the back row I can’t see that far, but I know that you’re over there. You talked about the unions and all the

consultations, and you were good enough—and I appreciate that—to list all the unions. What you didn’t say in your remarks was what they told you to do with this bill, because you probably wouldn’t be allowed to say that in this House.

My good friend over there should have known what they thought of Bill 124 very early this morning, because when I got here this morning there was this train going around Queen’s Park talking about what your government has done since you got elected 18 months ago—well, it’s actually only 13, because we didn’t sit for five months—and they were talking about cuts to health care, as you’re trying to tell people that you’ve increased it. You know you’ve put money into health care, but not at the rate of inflation. You know you need 5.3% to keep up health care. You saw that this morning. Did you go out and ask any of those union members what they thought of this bill? They were telling you this morning what they thought of this bill.

I’ve only got eight seconds left. I just want to say that you gave a 14% raise to the ministers and you’re asking the workers who keep this province going to take 1%. It makes no sense.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry will come to order. That’s the third time. Next will be a warning.

I recognize the member for Cambridge.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Welcome back to everyone.

Let me first address what the member opposite just mentioned. We’ve had a wage freeze since 2009. That was done because our debt is out of control. It makes sense. Why would we give ourselves a raise when the province is in such dire straits? I want that on the record. There has been no wage increase for members of provincial Parliament for the last decade.

Let me go back to the comments from my colleague the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore—great job; 20 minutes is a hard one to do. I just want to say that we should be running our great province like a household. When I had my son and I was on mat leave, I decided to take an extended leave. At that time, 18 months wasn’t available. So my husband and I sat down and said, “What can we cut?” Two things happen when you’re in debt: You either make more or you spend less. I wasn’t working, so we had to spend less. We decided to cut cable, and there are other things in the household that we did. Why would we not run our province the same way?

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you.

Respectfully, I know that the opposition—your role is to oppose, to pick out the things that we’re doing and say what you think we could be doing better. So my statement today is, we haven’t actually cut anything, much to the surprise of a lot of my constituents, who thought that we would have frozen wages—if the bill goes through, the

proposed legislation, they would be going up 1% a year. That's not actually cutting anything. So knowing that we're spending \$36 million a day or \$13 billion a year, knowing that we could use that money for things like health care, education and infrastructure, what else do we do? Where else do we find that money, if we're not going to raise taxes and hurt the people who we know—if you raise taxes, they're going to spend less, and eventually hurt the economy. Where do we fix the cycle so we're not stuck with nothing in 10 years?

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I want to thank my colleague from Niagara Falls as well as my colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Madam Speaker, this piece of legislation was tabled before we all left on our five-month vacation—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The Associate Minister of Energy will come to order.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I think the public understands what I meant.

This legislation has been pretty much hanging over all the collective bargaining agreements that have been out there. If we look at Bill 124, it contains a lengthy set of regulations and rules that limit the ability of individuals and workers and unions to challenge the legislation, as my colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas so eloquently mentioned earlier. It also prevents people from seeking legal remedies. All of this power now is with the minister, who I'm sure is happy about that.

This government talks about doing the right thing, making smart choices, but of course we've seen a lot of the things that they've been doing lately: suing the federal government for gas taxes—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: For \$30 million.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Is it \$30 million?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: It's \$30 million for gas taxes.

So all the Conservatives seem to care about right now is reducing public sector salaries—and what they're actually doing is adding to Ontario's public debt by eliminating higher-income surtax, as one example. The people who are going to be affected provide the most valuable services in Ontario. They are people who work in long-term care, who work in children's aid societies, who work in our school boards and colleges, and also, of course, our corrections officers. This is shameful.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: It's great to be in the House today to debate Bill 124—and going on to what the minister had prefaced this morning, the moral imperative to get this bill through. I'm thinking about not just my generation but the generations that come after me. All of us enter public service because we want to do something; we want to make a difference. We don't enter public

service lightly, nor do we enter it for the wrong. We enter it for the good. We enter it to bring lightness to the darkness that might occur in our world. When you talk about the moral imperative, all of us have a moral imperative to leave the world better than the one we've come from.

My grandparents came from the shackles of the Soviet Union, and they came for the great, brighter shores that are Canada. But now, unfortunately, our province is shackled in debt, and we need to get out of it. We need to make those tough decisions that governments must make when they govern. So when we do have situations of paying \$1.5 million every hour and \$36 million every day in debt, we think: What legacy are we leaving for the next generation; what legacy is that for our schools, our hospitals and our social programs?

So I say today—and I echo the comments from the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore—let's do it for the kids. Let's do it for the future generations of grandchildren. Let's do it for the future generations of newcomers who come to Ontario for better shores, for that opportunity to succeed. But they cannot succeed if we leave them with nothing and a crumbled system that is not supported.

So let's make a difference today. Let's go after that moral imperative and bring the public service back to a place where our moral imperative is to leave a legacy of good.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all my colleagues who contributed to this debate, including the members from Niagara Falls, Cambridge, Brampton North and Barrie–Innisfil. And thank you again to the President of the Treasury Board and to my fellow parliamentary assistant from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, and again, to all the hard-working staff at the Treasury Board Secretariat for all their work on this bill over the summer. I really look forward to this bill coming to a vote. I can tell you that during the campaign, this was a key issue at the door. People understand that over a billion dollars every month in interest payments on our debt is making it more difficult and less affordable for our services.

As the minister explained, a \$72-billion compensation represents about half of the provincial budget each year. Even a 1% increase costs us \$720 million. To be clear, we value the important work that the public sector workers do to deliver programs across Ontario; however, we cannot ignore the current landscape. In order to succeed, the fiscal health of this province will need to manage this compensation growth in a thoughtful and measured way. Everyone must do their part to ensure the sustainability of the core government services, including health care and education, and for our children.

I am very proud of this responsible approach we are taking today with Bill 124. I look forward to future debate on this bill this afternoon.

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

Mr. Jamie West: We're here today discussing government Bill 124, the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act. It was tabled last June, nearly five months ago—four months and 24 days. I have to concur with my colleague earlier, who had said, "I'm not sure why we're tabling and discussing this when at the door, really, hydro, health care and long-term care were the priorities." We've barely stumbled forward on those, which would make a huge impact to a lot of people, but here, we're on a bill to attack unions.

Another thing that wouldn't even require coming here but that I'd love to debate is my colleague the MPP for Niagara Falls' bill changing the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to help improve the protections available to indirectly hired temporary help agency workers.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Hear, hear.

Mr. Jamie West: We can do that in a heartbeat after five people have been killed at temporary agency workplaces. All we need to do is change the word "may" to "shall," with minimal debate, and we would stand and applaud. But instead, we're here talking about putting our thumb on the scales of the working class again.

This is a government that has a cut-first-and-ask-questions-later scheme that hurts Ontario families and threatens the services that they demand. This Premier's latest scheme will disrupt the public sector services and create chaos. This is a bill that unilaterally legislates a cap on salary and compensation for public sector workers. It says that all new public sector collective agreements will be limited to a pay and compensation increase of no more than 1% a year during a three-year moderation period. I knew Conservatives loved the 1%, but I didn't see it this way.

One per cent is well below the cost increases that families will have to pay for things like food and housing over the next three years, Speaker. You don't have to take my word for it. They love math and facts. I looked at the Ontario inflation rate. If you go to the consumer price index—the consumer price index, for those who don't know, measures the increase of costs of basic products and services that Canadians consume on a daily basis. They take food, shelter, clothing, health care, transportation, alcohol and tobacco products; they measure how much they cost last year and this year. For example, last year, for a hundred bucks you'd get a certain amount; when you buy the exact same thing this year, it's going to cost you \$101.34. That's a 1.34% increase in inflation. The short version is, CPI increases and inflation goes up. A good way for people in Ontario to recognize this is, next month, when your hydro rates climb up, that's a sign of inflation climbing up as well.

I checked the consumer price index over the past decade. In 2008-09 it was 0.35%. That's pretty good, right? One per cent would be above that. Unfortunately, the following years it was 2.46%, 3.19%, 1.42%; almost 1% in 2012-13—it was 0.99%—2.36% after that and 1.19% after that. In 2015-16 it was pretty good: 0.47%.

But the following three years, it was 2.19%, 2.6% and 1.34%. So in almost every one of those except for two of them, inflation was more than 1%. That means that even if you get the full 1% increase, you're not actually ahead; you're losing money. As much as they say this is a raise, it's actually a lack of spending; it's a loss in spending.

The government wants to cap wages at 1% per year, but the 10-year average, if you average it, is 1.8%. Even if you take 3% of that total cap and just roll through—I played around with the numbers; I'm learning Excel—at best, it was 3.85% and at worst, it was 6.97%. Any way you look at it, you're going to lose money, getting a 1% raise. You'll have less money, even though the price of everything is climbing. So what we're talking about, Speaker, is a pay cut.

The government is going to say that this will all be done in the name of the deficit—or now they've switched to the debt. Last year, it was a \$15-billion deficit. Remember they kept saying that again and again? Oh, it was unbelievable. I looked in Hansard. I couldn't open them all, but on 71 separate days it was said multiple times. They pounded the table and they said, "\$15 billion." It was the catchphrase that they used to already cut \$2.4 billion from public services. Even today, the member for Oakville talked about how expensive the debt was and the deficit was. But if you're going to balance your budget and you're going to talk about it like a household, then you can't cut here and spend like a drunken sailor at the other end—and I'll get into that.

The actual number was less than half the amount that they were saying all last year. It was \$7.4 billion, which still is outstanding—but, you know, attention to detail. It's a government that cuts first and asks questions later. I like the phrase that our House leader said last year: "Ready, fire, aim." I think it encapsulates what we're doing.

I think attacking public sector workers is exactly the kind of behaviour that we expect from this government. Frankly, it's the kind of behaviour we expected from the previous Liberal government as well. I often say, "Liberal, Tory, same old story." This is another example, because Liberals and Conservatives love attacking public sector workers, they love weakening public services, and they like to take that money and they like to give big tax cuts to big business and their wealthy and well-connected friends. This government, this Conservative government, just like the Liberals before them, is trying to dismantle our public services piece by piece.

Think about what happened to the families of children with autism when they were here protesting the Liberal government. The Premier said, "You'll never have to protest again." We had one of the largest protests I've ever seen at Queen's Park, under the Conservative government, outside protesting again. You think of the anguish and the uncertainty that they went through and are still going through.

They're doing consultations, but frankly, Speaker, it feels like they're just kicking the can down the road to open further insult in April, when they finally get the results. We all know, on this side, what needs to be done.

We have a report that we've shared with the government about what needs to be done, so I don't know what further consultation they're counting on, besides stalling.

In Sudbury, for example, CCR, Child and Community Resources, offers autism therapy and behavioural analysis. They do it in Sudbury, in my riding. They also do it in Thunder Bay, Kenora and Algoma. Well, they used to, Speaker; they don't anymore. The Conservatives' cuts forced them to lay off nearly 90 employees—90, nine zero; if you think that's going to hurt the economy, you're right—and they no longer provide fee-for-service options for families.

Frankly, Speaker, I think it's shocking that this government is telling everyday families, rank-and-file people struggling to make ends meet, that the cupboards are bare and that they're going to have to make sacrifices. I'm in favour of making sacrifices for a good deal and a big plan, but the way they talk, on one side, that everyone has to make sacrifices and, on the other side, fill their pockets is ridiculous. For the Premier's insiders, money is no object. We've seen this again and again. There is no government too big for this party.

Speaker, 15 days after our summer recess, the Conservatives increased their cabinet. They increased the number of parliamentary assistants by 72%. They went from 18 to 31 parliamentary assistants. In terms of base salary, they make 13.7% more than the rest of the MPPs. They added five associate ministers. I don't believe there were any before. They make 19.2% more than the regular MPP does. They have now appointed more cabinet ministers than any other province in this country. They have 21 ministers of the crown. They make 42% more than the rest of the MPPs, almost \$50,000 more.

Honestly, Speaker, \$50,000 isn't even close to what a lot of public sector workers make. They're struggling to make that.

1650

That doesn't include the other costs of the Conservatives increasing the size of their cabinet. The new ministers and associate ministers are going to have to hire more staff, which will expand and stuff. The reason I'm talking about staff is that this summer there was an ongoing Conservative patronage scandal and appointees were forced to resign as a result of intense scrutiny, Speaker. There were gifted insider appointees such as Dean French's niece and a lacrosse player connected to Dean French, and that was the tip of the iceberg. Those were the two at the top of the list. The point I'm making, Speaker, is that the cupboards are never bare.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Chief government whip on a point of order.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, I've been listening carefully to the presentation. Very little of what I'm hearing relates to Bill 124. Lacrosse has no correlation to what we're debating here today. Can we please move on with—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Point of order. I've been listening as well and I believe that the member has been on topic, but please make sure that you

are tying your comments back to the bill. Thank you. Back to the member for Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the constructive criticism. The point I'm trying to make is that when we're talking of public sector workers, the government feels that 1% is absolutely the max we could spend. When we're talking about the government's friends and anyone outside the public sector workers, the max can be as high as they want. That's the connection that I'm making.

I'll bring it around. Here's a good example of the cupboards not being bare for the Conservatives' friends. This summer they were forced to close down a \$2.2-million strategic transformation office. This was another patronage scandal. There was a lack of clarity around its value and its purpose. The salaries, because we're talking about salaries, for this office's core team: the deputy minister, \$325,000—these are estimates that were listed—director of operations, \$164,900; senior portfolio manager, \$127,300; executive assistant, \$127,300; executive adviser/business integration lead, \$103,900; and legislation/regulation review and compliance, \$199,000. There were also five special advisers who each made \$127,300, for a total of \$636,500. That's the point I'm making—at 1% and looking at even the lowest wage here, Speaker, of \$103,900.

Similarly, and my colleague had mentioned this earlier in the debate—he had said “ministers.” I think what he meant to say was the deputy ministers. The retroactive wage hikes for their deputy ministers—all 28 of them got a 14% raise, retroactively. The new minimum salary will be \$234,080. They were allowed the 14% raise because their previous minimum salary was only \$205,000, so imagine trying to make ends meet on that, Speaker. It's unbelievable. No wonder we had to give them 14%. How do we pay for that? We cap the wages for people who are of the working class. We cap them at 1% or lower.

The government is imposing a 1% annual cap on pay and compensation for public sector workers. This will apply to the negotiations of a worker's salary but also all other payments provided to or for the benefit of workers, including benefits, perquisites and all forms of discretionary and non-discretionary payments. Just as a reminder, 1% for them, and over any given three years in the past decade, inflation in Ontario was at 3.85% at its best and 6.97% at its worst. Inflation last year across Canada was at 2%. So what we're saying is that you won't even be able to afford the stuff you can afford this year; we're forcing you to take a cut and pretending that it's disguised as a raise.

Our Conservative government is picking a fight with people that make our province work. They keep our roads safe, they care for our loved ones, and they teach our children every day. These are the workers who make Ontario a great place to live. These are the families that provide the essential services that our families rely on.

The Ontario Federation of Labour expects that over one million workers in Ontario will be affected by this legislation. One million workers will be affected by this.

We're talking about teachers; we're talking about corrections officers; we're talking about EAs and support staff and school bus drivers. We're talking about nurses, children's mental health workers, college and university instructors, and care workers at long-term-care homes.

Also, Speaker, in Canada—my colleague had said it earlier and it's worth emphasizing and repeating that in Canada, the right to collective bargaining is a constitutional right. Every worker in this province is going to be impacted indirectly by this bill, because it infringes on the basic constitutional right to free collective bargaining. Workers have the right to bargain collectively. They have a right to strike. Although, it's about 98% that are bargained successfully, so the pattern works. These rights are part of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that they're protected by the Constitution.

This is a fight that the government would love to have, but they're going to lose, and while they're having it, win or lose, it's going to cost Ontario a lot of money. It's going to cost us in lost services. It's going to cost us in legal penalties along the way, in court fees. Honestly, I can't think of a union out there that isn't already picking up their phone and asking a constitutional lawyer what they think of this.

The government's decision to impose an arbitrary salary cap on workers without even attempting to negotiate is an attack on the right to free and fair collective bargaining in this province. This bill is imposing an outcome on workers before collective bargaining even starts. Bill 124 interferes with free collective bargaining by dictating what can and cannot be negotiated. It would also grant broad and sweeping powers to the minister—I shortened this through the whole thing—to review collective agreements and, in his or her “sole discretion,” make an order that a collective agreement or an arbitral award is inconsistent with the act. It doesn't make any sense that one person can go through a collective agreement that the employees and employer agree on and decide, “I disagree,” and be able to tear that up. That's what is in our bill.

This is a bill that so clearly infringes on collective bargaining rights that it will, without a doubt, be subject to a charter challenge that will cost Ontarians and will not help us save any money. We know this because this is a bill that shares similarities with Liberal and Conservative legislation that have cost Ontario in the past. We saw it before in the past when the Liberals tried to impose contract cuts on public sector workers, and they lost. That cost Ontarians tens of millions of dollars in settlement fees and penalties, not including what it cost us to go to court—tens of millions of dollars.

The Harper government also went through this wage restraint legislation in 2009, and it went through years of costly legal challenges. It didn't cost us at the end, but it cost all the legal challenges that it went through and the labour strife. I know that this doesn't concern our government, Speaker, because the Conservatives like spending taxpayers' money on court challenges. As the MPP for

Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas said earlier today during the debate, “It's not the government's money, so send in the lawyers.” They love spending money on losing the climate change court challenges. We're looking at \$30 million and counting. When I hear the government on the other side saying, “We've got to run the government like our household. We've got to pinch our pennies. Also, we've got to spend \$30 million fighting an unwinnable climate change court challenge and go back again,” it doesn't jive. It doesn't match up.

They also want to cancel a legally signed contract with the Beer Store that's going to risk hundreds of millions of dollars in legal fees and penalties for something that nobody really is pushing for. These tactics will not help Ontario save. They're going to cost Ontarians, and it's going to leave families feeling more squeezed.

We know there is a deficit in Ontario. We know there is a debt, but this will not solve the province's revenue troubles. It's no different than back in Mike Harris's days when we sold off the 407 for a song. It helped make a little dent in the short term, and in the long term, we lost it all as rates climbed and climbed and none of that revenue came to our government.

In 2012, the Drummond report found that wage restraint is an ineffective mechanism to manage spending over the long term and something that the government should avoid. They said in the report that, instead, we should be investing in workers, ensuring that they have more in their pockets to spend in their communities and local businesses, which creates new jobs, and we should be asking those who can afford it to pay their fair share in taxes. That's basically what our platform was. The people who can afford it, the super-rich, should pay their fair share because the rest of us are paying our fair share. Instead of cutting from the lowest people who have the least amount of money, we ask the wealthiest people to pay their fair share because that's what is fair.

1700

I know that the Drummond report came out through the Liberals. The Conservatives might think that there are thumbs on the scale and it's not legit. So I just want to read here what I read this morning from Abhijit Banerjee. I apologize if I mispronounced his name. Abhijit Banerjee was the winner of the Nobel Prize for economics. What he said was, “You don't boost growth by cutting taxes; you do that by giving money to people. Investment will respond to demand,” and then you ask those who can afford it to pay their fair share in taxes.

Fun fact: Abhijit is the Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at MIT, and he won the Nobel Prize for economics along with Esther Duflo of MIT and Michael Kremer of Harvard University, so I believe they know what they're talking about.

So what do we do out of here? Ultimately, in the end, Speaker, we're in a situation where we know we've got to do the right things. The difference, though, is that on this side of the House we don't believe in attacking the people with the least amount of money. We don't believe in imposing caps on their bargaining process so that they

can't have free collective bargaining. We don't agree with attacking public sector workers and demonizing them in the press. We want to support the people that support our families and support our communities.

Ontario families deserve a government that works in partnership with people and organizations to deliver the services we depend on every day. These workers who make our province a great place to live deserve so much better. They deserve the respect and compensation that reflects the vital work that they do. This bill is a direct attack on the services they provide and to decent work in this province.

The NDP believe that government must consult before making any decisions and actually listen to the consultation. Don't say, "We consulted with all of these unions, and anyway, here's what we're doing."

New Democrats are going to partner with families. We're going to push back against the latest Conservative scheme. We're united with the labour movement in calling on this government to stop their cuts to vital services. We want them to invest in the people of the province and want them to respect workers' rights.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'm sitting in here today and my head is actually spinning, listening to the comments that are coming out from the opposition. The reason I'm saying that is, when you look at what we picked up, what we've inherited after 15 years, 40 cents of every dollar is spent on health care, and 20 cents of every dollar on education. Our fourth-largest expenditure, after health, education and social services, is the interest on the debt.

Let's be realistic right now and let's think about this for a minute. I turned 60 last Tuesday, and—

Applause.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'm not saying it for that. I'm saying it because this is about the next generation having a life and to be able to go to health care and get the health treatment that they need. We haven't had one long-term-care bed in the last 15 years.

When I was here from 2011 to 2014—I see the Associate Minister of Energy over there—the Liberal government just threw money at the wall constantly; no performance measurements; no one knew where anything went. Now all of a sudden we're spending \$36 million every single day on interest on the debt. So I'm baffled when I stand here and I sit here today listening to this, because to make things better when they were so bad, there have to be some changes that you have to make.

I want my grandkids—I've got three of them—to have a good education, that they can go to school and enjoy their teachers and enjoy their life, just like my kids were able to do. But we can't do these things if we're not responsible, doing the right thing.

When Minister Bethlenfalvy got up and he was talking to us about making some changes, because if you don't, nothing is sustainable anymore, it's like the OSAP program that we had. It wasn't sustainable when people in

households that were making \$150,000 were able to get OSAP.

Let me just digress for a minute. You can't have money going out constantly, over and over—

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Madam Speaker.

When we talk about protecting a sustainable public sector for future generations, I think about where I come from. I'm from a small town of 6,000 people, Sioux Lookout. When we talk about hospitals, we have a 19-bed facility for long-term care. It takes about four and a half years to get off that wait-list. When we talk about these workers and when we talk about the cost of living in our communities, that's not put into a factor. When we talk about—let me use the word "remoteness coefficient": That doesn't play a factor in our role.

One of the things that we have up north as well is remote airports, which are run by the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario. We have workers there who are concerned. I think of airport foremen. That's going to have an impact on those individuals.

I've seen this thing that we had on the most remote—the most northerly community in Ontario is Fort Severn. When we talk about the price of gas, today, this morning, the price of gas was \$3.99 per litre. When we talk about sustainable, that is not sustainable for the people up north, when we talk about public service sector workers such as airport workers. Meegwetch.

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

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: The NDP have made numerous comments calling for respect for workers and the people of Ontario, and I have to say that I am with them on this. But doing so while constantly making petty, inaccurate remarks about this government and Bill 124 really takes away from the sentiment and makes them appear disingenuous. We're back. Put away the petty politicking. Let's focus on making life for Ontarians better.

On that note, Bill 124 is being implemented to assist our province in dealing with the crippling debt that we were left with by the Liberal government that was propped up by the unfriendly opposition. The interest that we are paying on our province's debt is our fourth-largest budget line item, coming in right after health care, education and social services.

We need to bring our debt down and we need to do it fast. Bill 124 is one of the many ways that we are managing this. Bill 124 protects our front-line workers, services and jobs by managing compensation in a fair and reasonable manner. It does not connote wage freezes or rollbacks. A wage increase is not equivalent to a loss of wages in any universe, despite the opposition and their faulty math claiming this.

We are doing everything we can to help people both today and in the future. Bill 124 is a good-news bill. Reasonable wage increases today mean a brighter future tomorrow.

I'll close by stating that I wholeheartedly reject the premise that this bill is an attack on teachers and students. As a TDSB teacher who is a member of the union, I am telling you that I am very content with our salary cap, which is around \$100,000 a year, and that this salary is not why I teach. I and many of my closest colleagues teach because we want to make a positive difference in the lives of our students—because this is our way of contributing to a better future.

Bill 124 is our way as parliamentarians of effecting positive change for the people of Ontario, both today and for tomorrow's generations.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to make sure that my colleagues understand—because they were all screaming at me not that long ago—it's the deputy ministers, 28 of them, who got a 14% raise. Am I accurate on that? Give me a big round of applause on that.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Assistants, sorry.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: But I want to say, I've been listening about the debt. My colleague from Sudbury came up with some stuff that I think everybody in the province of Ontario should know, because I didn't know until I heard this today. They increased the number of parliamentary assistants by 72%. They went from 18 to 31, Madam Speaker. They receive 13.7% more: \$16,300. They added five associate ministers at 19.2% more than an MPP. That's \$22,368. They have now appointed more cabinet ministers than any other province in the country: 21 ministers. The minister of the crown received—listen to this—42% more: \$49,000. Think about that—that you're asking bus drivers that take our kids, that get up at 5 o'clock in the morning, saying, "Take 1%." Do you know what that 1% on \$15 works out to? It's 16 cents, 15 cents an hour, as their hydro bill goes up 2%, when it was supposed to come down 12%.

1710

So when you stand up and talk about the debt, I think it's fair, I think it's reasonable for these numbers to get out. I hope the press is watching so that they put this out to the very public workers that you're telling to take 1%. If you're going to go after workers in the province of Ontario, you have to lead by example, and giving yourselves 14% and 16% raises is not leading by example.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to my colleagues for their feedback and for their debate.

The member from Burlington: I want to wish you a happy birthday, as I'm sure all of my colleagues would. I thought we were going to sing. I agree with you: You inherited—we all inherited, after 15 years of horrible Liberal government—a mess, and zero long-term care for 15 years. We inherited a mess, and I'm here giving you advice and my feedback because three years and whatever

months from now, I don't want to inherit a mess when we become government.

The member from Kiiwetinoong: I want to echo his need for public sector workers in his region; when he talked about the north and how expensive it is to live there; when he talked about the cost of gas at \$3.99 per litre; when he talked about airport workers, which aren't wealthy airport workers making \$100,000 a year—they're making ends meet. And the wait-lists that they have up there for people who even want to work there and the cost of living there—when you cap that at 1%, what happens to those workers?

The member from Scarborough Centre—I believe it's Scarborough Centre; the map has changed, so I hope I got it right—talked about how it protects the front lines. I find that confusing. How does it protect the front lines? I met 50 teachers who had lost their jobs this morning, 50 teachers who don't have their jobs. How were they protected? I don't see that in it. What she said—that she agrees with this as a teacher—you're not a teacher anymore; you're an MPP. You make much more than teachers do. The world is different.

Finally, the member for Niagara Falls talked about the increase to cabinet. That was the point I was making when the point of order was raised: They increased the cabinet. And we can't on one side say there's a debt and a deficit and we have to tighten our belts and then spend like mad on the other side. It just doesn't make sense. The old expression I've heard is that you can't suck and blow at the same time; you can't inhale and exhale at the same time. We just can't do that, Speaker.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to speak on Bill 124 today. The Premier has said that he wants to set a new tone for the Legislature. The Minister of Education says he wants to negotiate a fair deal for teachers. But how can we take the Premier seriously when he moves forward with a bill that is a pre-emptive strike on the collective bargaining rights of people in this province?

Speaker, if Bill 124 passes, the government is headed for a court challenge, no matter how much it attempts to restrict access to legal justice in this bill. Indeed, a court challenge is already happening right now in Manitoba because of similar legislation that restricted front-line workers' wages outside the collective bargaining process. So, once again, Madam Speaker, the Ford government has an employment procreation program for lawyers in Ontario, while they stick it to front-line workers who provide the essential services for the people of Ontario.

I believe in the importance of front-line services. Public servants educate our children. They look after us when we're sick. They keep us safe. They protect the places we love and they protect the people we love.

The Premier may continue to inflate the budget deficit, inflating it to justify cuts. As a matter of fact, today, once again, the Treasury Board president and the Premier said that we have a \$15-billion deficit, when the government's own numbers and the Financial Accountability Officer's numbers show that the deficit is half that amount.

So, Madam Speaker, if the government claims they inherited—or if they are so concerned about the budget deficit they inherited, they need to reverse the tax cuts for the wealthy in last fall's economic statement. They need to means-test the Liberals' unfair hydro plan that accounts for over half the amount of the budget deficit for this year alone.

The bottom line is that Ontario can get its fiscal house in order without attacking the charter rights of workers in this province, without cuts to education, without cuts to social services that protect the most vulnerable in our province, and without cuts to environmental protections.

If the members opposite truly want to change the tone at Queen's Park, let's change the policy direction of the government. Let's respect people's collective bargaining rights, and let's start putting communities before cuts. You can start by pulling Bill 124 off the order table.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm listening to the debate tonight, and I think, pretty much, we're all in agreement that we're in a bit of a crisis here in Ontario. We are still running deficits every single day, every single hour. We're spending \$36 million each day just on interest on the debt. The debt continues to grow, and we all know that interest rates are likely rising. It's just a question of when we go into a recession.

It's very important to protect the workers and to protect their jobs, but we also have to protect—those workers need access to education for their kids, and they need access to health care for themselves, their friends and their family members. So we have to find that right balance.

Yes, we would like to give everybody raises every year, but unfortunately, we're left with such a fiscal mess here in Ontario that it may not be possible to do everything for everybody. We have to make those tough decisions. We're willing to make the tough decisions on this side of the House. I invite everybody on the other side to join us in doing that.

It's not enough to just raise taxes and expect that you can raise revenue. You have to create jobs; that's what drives up revenue. There's what is called the Laffer curve, named after Arthur Laffer. In 1974, he drew on a napkin—which reminded me of the former Liberal Premier—a curve. Basically, at the 0% tax rate and at the 100% tax rate, you collect zero revenue. There's a sweet spot in the middle where you get the most bang for your buck, the highest revenue. If you try to raise the tax rate, you actually collect less.

That's our job as legislators: to find the right tax rate, the right balance, to supply the revenue needed for health care and education and everything else we talk about here every day. I invite everybody in the House to work together with their constituents and make sure that happens.

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

Mme France Gélinas: It is obvious that the bill that has been put forward will not be felt the same way by everyone

in Ontario, and this is what the member was referring to. There are choices to be made, and with the choices this government has made, I will tell you, the burden will be borne more by women than by men.

If you look on page 3, at the application of the bill, you find this: "2. Every board within the meaning of the Education Act." Speaker, you yourself, before you joined us here, were in the education system. It is mainly women who work in the education system.

It goes on to say: "4. Every hospital..." It won't be a surprise to anyone to know that 95% of the people who work within our hospitals are women.

Then you go on to this: "5. Every licensee under the Long-Term Care Homes Act..." Is it a surprise to anyone in this room that most of the people who work in long-term-care homes are women?

The list goes on: "7. Children's aid societies." Sure, there are a few good men who work for the children's aid, but the great majority of workers are women.

The list goes on, Speaker. It is a question of choices. The choice that this government has made is that women will have to balance the budget by taking on a pay cut. Many of these women are \$14-, \$15- and \$16-an-hour workers, which means that a 1% increase, even if you work full-time at 40 hours a week, means \$280 per year. It takes a lot of \$280 to balance the budget.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments? I remind all members that the side conversations are quite distracting. I recognize the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Speaker. It's a real honour for me to speak to Bill 124, the proposed Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019. I've listened to the opposition go on and on and on, and yet you know what? I look at it this way: I'm from the private sector, and I ran my own business. Of course, you work your budget based on your income coming in. I get that. But if there's an opportunity to cut back or if I had to cut back, my family and I, we'd cut back. We did what we had to do in order to get by, in order to enjoy what this great province has to offer.

Now there's this discussion about 1%—1%. Well, first of all, when we take a look at that 1%, that's better than no per cent, isn't it? It's better than a wage freeze; first of all. So they should be grateful for that.

Secondly, we're looking at the opportunity here. Where there are current contracts already in place, we're not touching those. But when they come due, then people need to realize that for three years, they will be in a 1% wage increase for the next three years—not a wage freeze, a 1% increase. It's still better than a 0% increase. We're not talking wage freezes. We're not talking about wage rollbacks. We're not talking about public sector job losses. Public sector employees would still be able to progress through salary ranges, be eligible for compensation increases, and be able to negotiate terms and conditions, including compensation—not necessarily the case in the private sector. Not necessarily. You're at the mercy of your employer. Be grateful for a job.

What we're trying to do is to sustain the way things are right now, because this province is in trouble because of mismanagement from the former Liberal government—

Hon. Bill Walker: Propped up by the NDP.

Mr. Rick Nicholls:—supported by the NDP.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House and to hear the comments of my colleagues. It's clear after the debate this afternoon that we see this bill in a different light on both sides of the House, and that we have different ways of looking at how we get to fiscal balance.

We have one million families—not just one million workers, but one million families—whose income is going to be affected by this bill. We also don't know how the other things that were talked about or alluded to in the comments from the government around pensions and benefits are going to be rolled out. Giving the minister a lot of authority over a process is not a good idea. When you have power concentrated in one person's hands, or even one party's hands, without the benefit of effective communication and consultation with other parties, which is the trend we have seen—we'll wait to see if that trend changes in this round, but what we have seen is a powering through of bad ideas. So I encourage us to look at this bill and the way it's structured and to look for amendments.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to appreciate the members' contributions to the debate today and just take a moment to welcome everyone back on our first day after five months of working hard back in our ridings.

Hon. Bill Walker: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Hear, hear.

I just want to say that, setting aside a lot of the comments about the fiscal realities of the province, we can't forget the fact that this is a pre-emptive strike on the collective bargaining rights of people in Ontario. It's likely going to lead to a court challenge, which I know will create jobs for lawyers, not necessarily for front-line public sector workers.

The members from both Thornhill and Chatham-Kent-Leamington talked about the need to balance the province's budget deficit. So first, let's remind everyone of some facts. It's not a \$15-billion budget deficit. It's a \$7.4-billion budget deficit. Ontario has the lowest per capita revenue of any province in the country. We have the lowest per capita spending of any province in the country, which affects the ability to deliver public services in Ontario.

Budgets are about choices, and I'm so happy the member from Nickel Belt reminded us of that. We could choose to reverse the tax cuts for the wealthiest 15%, which were in last year's fall economic statement. I don't think that would be a burden on those folks. I don't think it would lead to less tax revenue. It would actually lead to more tax revenue. We could means-test the previous government's

unfair hydro plan, which cost \$4.2 billion of the \$7.4-billion budget deficit.

The bottom line is, we don't need cuts that disproportionately affect women, as the member suggested; we can balance our budget without it being on the backs of front-line public service workers.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I spoke briefly for two minutes about this particular bill, but now I have the opportunity to speak in more depth and I'd like to get right into it.

I'd first like to thank Minister Bethlenfalvy for your dedicated efforts in reforming Ontario's government with the proposed Bill 124, the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019. The government is introducing the proposed legislation to ensure that public sector compensation reflects the current province's fiscal reality.

In spring of 2019, the government consulted with provincial public sector employers and bargaining agents on how compensation growth can be managed in a way that results in a fair and reasonable path forward that will protect vital services and front-line jobs and workers. This is a fair, consistent and time-limited approach that applies across the entire public sector.

Madam Speaker, before I get into the details of the proposed legislation, I would like to discuss the state of Ontario today. Due to 15 years of Liberal mismanagement, the province's net debt has grown to \$360 billion. In other words, the Liberals have nearly tripled our debt. This is the highest subsovereign debt in the entire world. The evolution of this number is the result of a regime that refused fiscal responsibility. For 2019-20, the government is forecasting \$13.3 billion in interest payments to service that debt. It is deeply shameful that we have to pay \$1.5 million every hour of every day in interest. It is the fourth-biggest expenditure in our budget, after health, education and social services.

Through the implementation of the debt burden reduction strategy, the government is protecting services that matter the most to people and helping to ensure that future generations are not left to deal with the burden of past financial mismanagement.

Balancing the budget and restoring accountability to our finances is not just a fiscal imperative; it is a moral imperative. We owe it to our children and grandchildren, who, for better or worse, will have to live with the consequences of the decisions that governments make today.

In 2009, almost every province had a deficit. Today, provinces like Quebec, Saskatchewan and British Columbia have projected surpluses. Why should Ontario continue to be an outlier?

I reiterate that Ontario has the highest sub-sovereign debt in the world. No other state, province or municipality in North America is as indebted as much as we are here in Ontario. Our debt is larger than the annual GDP of Portugal, New Zealand, Ukraine, Vietnam, Finland and many more. It's no surprise that Canada's Parliamentary

Budget Officer has indicated that Ontario's current fiscal policies are simply not sustainable over the long term.

Protecting front-line services, public sector jobs, and making Ontario fiscally sustainable will mean that everyone needs to do their part. Our government for the people will continue to work with all public sector employees, employers and bargaining agents to protect what matters the most.

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Public sector compensation represents roughly half of all government expenditures, totalling \$72 billion annually. Every 1% increase in compensation-related expenditures translates into \$720 million in increased expenditures that we don't have. This legislation, Bill 124, if passed, would apply to bargaining and non-bargaining employees, managers and leadership whose compensation is not otherwise moderated across the provincial public sector, including provincial authorities, boards, commissions, corporations, school boards, colleges and universities, hospitals and the Ontario public sector. As drafted, it would not apply to municipalities, including municipal authorities, corporations, boards, long-term-care homes, the Ontario Medical Association physician services agreement or for-profit organizations. It would also not capture the broader public service executives covered by the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act of 2014, whose wages have been frozen for much of the last decade. Existing collective agreements would not be revised based on the proposed legislation, and it would not impede the collective bargaining process.

The proposed legislation would not impose wage freezes, wage rollbacks, or public sector job losses. Public sector employees would still be able to progress through salary ranges, be eligible for compensation increases and be able to negotiate terms and conditions, including compensation. The proposed legislation, if passed, would limit future annual wage increases to a maximum of 1% per year for a three-year period across the provincial public sector.

This is about the future sustainability and protection of government services. We are taking these steps precisely so that we can protect front-line jobs and workers. If we did not take this action, tens of thousands of jobs, as well as future services, could be at risk, which our government refuses to do.

The government conducted six weeks of good-faith consultations with the public sector employers and bargaining agents in the spring of 2019 to explore how compensation growth could be managed in a way that allows for reasonable wage increases while protecting the province's front-line services, restoring the province's financial position and respecting the taxpayer dollars. The government wrote to all stakeholders who participated in the spring consultations to review the draft measures and to continue to provide feedback on the proposed approach. For an additional 15 weeks over the summer, we continued to receive input from employers, partner ministries, bargaining agents and other stakeholders. In-person sessions included participants from 68 employer

organizations in sectors covering more than 2,500 collective agreements, 57 bargaining agents who collectively represent 780,000 workers across all sectors of Ontario's public service, and all major bargaining agents attended and participated in the consultations.

Specifically, bargaining agents that participated in the public sector consultations included, but were not limited to, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Service Employees International Union, Ontario Nurses' Association, Elementary Teachers' Federation and Power Workers' Union, to name a few. Specifically, employers that participated in the public sector consultations included, but again were not limited to, the following sectors: colleges, universities, school board trustee associations, Ontario Hospital Association and provincial agencies, to name a few. All in-person consultation sessions took place at publicly held facilities at low or no cost, and teleconference options were available to minimize travel-related costs to the representatives and stakeholder participants.

At the Canadian Club, Minister Bethlenfalvy stated, "Since 2003, Ontario's debt has increased by almost \$200 billion. The question we must ask ourselves is: What did we get in exchange for this \$200 billion debt burden?"

"Is your life \$200 billion better? The answer is no, not even close."

From 2003 to 2013, public sector employment in Ontario grew an astonishing 27.6%, which dramatically outpaced the 5.6% private sector employment growth. Meanwhile, excessive public sector employment coincided with a period of dramatic increases in provincial government spending, rising government debt and sluggish economic growth—not a good combination.

Our government views the economic sustainability of Ontario as both a moral and fiscal imperative. Without the fiscal health of the province, our schools will fall into disrepair, our neighbourhoods are less safe and our loved ones will be treated in hospital hallways. In order to protect the services the people of Ontario rely on, we must act and we must act now. This is a province in a building moment and an opportunity to do government differently.

While we have begun to see results from our actions, we are nowhere near the finish line. We're proud of the responsible and measured approach we are taking and will continue to take, spending smarter and treating Ontarians' money with respect. The 2018-19 public accounts of Ontario showed that our deficit fell to \$7.4 billion, in part thanks to higher-than-anticipated revenues as well as lower-than-expected expenses.

After years of negative credit ratings under the previous government, Ontario's credit rating has been returned to stable. While the public accounts show we are making progress, again, we are far from the finish line. The government still has a significant deficit and an enormous amount of debt. As the great Edmund Burke once said, "If we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free; if our wealth commands us, we are poor indeed."

We are paying \$36 million every single day on our debt. That's \$36 million we could be investing directly back into improving lives across the province. It's money that we

could be using to build a stronger education program, better health care or updated and modern infrastructure. Spending smarter means recognizing that every dollar government spends is taken from a hard-working Ontarian. It means we need to maximize the value of that dollar, looking at government expenditures in more critical ways and finding efficiencies that protect the long-term sustainability of public services.

Like a household budget, Ontarians know that only paying half your credit card payment does not mean you're doing well financially. We are being honest with Ontarians. As a province, we have a long road ahead to get our financial house in order, but we are committed to staying on course. If we don't balance our budget, get our spending under control and reduce our debt, the long-term stability of our province is at risk and the services people depend on every day will also be at risk.

To those who dismiss the warning signals, I know you know the value of money. We cannot go and borrow more. States that refuse fiscal responsibility and discipline provide painful consequences for their inhabitants—look at Venezuela, Greece or Argentina. The consequences of Liberal fiscal mismanagement means we now have a higher debt-to-GDP ratio than New Zealand, Russia, Indonesia and the Czech Republic.

This government embraces the moral duty to be fiscally responsible. Our government aspires for Ontario to be a leader in global prosperity and economic growth. We want to be a shining example to the rest of the world and show how we are disciplined and responsible with our fiscal policies which result in abundant prosperity for the inhabitants of this great province. Take a look at the fiscally responsible countries around the world: Norway, Switzerland, Denmark. Ontario has a higher GDP than these countries, yet they have a higher GDP per capita than we do. This is shameful and subpar for Ontarians. We should be doing better.

We aim for the best and this government embraces that culture. It means we need to maximize the value of that dollar, looking at government expenditures in new and more critical ways and finding efficiencies that protect the long-term sustainability of the public services we enjoy. This is about rebuilding a province that allows the people of Ontario to flourish. This is about building a future where, when our kids finish school, instead of struggling to find a job and putting their future on hold, Ontario's bright minds can put their creative talents to use and lead the world; a future where we enjoy world-class infrastructure and public transit, letting us get home to our families faster after work, no longer wasting hours on a hot subway or standing waiting on a cold railway track or waiting for a bus. I must stress that if we are to enjoy the province's social services, we must have the courage to be fiscally responsible.

Furthermore, we know that getting a handle on our fiscal state would require both short-term action and long-term planning.

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Madam Speaker, part of our government's commitment to fiscal responsibility and smarter spending included

looking closely at how we do business. We need to find new ways to operate that enable us to both modernize and work as efficiently as possible.

Members of this House will recall that earlier this year, on March 18, we announced a plan to save \$1 billion annually by implementing smarter supply chain practices and reducing waste across government. When we assumed office, part of our platform, alongside a number of other cost-saving measures, was to centralize government purchasing. For far too long, smart supply chain practices in Ontario were being ignored. We saw a tremendous opportunity to better leverage the volume of purchasing across the Ontario public service sector and the broader public sector, ensuring that purchasing was more competitive in order to achieve the best value for the taxpayer.

Our government looked at our supply chains and how we managed the flow of purchases across government. Ontario is now working diligently with stakeholders to start using leading supply chain practices and determine the best way to centralize the province's public sector supply chain system and streamline back-office processes and services.

We have done so because we are committed to transforming the way goods and services are purchased in the Ontario public sector and broader public service on behalf of the people of Ontario. In doing so, we will be better able to leverage the government's buying power to realize significant savings, improve outcomes for end users by providing consistent access to high-quality products, and provide greater value for money for the programs and services that Ontarians rely on.

What's more, these initiatives have projected savings of \$1 billion per year. This initiative is about responsible public administration that respects the millions of taxpayer dollars invested in the Ontario public service and broader public sector, from health care products like bandages and pacemakers to technical items like IT hardware and computers.

Supply chain centralization requires long-term strategic thinking, and we have put key initiatives in place to ensure this happens. Ontario is committed to building a modern, integrated public sector supply chain system that will drive significant cost savings across government and streamline purchasing processes while simultaneously making it easier for businesses of all sizes to work with government.

At the end of the day, we are changing the culture of government. This is a change that was a long time coming and sorely needed. This is a change we are excited about. We are doing it in a way that helps us find solutions to Ontario's biggest challenges so that we can focus on the programs and services we all rely on. Our government is doing this for the people of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, our government received a strong mandate from the people of Ontario to ensure we got our fiscal house in order. We promised we would change the culture of government, modernize it, and that things would be done more effectively and differently.

The expanded voluntary exit program that was made available by Mr. Bethlenfalvy for non-bargaining staff,

managers and senior executives of the public service began in December 2018. The key objectives of this program included modernizing government, identifying areas for efficiency, removing duplication, offering employees more choice and flexibility regarding their individual career paths and directing taxpayer dollars toward front-line programs and services. The government's plan ensures front-line services and the workers who deliver them are protected. We received roughly 3,300 applications, of which approximately 2,400 were approved.

The government has already decreased the size of the Ontario public service by 3.7% through voluntary attrition alone from June 2018 to April 2019. The estimated cumulative savings of these voluntary exit options are estimated to be approximately \$317 million by the end of 2021-22. Planned efficiencies achieved through these exits are reflected as part of the government's fiscal plan and year-over-year growth rates in expenditures as reported in the 2019 budget.

We promised the people of Ontario we would restore the fiscal health of this province, and due to the hard efforts of Minister Bethlenfalvy, we are headed well on that path again, but there is much more to be done.

The government also quickly took a coordinated approach in managing expenses to ensure that programs are effective, affordable and meet the needs of Ontarians. As part of that expenditure management, restrictions have been implemented for all ministries across the Ontario public service. These restrictions include a pay-for-performance compensation arrangement for executives, managers and non-bargaining staff; a hiring freeze, with the exception of essential front-line workers; and a freeze on discretionary spending.

Bold steps have been taken to address the March madness spending that too often happens at the end of a government's fiscal year. March madness is unnecessary discretionary spending that increases the amount governments spend at the end of a fiscal year. To address this, the government has worked further to control spending by directing all ministries to limit commitments under contract, legislation and/or requirements to fulfill core services up to March 31, 2019. We realized cost savings of approximately \$153 million in two months.

All these expenditure management exercises are to put the taxpayer at the centre of everything the government does. It's about putting the structures in place that end a culture of waste and inefficiency. The government's approach will ensure that tax dollars go to the services on which Ontarians depend. We have already seen significant cost savings because of these measures.

Madam Speaker, our government is on the path to balance, but much more needs to be done. Things need to be done differently: leveraging technology, innovation, respecting the tax dollars and eliminating inefficiencies. I was proud to hear that Minister Bethlenfalvy is implementing the smart initiatives to ensure we will build a better government to work smarter for Ontarians in the 21st century.

These are just a few things we are doing to put the government back into the right financial shape, and I'm excited to support Bill 124 as a result.

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

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank the member opposite from Oakville for his comments—similar to what we've been saying through the whole debate here. The two things I've heard—one about consultations, the other one about having to tighten our belts.

On the first one, the government consulted for six weeks with public sector unions, and perhaps more than that. I was making a couple of notes about it. Because I also consulted with unions, I can't imagine they said something different to the government than they said to me. A theme that I've seen with the government is, "We have consulted with," and they'll say the number and the times and this is what we're doing. I never hear anything about, "This is what they told us. This is what they want us to do. This is the feedback we got. This is where we're meeting with them and we're balancing." I never hear that. I just hear, "We consulted." Whether it's about our sex ed—our public health education. The sex ed was the core component of that that caused a lot of strife and debate here. It was, "We consulted with all these families. Anyway, here's what we're doing." That's not consultation. Consultation is when you listen, you consider it and you change or you alter what you're doing.

The second part that we heard was, "We need to tighten our belts and make the sacrifices. We're in dire straits when it comes to the debt and deficit after 15 years of Liberal mismanagement." I agree with that. They were a horrible government. The thing we keep saying again and again—

Interjection.

Mr. Jamie West: And you need to listen; this is important. You can't say, on the one side, that bus drivers and snowplow operators and parole officers and correction officers need to tighten their belts, and on the other side, "We're increasing our cabinet, and everyone in the cabinet who now becomes a PA or an assistant minister or a minister is going to get a hefty raise. But you tighten your belts because we've got a budget we've got to get under control." You can't say, "Deputy Ministers, you get 14% retroactive," when they already make \$200,000 a year, and tell people who are airport screeners, "You're paid too much and we need to cap it at 1%." The math doesn't add up. It doesn't make any sense, Speaker.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise and say a few words. I think we're all in agreement. We're in a crisis. We are still running deficits. The debt is still rising. The new pages are here, I guess, for a couple of weeks, and they're listening and thinking to themselves, "Who is going to pay for all this?" Well, they're going to be paying for it, and I think they're smart enough to get it: that if, at this time, right now, adults are deciding to spend more money than we're taking in in revenue, we're borrowing

from the banks and bonds in order to make up the shortfall, eventually somebody's going to have to pay that back, and it's not fair to you. I want you to know that this government is working hard to ensure that we can get the deficit and the debt under control so that you will not have to be paying our bills, so that there will be enough money and it will be sustainable.

We need to have sustainable jobs, we need to have sustainable salaries, we need to have sustainable infrastructure. I think, if we ask all the workers in the province, whether they're private sector or public sector, they want to see infrastructure being built, and they wonder why all that money was borrowed for 15 years by the previous Liberal government and there's nothing to show for it: still no Yonge subway going through Thornhill to Richmond Hill. All those years and all those deficits leading up to the increased debt and there's nothing to show for it.

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We are working on having some sustainability, but we're also looking forward to having smart government, digital government. We heard that people can have the iPhones with the wallets that can show their car insurance or car registration. We're going to be doing a lot more of that, and we want to work together. We want to hear your suggestions. You're at home right now, you're at work right now, and we want to hear your suggestions on how we can make the government work more efficiently for you, smarter for you, more digital, more apps. We look forward to hearing from you.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to welcome everybody back to the Legislature today. It's our first day back. The member from—Vaughan?

Interjection: Oakville.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member from Oakville wants some suggestions on how to help out. Well, you can stop suing for climate change and causing a legal bill that's \$30 million. You can stop cancelling contracts before their term is up and having to pay penalties.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: That's a good idea.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That's a good idea. There are lots of good suggestions that this government can take responsibility for and stop blaming front-line workers, like educational workers who go to school every day and make the environment for our children the best it can be so our children can thrive. I've heard from educational workers on how the environment in their school has changed. They are subject to violence; there are so many different elements. All they want is fair wages for the work that they do. For this government to ask front-line workers who, in this case, educational workers, are making an average of \$38,000, "You've got to tighten your belt more," you're asking families to make sacrifices. Yet you're suing for climate change legislation not to happen, costing \$30 million. And you're asking single mothers, single parents, maybe one-income families to take a hit because you can't figure out what to do when it comes to actually doing better for workers, families and students. That would be the suggestions I just came up with: Stop suing everybody

and causing all those legal bills for this government and for this province, and stop cancelling contracts mid-term. Honour those contracts until the end and then renegotiate and do other things. That's not good business.

That's what you should be doing to save this province some—

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

Mr. Parm Gill: I appreciate the opportunity, and first of all I want to thank my colleague the member from Oakville for his passionate speech. He's someone who brings tremendous experience, especially from the finance industry, and someone who really understands the numbers. I want to thank him for his contribution.

Madam Speaker, it is no secret: When we were campaigning in June 2018, Ontarians elected us for a reason, because they were frustrated with the mess that the Liberal government had created for over 15 years. People were, of course, concerned with the direction that the province was headed in.

I think all of us can relate to the situation we are faced with. You could not afford to run your household budget the way the Liberals ran the province, right? You would lose your house; you would lose your cars; you would lose everything you have. The bank would not lend you money. You can only live off of a credit card for so long, and ultimately, when you cannot afford to even make your interest payments, the banks would pull the credit card back.

Some of these numbers are alarming, and I'm sure every member in this House would agree. We're paying over \$13 billion in loan interest every year. That's over \$1 billion a month. You break down the numbers, and the President of the Treasury Board did a tremendous job highlighting—what is it?—in the neighbourhood of \$35 million a day, \$1.5 million by the hour. How long can we afford that? Just the interest payments alone, the debt payment, is basically the fourth-largest item. Madam Speaker, we cannot, for the sake of our kids, the future generation, afford to go the route that the previous Liberal government has taken us. We need to change course.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member from Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'd like to thank the members from Sudbury, Thornhill, London—Fanshawe and Milton for all their contributions to discussion on this debate. This is a really important debate. This is an important bill.

No government wants to come into power and legislate that we have to keep wage increases to 1%. I don't think anybody wants to do that. I mean, wouldn't it be great if the numbers were much larger? Of course, everyone would like that, but we've got to face the fiscal reality we face as a province today. We have a problem, a serious problem, and we don't want to leave this problem for our children and our grandchildren.

Now, again, there are a couple of courses of action we could take. We could raise taxes. I know some people on the other side, or perhaps a lot of you, would like to do that. Well, first of all, it has been proven to be not successful when we raise taxes. Usually the income goes

down. Number two, Ontario has the highest personal tax rates in North America. I don't know if you're proud of that over on that side of the aisle. I know the Liberal government brought it up to 53% or 54%. It doesn't bring a lot of interest in people wanting to come to Ontario to want to earn some money and get ahead. We have the highest taxes, so I don't think that's a realistic option.

The second option is laying off workers. Our government doesn't want to do that. We made a commitment. Premier Ford made a commitment that we did not want to come into government and have to slash and burn in order to balance the budget. We want to balance the budget, but we want to do it in a methodical, rational, measured way, and that's what we're doing. We're finding efficiencies in government. We're limiting the pay increases over the next three years.

Again, I want to reiterate that any contract that's already in place is not going to be thrown in the garbage can. On the contrary, it will be respected, but going forward three years hence, we're going to limit it to 1%. Everybody has got to share.

We're not blaming workers. I know one of the members opposite said that we're blaming workers, that we're attacking workers. On the contrary, we're all in this together, collectively, as a province, every one of us. We've got to share the responsibility for the next generation, and so we've got to make some decisions. I believe this decision that we're doing here with Bill 124 is the right one for the province.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to start my 20 minutes on Bill 124 by sharing a letter I got from Brook Morneau. She's a 17-year-old student from my riding, and her dad works at Clarabelle Mill. It goes as follows:

"There are many different problems in the world, such as world hunger, global warming, child poverty. Those problems are global, but each province in Canada has their own set of problems when it comes to the working class. The labour movement in Ontario faces many problems daily. I believe the most important problem facing the labour movement" in Ontario "today is the fact that the government, in 1996, revoked the Labour Relations Act. In doing so, the government put their workers' health and working conditions at risk.

"Firstly, the Labour Relations Act was put in place to prevent companies from hiring scab labourers during a strike or lockout, thus enabling the company to continue making profit and not paying much attention to the needs of their workers. As a result, the workers are unable to negotiate safe terms. Working in the labour industry comes with many health risks."

She goes on to describe silicosis, "a disease that develops after many years of inhaling of crystalline silica dust. This disease could be preventable if the company properly informs their workers on safety precautions. Usually one of the reasons workers go on strike is to improve working conditions, wages and benefits. If the company is unwilling to negotiate because they have hired scab labourers during a strike or lockout, that means the workers' health and safety are not improved. That is one of the reasons why removing the Labour Relations Act is horrible for workers in the industry.

"Secondly, when the company is non-compliant when it comes to negotiation of a contract, it can also harm the work conditions. Work conditions are anything from physical aspects in the workplace to safety, work hours or even legal rights. I believe work conditions are a big factor when going on strike. Work conditions take a big part in the workplace. Typically companies expect more from their workers, which can harm the safety in the workplace. This could mean companies want people to work long strenuous hours or in unsanitary conditions. Not doing so could lead to termination. Overall, hiring scab labourers prevents fair negotiation of a safe contract, which is why removing the Labour Relations Act harms the work conditions of workers in the labour industry.

"Thirdly, as a solution there are a multitude of things we can do. Here to name a few, we can start off by bringing back the Labour Relations Act. Therefore, companies cannot hire scab labourers during a strike or lockout. This will force the"—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Once more, thank you, Speaker, for letting me read parts of her letter into the record.

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 1800.

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Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (IND)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Vacant	Orléans	
Vacant	Ottawa—Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Stephen Crawford
Wayne Gates, Randy Hillier
Andrea Khanjin, Jane McKenna
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Lindsey Park
Randy Pettapiece, Peter Tabuns
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Vacant
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Kaled Rasheed
Jeremy Roberts, Amarjot Sandhu
Sandy Shaw, Donna Skelly
Dave Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Vacant
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Rudy Cuzzetto, Parm Gill
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Marit Stiles, Vijay Thanigasalam
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Roman Baber, Will Bouma
Lorne Coe, Parm Gill
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Gurratan Singh, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Michael Coteau, Faisal Hassan
Logan Kanapathi, Jim McDonell
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaled Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Jill Andrew, Toby Barrett
Stan Cho, Stephen Crawford
Catherine Fife, Goldie Ghamari
Michael Gravelle, France Gélina
Norman Miller, Michael Parsa
Nina Tangri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Will Bouma, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Vacant
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, John Fraser
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie