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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 October 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 octobre 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments relating to the legislative offices pending the voting of supply for the period commencing October 28, 2019, and ending on March 31, 2020, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation for the 2019-20 fiscal year, following the voting of supply.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 67. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Parsa: It's a pleasure to rise in the House to put forward a motion for interim supply to authorize the salaries of legislative staff and other necessary payments relating to the legislative offices.

This motion ensures that we have the ability to pay all of the necessary expenses of the Legislative Assembly and the legislative offices, including the Auditor General, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ombudsman, the Financial Accountability Officer, the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Integrity Commissioner, from now until March 31, 2020.

This motion for interim supply is necessary to ensure those offices are able to continue the work that they do on behalf of Ontarians. They perform a vital function in our system of government, and I know members on both sides of the House rely on the analysis, insights and advice provided by these legislative officers. Final spending authority must eventually be authorized through the Legislature's concurrence of the 2019-20 estimates and passage of the Supply Act. This interim supply motion is not about providing additional funding for a government program or office; it's about making sure the Legislature, the institution that houses our democracy, has the funds it needs to operate.

Some members may wonder why this motion is necessary. The legislative offices are currently spending under the interim appropriation act, IAA, for the 2019-20 fiscal year that was passed as part of the Restoring Trust, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2018.

The interim appropriation act capped the spending of legislative offices at \$190 million, which was a portion of

their budget. At this time, a motion is necessary to support the continued operation of the legislative offices from the beginning of November until such time as all spending for the year is authorized through an annual Supply Act. I'll also want to stress that the motion before the House today has to do with the appropriations decided by the Board of Internal Economy.

For those who do not know, the Board of Internal Economy is an all-party committee chaired by the Speaker. It's tasked with making funding decisions for the Legislature, including the legislative staff, the constituency offices of members, maintenance of the legislative building and overseeing funding for the legislative officers, including the Financial Accountability Officer, the Office of the Auditor General, and the Chief Electoral Officer. Based on the decisions made by the Board of Internal Economy, we're putting forward today's motion to ensure the Legislature's spending requirements are met.

There are several relevant changes to the legislative offices that have taken place over the last two years that I want to highlight today. First, members will recall that the previous government increased the number of seats from 107 to 124 just before the 2018 provincial election. As a result, we have 17 new members in the House, all of whom have new staff, new constituency offices and new offices at the Legislature. Second, members will also be aware that the Office of the Assembly has committed to upgrading the security and screening centre in the assembly to ensure the safety of members, staff and visitors. Lastly, the officers of the Legislative Assembly, including the Auditor General, Ombudsman and Chief Electoral Officer, require spending to continue the important work they are doing for Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, I hope all members of the House will agree that these expenses are not contentious and that they are necessary.

As members, we all know the fundamental role the legislative offices play in the life of government and our great province. It's within this great hall that we present, debate and vote on bills advanced by the government and private members; it is in committees with fellow members that we scrutinize and deliberate proposed bills; and it's here that we listen and speak to each other so that we can build a stronger and more prosperous province for all our constituents across this beautiful province.

The motion before the House today would provide the necessary spending authority to keep the legislative offices going and allow us to continue the important work that the people of Ontario have sent us here to do. Without it, most scheduled and unscheduled payments, such as salaries and

wages, or suppliers' accounts, cannot be paid. In essence, this motion allows us to continue serving the people of Ontario and keep our commitment to look after and represent their interests.

In the time since the Ontario legislative building here at Queen's Park was completed in 1893, its beautiful frontage has become a symbol of Ontario's democracy and the will of its people. Thousands of young Ontarians pass through here every year to learn about their heritage, their rights and their freedoms. This beautiful structure that represents so much serves as an inspiration to the next generation of our province's leaders.

I have to share a personal story with you in this area in particular, Speaker. For us, as you know, as young people when we are students, we typically have these tours where we come to various Parliaments, depending on where you live. This beautiful structure was one that was often visited by various schools, including ours. Whenever we had the opportunity to come and visit this beautiful building, it was such an amazing experience. Having immigrated to this country at a young age, I always wondered what it's like and what they do here—the work that gets done here. To one day have the opportunity to be a member in this House, Speaker—this is why, in almost every speech, I always say that we live in the greatest country in the world. I'm beyond thankful for the opportunity that my constituents and this great country have offered to me and to my family.

0910

Hon. Bill Walker: Hear, hear. We're lucky to have you.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you, sir.

You won't believe it, Speaker: Regardless of whether it's hot, cold or rainy, every day I walk to this building, park my car and look up with a smile. I'm in shock; I can't believe that I actually work here.

I encourage all members to support this important motion so that we can keep the lights on and the doors open to the people's House, and open for all. Ontarians demand no less from their representatives, and we certainly won't let them down. I thank you for the time to speak to this motion for interim supply, Speaker. I look forward to hearing from the opposition members on this very important bill. Thank you so much for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's a great opportunity to speak to an interim supply motion, well explained by my colleague across the way. I think he laid out what this motion is all about. Without this particular vote, we couldn't pay the bills of the Legislature—the staff, this building, the hydro, the heat and our wages. You wouldn't have an appropriation to do it.

I want to speak to how the government has set up the situation of having to have an interim supply motion now. As we all know, last spring the government brought in a budget. Normally, you could contain within a budget bill an appropriation for an amount of time—let's say from the time of the budget up until April 1—in order to make sure

you had the authority to spend what is necessary at the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, all other ministries and the Ontario Legislature.

For whatever reason this year—and I thought it was odd when we saw this interim supply motion show up at our House leader's office. Looking at it, I was saying, "Well, this is kind of odd. It's kind of early to get an interim supply motion at this time of day." I'm not saying it has never happened before, but it's not the norm. We don't normally see an interim supply motion in this time. But then we went back and looked at the actual budget bill. When they did the appropriation for the Legislature—our budget is about \$300 million, to pay for everything that runs the Legislature, and they appropriated about 25% to 30% of what was needed inside that bill. So then I went, "Well, why did they do that?" For a government who says they want to get House time maximized so they're able to pass more legislation through the House, they set up a situation where they would be forced to use more House time to do an interim supply motion on something that you could have dealt with when you did the budget bill.

I'm not faulting the government for not having brought it to the end of the year; other governments have done the same. This is not casting aspersions in regard to what the government did overall, but you have got to wonder: Why would you only appropriate 30% of what was necessary? Normally, when you do an appropriation in a budget bill, you do at least appropriate for six months. You do a set of time, for six months, or you do the amount of money that gets you to about six months so that by the time you do your fall economic statement, you're able to put into a bill whatever it is that has to be done.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, this one is six months. But my point is you wouldn't have to be in this situation if you would have done an appropriation that allowed to the end of the year or even beyond Christmas, because you knew you were going to do a fall economic statement. I have got to imagine that the government, once they do the fall economic statement, which I think is next week, is going to bring a bill to the House—I would think. If you bring a bill to the House—it's an appropriation, so you could have put this in the appropriation bill if you had set up the timing properly. That's the argument.

I'm not saying there's anything nefarious about what you've done, but it certainly makes you wonder who at finance, or who in the Premier's office or the House leader's office or a combination thereof, made the decision to do the appropriation in this way. That's the point that I'm making. For a government who says, "We need to use every second in the House as efficiently as we can," you're being yourselves a bit sloppy in the way that you're setting this up.

Is it the end of the world? Absolutely not. This is only a two-hour debate, because an interim supply motion is limited to two hours by our standing orders, so it's not the end of the world. But it does raise the question, "Why did the government do it in this particular way?" That's the first point that I wanted to make.

The second point I want to make—and this, I think, is the beauty of the British parliamentary system. In the United States, in the congressional system and the senate system, this whole thing would be just—there would be all kinds of riders on it. It always amazes me, when you read the news in the United States about their budgetary process, that the budget bills could be about that thick, because there are so many earmarks put onto every appropriation that it becomes that every congressman and every senator puts their pet projects through. In order to be able to get support for the budget bill, they end up putting riders on—earmarks, as they call them—in order to get additional money. The British parliamentary system doesn't work that way.

I know we all are in agreement here on both sides of the House, but when I hear some of my friends talk about, "Oh, you know, the United States, I like their congressional system," this is one of the things that's much more superior about what goes on in the British parliamentary system, because our appropriation process is fairly clear. The government sets out a budget in the spring by way of a speech here in the House as to what its general principles are to what it is that they want to do economically for the next year. Once we've done the debate on the actual budget speech, we then have a bill, and then the bill, yes, can be amended in committee to do whatever, but we do not have the practice in our parliamentary system to do what they do in the United States. In fact, I think what we do here is a much cleaner system, where a government decides what they want to do as far as appropriation, there's a debate in the House where members can speak to or against or for or whatever they want to do, and then we refer it off to committee.

Now, here's where I think our system is starting to break down a little bit: The government has increasingly gotten into the habit, especially under this administration, that there is little or no time in committee to deal with bills once they get to committee. Because our parliamentary process is that a bill must have first and second reading—first reading is a nod, yes, it's introduced, we all agree, and then we have a short six-and-a-half to seven-hour debate at second reading here in the House, because the government will time-allocate everything at that point. But once you refer it to committee, we're supposed to have some time.

For example, members on the government side or members on the opposition side should be able to get an opportunity to get into committee to further probe what the government is doing with their budget bill, or whatever appropriation it might be—and, more importantly, the public. This is where I think this government has failed. If we don't allow the public to get access to us, the politicians, and to our legislative process, I think we're failing our citizens. Because a lot of them these days, we say, "Oh, you know, the public is apathetic. They don't vote in large numbers and they don't pay attention to politics." Well, we don't give them the chance sometimes. The fact that we don't allow enough time in committee for the public to be heard when it comes to everything from a

budget bill to a very important bill, whatever it might be, on an issue that they care about—they don't get an opportunity to be able to speak to the bill.

When I first got here in 1990, it was the practice that governments, especially on controversial bills, not only referred them to committee in this Legislature, but they would refer them on the road so that in between sessions—not while the House was sitting, but in between sessions, either the spring or summer—a bill of controversy would have at least two to three or four weeks of hearings, depending on negotiations with the parties, in order to give the public a chance to have their say. On a budget bill, it was the same.

I harken back to—I think it was our first or second budget—when I first got here in 1990. The Conservative Party of the day, the third party led by Mr. Harris, took exception to the budget. Fair enough. He has that right as a member. I'm not arguing he shouldn't have done that. So they held up the House with the rules of the day in order to put pressure on the then-government, NDP, to travel the budget more extensively than we would normally have done.

So we had to acquiesce because of the rules of the House. We were forced to negotiate, and I think that was a good system. It was give and take. Tories wanted more time; we wanted less time. We negotiated and we came to an agreement.

0920

But the budget bill was sent out on the road. Not only did the opposition third party—in that case, the Conservatives—gain information about what it was that they were trying to make as far as points about that budget, but we as a government also gained as well. We learnt things. Because as you know, when you draft bills and you draft budgets, sometimes you don't get it right on the first pass. That's why we engage with the public. That's why we engage with people who are interested. That's why the people who follow this stuff closely within various agencies and universities etc. come to talk to us.

When the government refuses to give that opportunity to the public, I think we're put in a position where it's short-shrifting democracy. I would hope—not on this appropriation, because this is an interim supply motion, which means to say it's not going to go to committee, but when it comes to a budget bill—you'll have a money bill that you'll bring in to this House, I would think, after your fall economic statement—I think the government would be well advised to allow time for the public to have their say, not only here in Toronto but in places like Hamilton, places like Ottawa, northern Ontario, southwestern Ontario, so that people can feel engaged with the Legislature and what their government is doing, because in the end, it's our money. It's the money of the citizens of this province. All of us work, or don't work, and pay taxes in some form. These taxes are collected and we utilize those taxes in a way to be able to provide services to people, so we should give them an opportunity to have that say.

A couple of other quick points that I would like to make in regard to this particular appropriation—you'll notice

those who have been down here and get to see the Legislature—as a member was saying previously, this building is, what, 128—I'm looking at the Clerks—about 128 years old, or about 118? About that. About 120 years old. The building is a glorious old building. It's an historical building, but, man, it's pretty expensive to take care of. They've had to redo all of the mortar between all of the bricks. They're not even bricks; they're big construction stones. They've redone the whole building. They've had to replace the mortar between every joint in this building. Very expensive to do.

Currently, we're building a new reception centre downstairs to deal with today's security needs when it comes to getting access to a parliamentary building in a day where security is not what it used to be and the threats to people are not what they used to be as compared to 30, 40 years ago. When I first got here in 1990, there was no security in this building, by and large. I'm looking at my good friend the Sergeant-at-Arms, who's smiling and looking because she's interested in this one. She's a great person, by the way. We should thank her for the great work that she does, along with all of her staff. We have professional security people here second to none, I would say. Well, of course they're second to none. Anyway, I was going to have a little fun with you.

But the point I want to make is, in 1990 when I got here, there was no security in this building. Anybody could just walk in. You could walk in by any door you wanted. You could walk up to the Premier's office, open the door and say, "Can I see the Premier?" Essentially, it was as easy as that. But it was a much different time. People were not consumed the way they are today with some of the things that have happened in society that have led us to the need of clamping down on security a bit more. Now, do I like all of this? Absolutely not, and I know our Sergeant-at-Arms knows I'm a traditionalist when it comes to this, but I understand why it's being done. But all of this costs money, and it's money that we have to spend in order to make sure that it's not just the politicians that are being protected, but that when the public comes into this building, they're protected as well, because we need to make sure that we do proper screening. We need to make sure that we control access into the building so that our security people here can do the job that they've got to do in keeping us safe. All of that costs money. One of the reasons we have to pass this appropriation motion today is that without the appropriation, everything in this building would stop, including the work that's being done downstairs with the reception centre. So let's understand what this is all about.

I know my colleagues want to have a few words on this as well. I'm going to wrap up within a couple of minutes. But I look forward to next week—the government's fall economic statement. It will be interesting to see what they have to say. I can tell you there is much in the way of angst in Ontario when it comes to how this government has dealt with things so far in the first year and a half in office. The government has done a massive restructuring and made cuts in health care, education and other programs that are

really starting to be seen back home. I think all of us could admit, on the government side and the opposition side, that we've all had constituents come up to us on the street, at the grocery store or the office, by email or whatever, to complain about what this has meant to a parent of an autistic child or what this has meant to a parent who has children in high school or grade school that is affected by what's going on.

I had an opportunity to meet with all of the school boards in my riding this spring. I've had an opportunity to meet with students. I've had an opportunity to meet with the labour leaders, which are the unions that represent the workers in all of these schools. I'll tell you that there are some changes that have happened. Now, the government has tried to mitigate some of those as of late—that's interesting. Certainly, New Democrats have been pushing for that. I take great pleasure and great pride as a New Democrat that we've been effective as an opposition in getting this government to slow down a little bit. Now, are they stopping? No. Are they going to go in the opposite direction? I don't believe so. But we've been very effective as an opposition, here in the NDP—our leader, Andrea Horwath, and all of our critics—working with the public, working with parents of children with autism, working with schools, working with students and working with health care workers and others who have been affected.

I think of people that I talk to in my riding who work in the home care sector. We have a crisis in home care. I'm not talking about long-term-care institutions; we have a separate problem there. When it comes to being able to provide services for people at home, we don't have enough PSWs. Why? Because we don't pay them enough. As a result, they can't find PSWs to do the calls. A good friend of mine, Darla, who is a PSW in Timmins in the home care sector, will take off for work in the morning, and she has so many calls, it's ridiculous. We're asking these people to do huge amounts of work for very little pay, and we wonder why they quit and why we can't find PSWs.

The government has really set up—the problem first started under the Liberals; I'm not going to put it all on your desk. The Liberals set this up by neglecting home care for many years, but you guys came into office and you were supposed to try to find a way to fix some of this. What we now have is a failing home care system where we can no longer get services that we used to be able to get, and what we do get is very much rationed.

I have a lady that I was dealing with in my constituency about two weeks ago. Her issue is real simple: She can live independently in her apartment, provided somebody comes in and does her laundry, because her arthritis is so crippling that she's not able to do the stuff physically that you have to do to operate the washer and dryer or to do the things that have to be done—a few other tasks, some of the heavier housekeeping. She can cook for herself; she can do the rest. She can live independently, but because home care is not doing the work that needs to be done to help her stay in her home, she's risking having to go into a long-term-care institution. It's going to be far more expensive to have her in a long-term-care institution than to keep her

in her home. So this is a question of the government not putting resources where they can best be utilized in order to lessen the effects on services back home.

I'm going to let the rest of the members of the assembly who I'm sure want to speak to this speak, and I look forward to continued debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? The member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Good morning and thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you sitting up there today.

It is an honour to speak today in support of the supply motion put forward by my colleague the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, a good friend of mine, right here in front of me today. This motion is routine and procedural, but it is also a very important step in the provincial fiscal cycle. As many colleagues note, this motion is about making sure the Legislative Assembly has the funding it needs to operate this year. It provides temporary spending authority for the salaries of our legislative staff, and for other necessary payments related to the offices of the Legislative Assembly, until the end of the fiscal year. These include the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ombudsman, the Financial Accountability Officer, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Integrity Commissioner and the Auditor General. As many members know, we are also upgrading the assembly's security and screening centre to ensure safety for all members, staff and visitors here.

0930

It is important to reiterate that this motion today includes spending approved by the Board of Internal Economy, an all-party committee chaired by the Speaker that makes funding decisions for the Legislative Assembly.

Our legislative officers perform vital functions, and I know that members of all parties rely on these essential functions. To take just one example, the Audit and Accountability Committee, on which I serve, is working right now on a motion and follow-up on the implementation of this recommendation of the Auditor General. We should all value her work identifying areas where taxpayers' money can be used more efficiently. We need this motion to ensure that these officers can continue their important work in this beautiful province of Ontario that we all live in.

From now until March 31, 2020, Speaker, I hope all members of the House will agree: These expenses are essential, and none of them should be controversial. But since this is a supply motion, the rules of this House also allow us to speak more generally on the economy and on the budget of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say once again that our government's approach is working. We took office based on a commitment to clean up 15 years of waste, scandal and mismanagement. We inherited a \$15-billion deficit; it has now been cut in half, to \$7.4 billion. After years of neglect under the previous government, our credit rating has now been returned to stable. I'll repeat that once again: Our credit rating has been returned to stable.

After years of warnings about "bogus accounting" by the previous government, we have received a clear audit opinion from the Auditor General for the past two years. And since last June, we have created 270,000 new jobs in this province of Ontario. We created a stable business environment where employers have opportunities to grow, prosper and create quality, high-paying jobs right here in this province of Ontario—for our children.

But as we saw yesterday, we have lots of work left to do. Having worked at Ford Motor Co. at the Oakville assembly plant for 31 years, I know how devastating the announcement yesterday is. Many of the 4,500 workers at the Oakville assembly complex were my co-workers; they remain my friends. They lost 450 positions beginning next February. It's difficult news, not just for them but for their children and for their families and for the entire region. I want them to know that I stand with them. Our Premier stands with them, and our entire government stands with them at this difficult time. I understand that the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development is now reaching out to help the affected workers, and I also stand ready to assist in any way that I can.

It is estimated that every job in auto manufacturing supports nine other jobs in our community, so it is also a difficult time for many auto parts suppliers and other small businesses.

When I was working there, I was a vehicle auditor at the Ford Motor Co. as well as incoming quality, and I dealt with a lot of these suppliers day in and day out. I know it will be very difficult for their families and their friends as well who depend on the Oakville assembly complex, as well as so many other businesses throughout Halton region. But, working together, I know that we can support the affected families and work to strengthen the competitiveness of the Ontario auto sector.

The first phase of our Driving Prosperity plan announced earlier this year committed \$40 million to do just that, and that's just the beginning. I know that, moving forward, our government will work every day to ensure that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs in automotive manufacturing.

In Oakville, Mississauga and right across this province of Ontario, over 105,000 Ontarians work in the automotive industry, with hundreds of thousands more spinoff jobs, so this sector is critical to the success of our province.

I would also like to take a moment to correct the record about allegations of a 14% pay increase to the deputy ministers. The reality is that since we have come into government, there has been a modest increase of 2% to the salary range of the deputy minister—that is the salary range of the deputy minister—and only for those deputies performing at a level of excellence.

In fact, one of the first actions we took as a government was to cancel the scheduled automatic pay increase that would have seen deputy minister salaries raised by 11%. Under the previous government, at the cost of living, deputy ministers received automatic pay increases regardless of their performance. We put an end to the practice of that in the 2019 budget, and we put a system in place that puts taxpayers first.

Under our new pay-for-performance strategy, modest pay increases are provided, and only to leaders delivering programs towards meeting key government objectives. This will end the culture of entitlement and create a new culture of excellence. The taxpayers of Ontario expect nothing less.

Speaker, we know the fundamental role that the legislative office plays in our government. This motion will provide the necessary spending authority to keep our legislative offices going and allow us to continue the important work that we have all been sent here to do. Without it, salaries and wages can't be paid.

Once again, I encourage all members to support this important motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You know what? I am surprised that we're here discussing this today. I am a new member of this House, and the senior members expressed that this is a very unusual time for us to be talking about an interim supply motion, in the middle of this budgetary year. I think I'm going to try to seek some answers from this government as to why we're in this position right now.

The government talks a lot about restoring trust and transparency. I hope that this is an opportunity this government will take to do just that, to answer some of these fundamental questions and to help us restore some of the trust and some of the transparency that the people of Ontario expect from our government.

As the honourable member from Timmins has said, this role, as the elected members of this House, is our fundamental duty. It is a duty that goes back all the way to King John and the Magna Carta. It's hard to believe we could be standing here this morning in Toronto talking about something that has a pedigree that deep but, in fact, it does. Really, these are the origins of our Westminster parliamentary system that go back to King John and the Magna Carta, and we're here today exercising that responsibility and exercising that duty. There is nothing we can say more strongly than it is our responsibility to be keepers of the purse strings of the taxpayers' money. That's what we're talking about today: good spending and good allocation of taxpayers' dollars, hard-earned taxpayers' dollars.

The Auditor General has a quote I'd like to read this morning that underscores the importance of our role in oversight when it comes to spending taxpayer dollars. In her 2012 annual report, it reads, "Legislative oversight of government spending, including the annual budget, is fundamental to any democracy. In Canada, such oversight typically falls to the opposition parties, although all elected officials are ultimately responsible for ensuring that revenues are spent prudently on behalf of the public."

That gives me an opportunity, again, to emphasize the important role of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, a key, fundamental component of a Westminster parliamentary democracy which the members of the House on the other side said that they are so proud of when they walk up to this House. They're proud of what this building represents. The opposition represents a fundamental, key component

of that pride we all feel in the system that we have here today. We certainly take this duty very seriously.

The government talks a lot about restoring trust, but I want to say that trust is another way of talking about confidence, that you trust someone when you have confidence in what it is they're doing. But, I have to say, at what point, with a government that appears to be incompetent when it comes to handling the financial files, does that lack of confidence become mistrust? I would say that that's what we're going to talk about a little bit this morning.

0940

I also want to say, again, this is an opportunity for the government side to answer questions clearly, so that we can ensure that we are restoring trust and that no one has any doubt about the competency of your handling of the financial files.

As I said, this is an incredibly unusual motion. I've listened carefully to the members on the opposite side, on the government bench, and I really haven't heard a clear answer as to why. Why are we here, and why are we discussing this interim supply motion?

I did hear some members saying that we have new members in the House, and we have increased the number of members in terms of the number of seats. That was something that was known; that's not new information.

I did hear that we talked about a security upgrade to the building. That couldn't have just come out of the blue. Maybe it has come out of the blue. I know we've had a lot of problems with this particular government in terms of security. That may be something that was unknown. But that kind of capital spend isn't something that comes out of the blue, or shouldn't come out of the blue.

I also would like to point out that while these things were already known, I noticed that no one on the other side mentioned some of the increases in the cost to the taxpayers, based on additional ministries and ministers, additional PAs, additional associate—what is it now, the new term?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Associate ministers.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Associate ministers. My question is, is there anybody on the government side that isn't a minister, an associate minister—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Or a PA?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —or a PA? Because according to the Premier, you're all all-stars, so I can understand why we will have to increase the cost for these promotions that you have awarded yourselves.

I would also say, in terms of the people having trust in how this government is handling files, let's just look at the numbers that this government keeps throwing around in terms of what is the actual deficit in the province of Ontario. I know people that I talk to have shut their ears; they don't listen anymore. This government had this big, flamboyant commission of inquiry. I sat on that commission. It really was, I would have to say, political theatre for the most part. But we did come up with a number that the government was in debt, that we had a \$15-billion deficit.

But since that time, we have a government that, in fact, has increased the deficit. I can't even imagine. Really, it

only would take a Conservative government to increase the deficit at the same time as you're cutting program spending. I don't know how that adds up. I was asked, and I'd have to say that the people of Ontario are also curious as to how that adds up.

Straight answers on the deficit, straight answers on your cuts to the cap-and-trade that is costing us \$1.9 billion in revenue, straight answers about the Liberal fair hydro plan that you are continuing—you've adopted that. It's costing \$4.2 billion to the taxpayers of Ontario, all at the same time that hydro bills are going up. That 12% promised decrease—Doug Ford promised that hydro bills were going down 12%. Well, that's not happening; it's going up. All at the same time, \$4.2 billion is going to subsidize Ontario hydro.

Now we can talk a little bit about transparency. I would have to say that the government has a lot of pretty words about transparency, but I am standing here before you to say that the government doesn't walk that talk. As the finance critic, I have made genuine, sincere efforts through the standing orders, through conversations, through committee to get straight answers on the government's handling of the finances, and I'm going to show you exactly how that has not happened. We don't get straight answers, and it's unclear. The government is not willing to be clear and forthright with the people of Ontario, let alone Her Majesty's loyal opposition, on how this government is spending taxpayer dollars.

When this government presented the estimates this year, it was a shock to me, as it would certainly be to the people of Ontario, that they were actually, in fact, the Liberal estimates. They used precisely the budget of the previous Liberal government. The Liberal government that they railed against on and on and on again—we had to discuss those Liberal estimates.

I don't see how that is transparent, because there were no answers from the government side, from the President of the Treasury Board or the Minister of Finance at the time, who is in a different position now—no straight answers as to why we were faced with having to debate the Liberal estimates at the time. So in order to begin to get a handle on what this government's spending is, we submitted to the government what are called order paper questions. This is something that exists in the standing orders, and it exists so that members of the House can get a better understanding of how the government is spending their money.

I submitted a few Treasury Board orders to the President of the Treasury Board. I submitted this question: "Would the President of the Treasury Board please provide details of planned spending changes to approximately 40 ministry programs referred to in the Financial Accountability Officer's report, *Expenditure Estimates: A Review of Ontario's Proposed Spending Requirements....*"

Now, I would reiterate the fact that this is 40 different ministries that were having a changing in their spending, and that we thought that this was really good information to have from the government. But essentially we really got, I would say, a cut-and-paste answer that referred me

to the Treasury Board orders that will be published in the Ontario Gazette. I'll talk a little bit about the Ontario Gazette in a second.

I had a second Treasury Board question, which was: "Would the President of the Treasury Board please provide a copy of all Treasury Board orders since June 29, 2018, including orders to adjust the authorized spending for any ministry program or sub-program."

Now, these are fundamental questions. You'd think that a government would be prepared to explain exactly how they were moving money from one file to another file, especially in a time when what we would see is cuts to spending. How many billions of cuts would we see to spending? Was it \$3.2 billion in cuts to program spending? But no details, absolutely no details. That's something that would certainly restore trust and transparency to this House, if the government was prepared to answer those questions.

Now, for those of you who don't know, the Ontario Gazette does publish Treasury Board orders. Treasury Board orders are in-year orders that allow the government to move money from one line item to another line item and back and forth. Really, Treasury Board orders show you what the real spending was. That's what they are all about. But the Treasury Board orders don't get published in the Ontario Gazette until the following year, so it's already way old news when we get those reports. The members of the opposition—including, perhaps, members like the parliamentary assistants and the associate ministers who may not be privy to this, as well—we get to find that out at exactly the same time as the general public does. That does not give us a good opportunity to exercise our duty, the highest duty that we have, which is to oversee the spending of the taxpayers' dollars.

There is no better example of the people of Ontario's lack of trust, their lack of confidence in the competency of this government's handling of taxpayer files, than the autism file. It was really contentious, and continues to be really contentious and, in fact, I heard yesterday morning that autism families were here again in front of the House, seeking answers. One woman said, "Tick-tock, Todd. We're looking for an answer as to how this money is being spent." They've been waiting 18 months now and they don't have a clue about what's going on with that money.

But we had the former minister of community and children services—she had a lot to say. She was very loud about her proclamation that she had in fact sought \$102 million. She had run to the Treasury Board to beg for \$102 million to maintain funding for the autism file that she claims was bankrupt when she arrived, based on the Liberal government's handling of that.

So in order to understand exactly what the minister at the time, MPP MacLeod, was talking about, we again submitted Treasury Board orders to understand exactly what was going on in this ministry. The MPP from Hamilton Mountain, Miss Taylor, submitted two Treasury Board orders. I will read those as well, because we did not get an answer to these questions and I would say that we still are waiting for an answer to these questions. That

would be: “Enquiry of the ministry—Would the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services please provide details of the constraints on spending on the Ontario Autism Program that explain her statement during question period on February 21, 2019, that she was obliged to ask the Treasury Board ‘for an emergency \$102 million’ to maintain funding for a program whose budget was \$321 million, according to the expenditure estimates published by the previous government and subsequently tabled by the current government.”

0950

As I said, this government, the Conservative government, tabled the Liberal estimates in this House. Even that is hard to believe, but it did happen. Truth is stranger than fiction.

A second order paper question from Miss Taylor: “Would the President of the Treasury Board please provide a copy of the request from the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to the Treasury Board ‘for an emergency \$102 million’ for the Ontario Autism Program, as mentioned by the minister during question period ... as well as the Treasury Board’s response, including any Treasury Board orders.”

Simple information: \$102 million in emergency funding; \$36 million has moved around. Really, those numbers don’t add up. To this day, those numbers do not add up. Again, the answer that came from the President of the Treasury Board was, “Wait until the Ontario Gazette comes out. You can find out, just like all the people of Ontario can find out”—the people who are really dying waiting with bated breath for those Ontario Gazette papers to get published.

The autism file is a perfect example of how this government could step up and give straight answers—straight answers to the opposition and straight answers to the autism families, who continue to have to protest to get the services that they so much deserve—and restore trust, as you so like to say. Restore trust with your actions, not with your words. But so far, we haven’t got straight answers on that.

I would have to say that the important components of the budgetary process, the important components that would allow every member to have some input, to have some understanding of the finances of Ontario, are prescribed in the standing orders. But as, again, a new member trying to understand that cycle and trying to understand what the actual prescribed standing orders allow, it hasn’t been easy, because this is a government that has seemed to short-circuit accepted practices. They don’t seem to respond to questions and they don’t seem to be conducting themselves, as far as their oversight of the finances, in any typical way, in any way that you would expect of responsible governors, the responsible keepers of the public purse.

One of the important pieces of this oversight is the Standing Committee on Estimates. Last year, we had the Liberal estimates, tabled by a Conservative government, that never did go to the Standing Committee on Estimates. So a huge chunk of the responsibility, the deep dive, the

drill down into what the planned spending of the government would look like, was completely taken away from the people of Ontario. It’s an important piece of our parliamentary democracy, and that didn’t happen for the last estimates tabled by this government. Now we have a new budget year. We’re moving on to the new budget year, 2019-20, so you would like to think that the government now had a reset point where they could get back to business as usual and ensure that their actions, the way they handle this file, would, as they like to say, restore trust and transparency. But you would be as disappointed as I am to hear that that is not the case.

The Standing Committee on Estimates usually begins meeting in September and October, but guess what? They begin meeting when the House reconvenes. But where were we? We were not here; we were on a forced absence from the House.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It’s called a Scheer pause.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It was sheer lunacy that we had a five-month break from this House. So now we have lost almost two months of a cycle in which the estimates committee could review the planned spending of this government. We’re now on an accelerated timetable. I’m not saying that the Standing Committee on Estimates doesn’t have some fantastic people on that committee and that they can scrutinize these estimates, but I can certainly imagine that they would have expected, having not had the opportunity last time, that they would not have a second opportunity shortchanged on behalf of the government.

I would also like to point out that we now have another feature in a way that the people of Ontario and the House can track spending. What we have is the public accounts. The public accounts is another way that we look to see what is the spending of the government. It doesn’t give the kind of breakdown that the Treasury Board orders give of where money went in and went out; it does show the spending.

But there has to be—I don’t want to lose people in the weeds, but it is important to note that volume 2 of the public accounts has been removed from the scrutiny of public accounts. So why does that matter? Within volume 2 of the public accounts—volume 1 is the ministerial spending. Volume 2 actually has a subset of three volumes, and what is in there is the actual spending of the government—the biggest budget items of the government.

In that volume 2, we have the spending of the LHINs, so our health care budget. The biggest, biggest item that we have in service spending is in volume 2. We have the spending on our school boards. We have OPG. You know OPG. We have the IESO, which is pretty important in terms of a government that’s trying to restructure or trying to address the rising costs of hydro for people in Ontario. OLG, those are there. We also have the LCBO.

This is billions of dollars that are being spent, and what the government is saying is that rather than that being part of public accounts, in fact, what we’re going to do is rely on these individual agencies to publish their spending on their own websites to make that available to the public. So you can’t go to one place to find that; you have to go to

the website of each one of these entities to find out how they spent taxpayers' money, this huge amount of money. I don't know about you, but that, to me, is a really onerous, unreasonable expectation for the people of Ontario to be going to each website to be scrutinizing this when, in fact, this is the government's responsibility to have ultimate oversight on the spending of taxpayers' dollars. But now they've downloaded that responsibility to these organizations.

A perfect example is the Green Ontario Fund. The Green Ontario Fund, that's millions—billions, possibly—of spending of taxpayer dollars. There are no financial statements on their website. It's an agency, an organization—absolutely no financial statements on that. So there is one example of many where I was only able to find—if I were looking to find out how that money went, and I was asked by the government to go to the website to see how the Green Ontario Fund spent their money, I wouldn't get any answers. I suppose I could ask a Treasury Board question, or I could stand up in the House and ask the minister, but my experience so far is that I would be out of luck in terms of getting a straight answer from this government.

So, really, while we agree that this bill, this interim supply motion, is not necessarily controversial and is not nefarious, as someone had said, it certainly points to this government's—really, they do not seem to have a firm grip on the financial budgetary cycle of the province of Ontario.

If you really want to restore trust, give people straight answers. Give the opposition straight answers. If you want to be transparent, as you so much claim—I mean, it seems to be your brand to talk about transparency, but it isn't just a T-shirt, by the way. It has to be backed up with actions, and this government to date has shown no actions that are moving us to a more transparent and accountable government.

I expect and hope that, when we have the fall economic statement, this will improve and that we can see a government that really does feel that they are accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario and that they really do feel that they owe the taxpayers of Ontario straight answers on how they are spending their hard-earned dollars.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

1000

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I listened to the member from Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, and I have to say I did appreciate his remarks about the importance of this institution to the furtherance of democracy in the province. He talked about the role of the Legislature in advancing the public good and enabling participation in the process of government.

But the problem is, Speaker, this supply motion, as necessary as it is, is not the answer to making democracy real in the province of Ontario. If this government was truly interested in respecting the role of the Legislative Assembly, they would do things like take bills to committee, enabling the public to come and participate in the legislative process, suggesting amendments to bills. Instead, throughout this government's first year, we have

seen numerous bills skip committee altogether, and go straight from second reading to third reading with no opportunity whatsoever for the public to come and make suggestions—maybe even commend the government for what they are doing. Lots of times, people come to committee to congratulate the government on what they're doing. But, no, this government is not interested in hearing from the public—good or bad—on what they're doing.

The times that we have seen this government take bills to committee, what we've seen is very, very, very limited time for people to come and make submissions. I think of the health care restructuring bill. There were thousands—thousands—of written submissions, hundreds and hundreds of requests from the public to come—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thousands.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes, thousands of requests from the public to come and speak to the bill. I think we had about four or five hours allocated to hear public input on that bill. That, Speaker, does more to undermine democracy than anything else that I can think of. If we're truly interested in the legislative process, in ensuring that there are opportunities for participation in moving the government's agenda forward, then we would ensure that there are ample opportunities for people to come to committee and make suggestions about the legislation that this government is passing.

Speaker, this interim supply motion is part of the government's overall fiscal agenda. As my colleague the official opposition finance critic has said, people have concerns about whether this government actually knows what it's doing with its fiscal agenda. People in the province will know that there has been a long, long, long list of cuts that this government has made. There are websites—the Ford Tracker—with all of the cuts that have been implemented by this government, and now, in response to some of the pushback that the government has received, they're partially walking back many of those cuts. So now we have a parallel set of websites that are tracking all of the walk-backs, the reversals of these cuts.

It's quite bewildering to people, what this government is doing with its fiscal policy. It's making cuts on one hand and it is reversing cuts on the other hand. But at the same time, Ontarians are really feeling the pain of the cuts that haven't been walked back. In my own riding of London West, health care remains a huge concern, a huge priority for the people who I represent. We saw this government, in its spring budget, make cuts to health care by not increasing health care funding even to the rate of inflation. We know that the health care rate of inflation is, in fact, much higher than the general rate of inflation. What this has meant is, in London—the London Health Sciences Centre last year ended its fiscal year with a \$24-million deficit. That, of course, was due to decisions that the Liberals had made: years of underfunding by the previous Liberal government. This \$24-million deficit at London Health Sciences Centre last year was the first time in 13 years that that hospital ended its fiscal year in a deficit situation.

With this government, they're now looking at a \$53-million deficit because of the decisions that were made in

the budget. In June, the hospital announced that it would be reducing staff hours across the organization, making cuts that are the equivalent of losing 165 full-time-equivalent positions. Reducing staff hours has an impact on the quality of care that people receive.

More concerning: Just in October, we learned that the hospital, London Health Sciences Centre, is going to be closing 49 beds in a community that actually is at the epicentre of the hallway medicine crisis. London Health Sciences Centre put together a hallway transfer protocol to deal with the reality that people in London were going into the hospital and were being treated on hospital stretchers—stretchers lining all of the hallways in the hospital. To deal with that reality, the hospital decided to put some rules in place, some guidelines, about the kind of care that patients would receive when they were lying on stretchers in the hallway.

In response to this crisis of hallway medicine, the hospital is in this position now of looking at making more bed closures. We're going to be losing a total of 49 beds, and that, Speaker, includes 11 beds from the burns and plastics unit. Actually, that is all the beds that are in the burns and plastics unit at the hospital. So the burns and plastics unit is going to be entirely closed.

Of course, London Health Sciences Centre is a tertiary care hospital. It serves a much broader area than just the city of London. People come from across southwestern Ontario to access care at London Health Sciences Centre. So when people experience a serious burn, they will no longer be able to get the specialized care that used to be provided in the burns and plastics unit. The specially trained nurses who worked in that unit are being redeployed in other areas of the hospital. So when somebody comes in with a serious burn, that burn nurse who used to be there in the unit to provide the care will have to be called from another area of the hospital, potentially leaving the patient that she was dealing with, and she'll have to come and hopefully be available to treat a patient who comes in with a burn.

There is also a very real risk of infection that burn patients will be exposed to if they have to be transported to different areas of the hospital to find someone who is specialized in burn care to treat them.

I want to commend our leader, Andrea Horwath, who came to London and joined me and my colleagues—the member for London—Fanshawe and the member for London North Centre—in meeting with the nurses, some from the burns and plastics unit, the unit that's being closed, and nurses from other areas of the hospital, who talked about what this is going to mean for the patients that they care for. I can tell you, Speaker, I was so impressed by the professionalism of these nurses. Their concern is not that they're going to lose their jobs, because they are being redeployed to other areas of the hospital. Their concern is for the people who are coming to the hospital to access care. They are very worried about what this is going to mean for people in London, for people in the surrounding area, when they come to the hospital to be treated—especially for burns, because that unit is now going to be closed.

Speaker, we also know that there are many other negative impacts in the fallout from this government's budget in the spring. Housing is something that was actually absent in this government's budget. We would have liked to have seen something in the budget to deal with housing, to deal with the backlog in maintenance for social housing, for example, because in London, as in all social housing stock across the province, we are facing millions of dollars in deferred maintenance. The community housing has not been able to do the maintenance necessary to provide the existing units, and even the existing units are nowhere near what is needed for low-income Londoners who don't have safe housing, who are living in substandard housing.

The London and Middlesex Community Housing actually has had a number of units vacant because they don't have the resources to do the maintenance and repair that's necessary to allow new tenants to come in and occupy those units. This is while we have—I think it's thousands of Londoners who are on the wait-list to get into subsidized housing in the city.

Poverty, Speaker: Poverty remains a huge issue. In London, we have a quarter of children in London living in families below the poverty line. We have a serious issue with a declining labour force. We have a jobs crisis in London. Over the last year, our workforce declined by 10,000 people, even while our population has grown by 8,000, so we're having more people moving into the city and we're having fewer people working. That really has a dramatic impact on the city's ability to deliver services to the residents of the city.

Last May, the London Employment Help Centre had to lay off a quarter of their staff because of provincial cuts to employment service providers. In a city that has a jobs crisis, that has a quarter of people of the working-age population who are not in the labour force, a city where half of the workforce are in what's called precarious jobs—they're not full-time; they don't have benefits; they are contract positions; there is no security—in a city where people could really use the services of the London Employment Help Centre, that organization had to lay off a quarter of their staff because of the fiscal decisions that this government has made.

We also have more than 3,500 families every month accessing the food bank. It's really painful, Speaker, to think that there are—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I apologize to the member for London West. The time to discuss motion 67 has expired.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Seeing the time on the clock, we will now stand in recess until question period at 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Jill Andrew: I would like to thankfully introduce Sharon Stanley, a member of CUPE women's committee

representing Local 101 in London, Ontario. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Sharon. Thank you so much for your advocacy for women and girls.

Mr. Dave Smith: I have two I'd like to introduce today. First, my new executive assistant, Sydney Bertrand, is here in the gallery.

And today is Meet the Miners Day, so the Ontario Mining Association will be with us today, as well as a number of other miners, and we have a reception later on this evening.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome back autism parents and advocates Amy Moledzki and Michau van Speyk. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I would like to welcome Sinem Mingan, the new Turkish consul general in Toronto, her husband and members of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations to Queen's Park this morning. Welcome.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm proud to introduce page Jack Sullivan, from Lester B. Pearson Public School, and Jack's dad, Sean Sullivan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Shannon Weir and Tanner Jamieson, from my constituency office. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would like to welcome the grandparents of Owen Welch, Kristine Welch and Mark Welch, from my riding of Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, and also Owen's cousins, Carter Nault and Emerson Nault. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I would like to welcome the grade 10 students from St. Xavier school along with their teacher, Mr. Howard Leung. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome William Haber and Auslin McDaniel-Perrin, young cannabis entrepreneurs from Alberta.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Good morning. I'd like to introduce Elizabeth Wright, from the riding of King—Vaughan, and her family, who are with us today to enjoy seeing their daughter in action.

Mr. Stan Cho: It's my privilege to introduce Brian Lukshis and Lynne Morrison, the parents of wonderful page Elizabeth, from the greatest riding in the world, Willowdale. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'm a little confused because I was told for the first time ever I was having a page, who is Owen Welch, and he goes to Pinedale school. Anyway, I'm over the moon, thrilled, glad he is here. Owen, we look forward to the next couple of weeks with you.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Good morning, Speaker. It's great to see you. I'd like to welcome Alisha Arora, who is the legislative page from the great riding of Mississauga Centre, as well as Wioletta Matczuk, who is visiting us from Poland and who is doing an internship at my office. Welcome.

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today a friend and former colleague. I'd like to welcome Sheik Mohamed Abdat, who is visiting from Dubai; and former colleague Shazad Mohamed and Amir

Modaressi, who are visiting us today. Welcome to the people's House.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature the proud parents of page Bernat Bernaus-Townsend: his father, Derek Townsend, and his mother, Isabel Bernaus. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): In the Speaker's gallery today are the family of the late Yusra Javed, our summer press gallery intern: Mohammad Javed, Sabrina Suraiya, Junaid Javed and Nusrat Rahman. We are pleased to welcome you to Queen's Park.

YUSRA JAVED

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent for the House to pay tribute to Yusra Javed, the promising young journalist who passed away this September, leaving an indelible impression on those who knew her, and that 10 minutes be divided between the official opposition and the Speaker to make statements, followed by a moment of silence to remember this incredible young woman.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent of the House to have a tribute for Yusra Javed and to have a moment of silence afterwards. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and yet deeply saddened that I will be speaking in memory of Yusra Javed, a remarkable 21-year-old young woman whom we have lost recently.

To Yusra's family—her parents, Sabrina Suraiya and Mr. Mohammad Javed, and her brother, Junaid Javed—and to the members of the press gallery, Yusra's friends, colleagues and guests in the gallery today: I had the privilege of meeting Yusra here when she started her internship. She found me after question period and introduced herself. From one young woman to another, I felt a true sense of pride as she told me she was proud of me. I told her I was proud of her. We went back and forth about who was prouder, and then agreed that we were both pretty proud of each other for making it through, for being able to work in this incredible place. I mean, how many brown women do you see in the portraits of these walls? So we were pretty proud. We both believed that one day we could have our portraits on those walls, too.

Yusra wanted to see more women, especially women of colour, taking up these spaces, and she knew that hard work and dedication were the way forward. She had an enormous amount of positive energy and motivation to create new opportunities. All of these attributes she acquired from her parents.

Yusra's parents were working-class people who immigrated to Canada in 1994. Her mother recalls having a small amount of cash with them when they arrived. Both worked odd, precarious jobs, making ends meet. Life wasn't easy, but they were determined to settle down and

give their kids the best life possible. For both of her parents, this meant supporting each other, learning together, and sharing each and every special moment together.

Before any big occasions, be it watching a political debate or preparing for an interview, Yusra's father was her go-to person. Anyone would say she inherited her meticulous organizing skills, caring nature and fashion sense from her mother. And there isn't a secret Yusra and her brother wouldn't share with each other. Yusra was the reflection of her parents and their upbringing.

In one of the episodes of her own show, *The Youth Perspective*, she starts with a quote from her father: "If you don't respect money, money will never respect you." This was an episode to help youth to be more financially responsible. Yusra wanted to empower people, especially our youth. This 21-year-old had embodied her parents' teachings. She wanted to make them proud, a sentiment I and many of us can closely relate to, and in just the beginning of her career she made them, and all of us, proud.

When Allison Jones from the *Canadian Press* and Rob Ferguson from the *Toronto Star* interviewed Yusra for the press gallery internship, her talent and her enthusiasm impressed them. Both shared with me how well thought out her answers were, and they wanted to hire her before she was scooped by another media outlet. Within months she impressed everyone in the press gallery.

Yusra believed in the power of journalism. She didn't hold back when asking the tough questions. Whether it was a student group, MPPs or even the Premier, she knew her facts and was quick to correct them when necessary. She believed that highlighting facts and truth was not taking sides but, instead, strengthening our democracy. This was her dream, and she did it with extraordinary poise.

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When writing this statement, I reached out to some of the members of the press gallery to ask about Yusra. Fatima Syed from the *National Observer* told me how confident Yusra was. "Yusra would be working for the CBC and would be running the press gallery and Ontario coverage with me and Emma Paling." That's what Fatima said. That was Yusra's dream.

Emma Paling from *HuffPost Canada* told me, "The confidence, drive and poise she exuded were unbelievable for a 21-year-old." She remembered the time when Yusra told Steve Paikin, "I'm going to have your job one day."

Yusra knew how to dream. She understood the need to occupy spaces that have been closed for generations.

When she was diagnosed with an illness that about one in 16 million people in this world have, she didn't lose hope. She wanted to get back up and finish her journalism degree, and, more than anything, she wanted to return to Queen's Park.

Yusra was a confident young woman who believed in the moral obligation to uphold the truth. Her essence was a reminder to all of us, especially those of us in this Legislature and anyone in public service, of our moral duties.

Rob Ferguson told me that she set the bar pretty high for their interns. I think she set the bar pretty high for all of us, especially for us daughters.

To the loving parents of Yusra Javed, we want to say thank you. Thank you for sharing Yusra with us. All of us whose lives she touched one way or another are better for it. God bless Yusra Javed and God bless this wonderful family that brought up this incredible young woman.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): As Speaker, I feel honoured and privileged to have been asked to give this statement on behalf of the Queen's Park press gallery, where Yusra worked as an intern this past summer.

Yusra's life was tragically cut short, but it doesn't feel like that phrase appropriately conveys the enormity of what was lost. Who would she have become, given all the years she deserved to have? How many other lives would she have touched in the way she left such an indelible impression on all of us after just a few months here? What those of us in the press gallery can say for certain is that journalism lost one of its brightest stars just as she was beginning to shine.

She had the drive to go above and far beyond what was required of her during her internship, pitching and writing stories for various news outlets, contacting dozens of people for one story, and still trying to do interviews while in hospital. She already had serious political reporting chops, which is incredibly rare in someone so young.

She could cut through message tracks, and she asked pointed questions at every press conference, grilling every stakeholder and special interest group that passed through the media studio. To get a taste of her unabashed gumption, you needed only to watch her questioning the Premier. None of us could have done that so skilfully at just 21.

Many of us have found ourselves, in the past few weeks, stopping all of a sudden when we realize Yusra is gone. Her press gallery internship was always supposed to wrap up at the end of the summer. But to know that she is not out in the world, wowing the CBC at her internship there, working on freelance stories in her spare time, finishing her degree at Ryerson, charming absolutely everyone she meets and spending time with her wonderful family, is just so abjectly unfair.

Yusra was on her way to becoming one of the very best journalists in the country. Her picture now hangs in the press gallery lounge so that everyone will know that. She has taken her rightful place among the giants who inspired her and so that she may inspire generations of journalists to come.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask the members to now rise and observe a moment of silence in memory of Yusra.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I am going to ask the pages to assemble for their introductions.

It is now time for me to introduce this group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 42nd Parliament. From the riding of Oshawa, Aarya Shah; from the riding of Markham–Unionville, Alexander Lai; from Mississauga Centre, Alisha Arora; from Parkdale–High Park, Bernat Bernaus-Townsend; from Scarborough–Agincourt, Boyuan Zhang; from Brantford–Brant, Christian Kuan; from Sarnia–Lambton, Davina Bhola; from the riding of Willowdale, Elizabeth Lukshis; from King–Vaughan, Elizabeth Wright; from Hamilton Centre, Ella Bradley; from Waterloo, Jack Sullivan; from Ottawa South, Josha McMillan; from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, Kiran Chauhan; from the riding of Guelph, Mackenzie Richer; from Essex, Madison Booth; from Whitby, McKenna Otter; from the riding of Niagara Centre, Nathan Wan; from the great riding of Wellington–Halton Hills, Neil Atkins; from the riding of Thornhill, Olivia Zhang; from the riding of Milton, Omar Sinno; from the riding of Burlington, Owen Welch; from the riding of Dufferin–Caledon, Ravneer Pabla; from the riding of Niagara West, Rian Wilson; and from the riding of Mississauga–Malton, Zakiyya Gangat.

I would ask all members to now rise and join me in welcoming this fine group of legislative pages.

Applause.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. I want to start by asking the Premier about the impact of his health care cuts in one community.

For patient safety, Ontario hospitals should be operating at no more than 85% capacity. That's the internationally recognized standard. Can the Premier tell us what level hospitals in Brampton are currently functioning at?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: We do know that many hospitals across the province of Ontario are operating at over 100% capacity, but this is nothing new. This has been happening for a number of years. We were elected to change that. We were elected to end hallway health care and we are doing that. There is no simple answer to it.

As all of you know, we know that we have thousands of people who are waiting for long-term-care beds because of inaction by the previous government. We promised the people of Ontario that we would build 15,000 beds within five years. We are working on that. My colleague the Minister of Long-Term Care is working on that diligently.

We know we also have people who are coming into hospitals with chronic mental health and addictions problems because there is nowhere else for them to go. We are creating community mental health and addictions policies and procedures and facilities so that people can get the care they need before they get into a crisis.

We know there are people with chronic disease management problems. We're working on those. I'll have more to say in the supplemental.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Through freedom of information, we have learned that in fact Brampton Civic Hospital has spent the first half of 2019 at over 100% capacity. But even more shockingly, Brampton's Peel Memorial urgent care centre is operating at 587% volume compared to what it is funded for. I'll repeat that: 587% above what it is funded for. That means that for every patient that urgent care centre is funded to care for, nearly five other patients arrive looking for care.

Does the Premier think this is acceptable, Speaker?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We are certainly cognizant of those facts and it is not acceptable. We are working to change that. That's what we were elected to do. We are focused on that each and every day.

We have raised the funding for hospitals. We know that there is more to do. We did provide \$384 million more in funding to hospitals this year, a 2% increase. We've also funded another \$68 million for small to medium-sized hospitals based on an inadequate funding formula, again brought in by the previous government. But we are changing that.

We recognize that hospitals are under pressure and we are working with the Ontario Hospital Association and with individual hospitals to change that. But this is not something that can happen overnight, because this is something that's been growing for 15 years before we were elected. We are here to change that and we will do that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is not about small and medium hospitals, but I dare say it is about this government taking the same track as the Liberals took in underfunding our hospitals system in this province.

Brampton's urgent care centre was built to bring relief to the overcrowded Brampton Civic Hospital, but under this government, Brampton Civic Hospital has more patients in hallways. Freedom-of-information documents show that there are more patients in hallways this year than last year.

So why is hallway medicine in Brampton getting worse on this Premier's watch?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We certainly know that there are many areas in Ontario where there is increasing pressure because there are more and more people moving into the area. That is why we are taking a look at hospital infrastructure projects. We have \$27 billion that we're going to be investing over the next 10 years to build hospital projects, but I'm sure the leader of the official opposition will know that we inherited a pretty dismal financial situation, again from the previous government.

We are working on areas where there is the most patient need. We're certainly aware there's a patient need in the Brampton area. We're working to address that, but this

isn't something that can be turned around on a dime. This is going to take several years in order to be able to deal with this completely.

But we are aware of these pressures. We do want to make sure that people are going to be able to receive the care that they need in their own communities, and that is making sure that we have hospital funding, that we have long-term-care beds, that we have community mental health and addictions programs. We are working on all of those factions. We will bring down hospital hallway health care.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Liberals left patients in hallways, and this government is keeping them there. That's the problem. It's not just Brampton that is seeing things go from bad to worse. Two weeks ago, I met with front-line health care workers in London who were being laid off as the hospital, yet again, was cutting beds to meet the budget crunch because they are not getting enough funding from the Conservative government, like they didn't get enough funding from the Liberal government.

The Premier knew that hospitals were underfunded by the Liberals for years. This Minister of Health has repeated that already, with my first three questions this morning—or the three parts of my first question—so why has this Premier continued to underfund the hospitals in this province, taking things from bad to worse here in Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: I find it very ironic that the Leader of the Opposition is saying what she is saying, because they voted 90% with the Liberals to destroy the health care system.

We're investing, as the Minister of Health mentioned, a historic \$27 billion into infrastructure, building new hospitals. William Osler had tens of millions of dollars of infrastructure put in place in their emergency room. I was there not long ago with one of our great MPPs from Mississauga who actually was a nurse there. We're focusing on reducing hallway health care by putting in over 7,500 beds, so far—long-term-care beds. We're promising 15,000 beds and another 15,000 after that that will alleviate the pressures at the hospitals. But I do appreciate the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, what I find ironic is that after five months, the Premier still didn't study the Hansard to figure out what went on in the four years before they made government.

But, nonetheless, patients are stuck waiting in hospitals. They are not fooled by the Premier's rhetoric as they sit languishing in the hallways of our hospitals. They know that hospital funding is not keeping pace with inflation, much less with patient need. They know that there are people in the hospital who are desperately waiting for long-term-care beds, and they see that the wait-list for long-term-care beds, in fact, has grown even longer after one year of the Ford government.

Does the Premier understand that cuts and lay-offs and budget squeezes won't solve the hallway medicine crisis?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you for the question, but I think we really need to look at the facts. We are investing \$1.3 billion more into our health care system this year than we did last year, and we are doing that across a variety of areas. Hospitals certainly have received an increase, \$384 million more this year than last year—a 2% increase. But we know that there is more that needs to be done. We have invested \$68 million in small-to-medium-sized hospitals, and it may not be important to the leader of the official opposition, but it certainly is important to many hospitals and many people across the province of Ontario.

We have also promised the people of Ontario that we are going to build more long-term-care beds, because we know that contributes to hallway health care. We have promised 15,000 new long-term-care spaces within five years. We have already built or created more than 8,000 of those beds, or have them in line to be opened within the next several years. We know it doesn't happen overnight—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, here is what families see: hospitals laying off nurses and beds still being closed in hospitals, hospitals routinely operating over 100% capacity, and in the community of Brampton, an urgent care centre that is operating at 587% volume compared to what it's funded for. This Premier committed to ending hallway medicine. Why is he, in fact, making it worse?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the leader of the official opposition: I'm sure she will know that hospitals are independent corporations. They make their own decisions with respect to staffing, and in the situation they are speaking of—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I close my eyes and I hear Kathleen Wynne.

1100

Hon. Christine Elliott: I believe that the member, if she will listen, was speaking with respect to some changes in the London area. That is a result of decisions that they made based on the need and based on the usage. They have made arrangements with community centres to take up some of the issues that need to be dealt with.

But that's what we're doing with changing our system of health care to reflect patient-centred care. We want to make sure that people receive the care that they need both in the community and in the hospital.

As we know, hospitals are not always the best place for people to receive care. Sometimes it's about home care. We are investing \$155 million more in home care, so that people can be treated in their own homes instead of hospitals, which is where they want to be. There is no one simple solution to this, as I'm sure the leader of the official opposition knows. We are working on many fronts—

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

The next question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last January, New Democrats asked the government whether Mario Di Tommaso, who the Premier had recently appointed deputy minister of community safety, had declared a conflict of interest when he sat on the hiring committee for the new OPP Commissioner. We are still waiting for an answer. Can the Premier provide one today?

Hon. Doug Ford: Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I really want to talk about the great things that are happening under Commissioner Carrique with the OPP. We have a commissioner in place who is actively engaged with his commissioned officers and the OPPA on actually dealing with the mental health crisis that we have within our police officers and our first responders.

When Commissioner Carrique agreed to take on this very important role, the first question I asked him was, “What is your top priority if you become the commissioner?” And he said, “The health and safety of my officers.” I can say without any doubt that what we have seen in place at the OPP, working together with the OPPA, is an amazing organization that is actually supporting and encouraging their officers to ensure that our communities are safer. Public safety will always be first and foremost with Commissioner Carrique and myself as the minister.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Globe and Mail has just published a news story detailing the close ties between Mario Di Tommaso and Ron Taverner, the Premier’s one-time pick for OPP commissioner. Among other things, the story reveals that Taverner actually helped organize the retirement party of the man who would then sit on his hiring committee.

We already know that Di Tommaso’s predecessor felt he was forced from the job of deputy minister after feeling pressure to hire Taverner. My question is—and, with all due respect, I didn’t get responded to in the last response from the minister—does the Premier acknowledge that the deputy minister he hired had a conflict? And, if so, what is he going to do about it?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: So, to be clear, we have a 50-year-plus veteran of the Toronto Police Service who knows a 40-year-plus veteran of the Toronto Police Service. That is not shocking to me. That does not surprise me.

Speaker, when you get to 50 years serving in the Ontario Legislature, I would be honoured to co-host and encourage people to go to your retirement party—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I might ask the minister to withdraw that.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Just kidding.

The next question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for our Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. Everyone in this House is well aware that Ontario is the economic engine that drives the Canadian economy. The financial capital of Canada is right here in Ontario. Even more impressive is the fact that our province is also home to the mining finance capital of the entire world. The TSX and the TSX Venture raise more mining equity than anywhere else on the planet. This leads to major investments in Canada and in our province.

Mining benefits all areas of the province, providing a broad scope of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Even in my riding, we have companies like Aecon mining.

Can the minister please tell us more about mining in Ontario and the special celebration we are having today?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Brantford–Brant for the extraordinary work he does in this place on behalf of his constituents.

He rightly points out that mining has an impact on just about every region in this province. We strive to make Ontario the mining centre of the world. He mentioned that it’s the financial capital of the world; that’s true, but we still face some challenges. That’s why, born out of this annual tradition of Meet the Miners, which is today and a long-standing tradition, the Premier and I and several other colleagues decided to establish the Mining Working Group. This calls on the Premier’s office, the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development as well as the Minister of the Environment, importantly, to attend panels with the OMA, working with them on the challenges—or the prospects, as we like to say. This Mining Working Group is a highly specialized discussion on the things that we can do to ensure that, for the entire spectrum of mining activity, the destination is Ontario.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I’d like to thank the minister for his answer. He has been an excellent advocate for the mining sector, and our work is only just beginning.

We’d like to thank the mining community for visiting us here at Queen’s Park today, and we’d like them to know that they have an ally in our government. We are focused on bringing good jobs back to northern communities, and the mining sector is a huge part of that plan. Our government’s plan is to keep taxes and power rates low, cut unnecessary and costly red tape and create unprecedented jobs and prosperity, all of which makes Ontario more globally competitive and a great place to invest.

Can the minister please tell the members of this House how important mining is to Ontario’s economy?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Over the past 15 or 16 months, we’ve been actively involved in a number of key mining opportunities in northern Ontario. Sadly, for the previous 15 years, mining activity in northern Ontario had been slowing down significantly. So when we came on board, it was the Premier and I who went up to the Sugar Zone

and the Harte Gold project. We were involved in moving them past the starting line on a few final regulatory matters.

I was recently up at the Borden mine, where we had a chance to celebrate the first completely electrified mining operation. They will tell you—Newmont Goldcorp will say unequivocally that we did more to help them in regulatory matters in the year leading up to their opening than had been done in the previous government.

More recently, we announced the east-west tie, a corridor across northwestern Ontario that holds the key to a number of potential developments to support mining activity, and, of course, the prospect of Greenstone Gold in Geraldton, where we could be facing one of the biggest opportunities in a very long time, the centre of gravity for the Ring of Fire and all that that region could benefit from.

We are moving forward with these mining companies and the communities that surround them for a prosperous mining sector.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. Yesterday, 50 laid-off teachers were here in the public galleries. Among them was Lindsay. Lindsay is a math and science teacher from Chatham who has worked for 12 years in various long-term assignments, but without permanent work. She is also a new mom. This year, Lindsay wasn't offered an assignment at all because there were no jobs available.

Now that the impact of the Premier's cuts are too difficult to ignore, does he still stand by his claim that not a single teacher will lose their job?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite: I thank her for her question.

It's clear that our government is committed to protecting front-line workers and front-line teachers in the classroom. It was the driving force for why this government in our last budget allocated \$1.6 billion to ensure teachers remain at the front of the class. It is why our government has announced a fund that is demonstrably working. In fact, in Windsor—Essex, in the Upper Grand District School Board, all teachers who had redundancy notices have been recalled. These are the stories that have to permeate in the debate. In fact, we're seeing more of this manifest in boards across the province. We will continue to invest in protecting teachers, invest in a modernized curriculum and invest in modernizing our schools, because that's what parents expect.

1110

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: The Premier and the minister can deny what's happening, but the fact is that teachers are still being laid off and students are being forced to accept less. With the greatest of respect, sorry, it is not clear at all that you are protecting these jobs.

The independent Financial Accountability Office has reported that by the end of this government's term, there

will be 10,054 fewer teachers in the education system; I have the citation right here. This year alone, the FAO estimates that there will be 967 fewer elementary teachers and 1,859 fewer secondary teachers.

Does the Premier think it's right that qualified, caring teachers are moonlighting as waitresses to make ends meet while students are seeing supports and courses that they need disappear?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask the minister to reply, I'll remind the members to make your comments and address them through the chair.

Minister of Education to reply.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, our government made a determination to create a teacher protection fund because we want to ensure that teachers remain in the front of class.

The Leader of the Opposition will know that the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, where she proudly hails from—the chair of that board said that this year there are fewer classes with 30 or more students than there were last year. It is proof positive that our plan is working. It is another example that our investments in the front-line are yielding positive results.

We're doing this while modernizing our curriculum, by investing over half a billion dollars to renew schools in the province. We have a \$200-million investment to ensure that math scores rise over time. We're doing all of this because we believe in the potential of our young people in the province of Ontario.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Firstly, I'd like to congratulate the Premier on a genuine effort to change the tone in the Legislature. I think we all welcome that change. But what Ontarians need more than a change in tone is a change in the Premier's priorities.

This government is still trying to make class sizes larger. Wait times in emergency rooms are getting longer; they're not getting shorter. What is most concerning is the Premier has already dismantled one plan for climate change and he is trying to tear another one down. In the federal election, almost three quarters of Ontarians voted to support a plan for climate change.

Speaker, through you: Why is the Premier trying to tear down a plan for climate change when he has none of his own?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of the Environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Referred to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is my first opportunity to speak in this session of the Legislature. I just want to thank you for your leadership and guidance in the Legislature. I think we're moving to a better place here, so thank you very much. We do support your work.

I want to thank the member opposite for that question. Unfortunately, I'm going to just reject his whole premise about an environment plan for Ontario. We're almost at the year to celebrate the anniversary of our Made-in-

Ontario Environment Plan, which is looking at protecting our land, air and sea.

We have moved forward with a number of initiatives already that are going to be bearing fruit in a short time coming forward. We have sent our mission performance standards to the federal government to target the big emitters, which will be fair and flexible. We've moved towards changing the recycling program for this province, to move plastics out of our landfills, out of our lakes and streams, and put them into a circular economy to create a new economy within Ontario that is going to grow and create jobs. It's also going to clean the environment.

I have more to say in my supplemental.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer.

In August, here is what the Premier had to say about his court challenge: "Once the people decide, I believe in democracy, I respect democracy, we move on."

Speaker, what has changed since then? This government has no real plan for climate change. They're not even meeting meagre targets. I agree with the Minister of Education when he says the next generation deserves better. It's ironic: Even the Premier's peeling gas pump stickers are trying to send him a message.

Speaker, through you: Will the Premier commit to withdraw his court challenge and work with all members of this House to come up with a realistic plan for climate change in this province?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I thank the member opposite for that question. You know, Mr. Speaker, last June we were elected with a mandate to end the cap-and-trade program that the member opposite was a part of—a tax that made life more unaffordable. But the main thing—I find it ironic that the member opposite talks about democracy. He was part of a government following the leader of the day, who sits beside him, that forced municipalities in rural Ontario to take these wind turbine projects in our municipalities, which split communities in half and drove up the cost of our energy. They are the last people who should be talking about democracy.

But let me just throw some facts out there. Angus Reid released a poll from the National Post during the last week of the election. It showed that more than half of the people polled said that the federal carbon tax should be cancelled; a fifth—22%—of NDP supporters said that the carbon tax should be cancelled; and 20% of Green voters said that the carbon tax should be cancelled, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to do everything we can to end the unaffordable carbon tax while implementing our made-in-Ontario environment plan, which will make our—

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

Next question?

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Parm Gill: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. Mr. Speaker,

everyone in this House is well aware that Ontario is the economic engine that drives the Canadian economy. Ontario is Canada's largest mineral producer, producing \$10.1-billion worth of minerals last year alone.

Can the minister share with this House the steps our government is taking to ensure that Ontario remains the world leader in mining investment?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Milton for the important work he does on behalf of his constituents and the contributions he makes to this caucus.

Our government's plan is to create a low-tax environment, cut costly red tape and create unprecedented jobs and prosperity. The financial activity in the mining sector is great, and it's wonderful for Bay Street, but we're concerned obviously with the opportunities or the prospects of more than 200 mines, more than 75% of them in northern Ontario. Look at the workforce here, Mr. Speaker: 11.2% of people working in mines, at mine sites and mining activities are Indigenous peoples. This is an important part of our northern communities, our northern economies and a critical success for the vast region of this province.

We want to translate those financial investments into activities up north. That's why we're working closely with companies to push them across the starting line and get digging.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank the minister. Mineral wealth and its associated economic activities are the key source of jobs and prosperity for many mining industry workers and their families in communities across our great province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the mining industry has created more than 26,000 direct jobs and approximately 50,000 indirect jobs in mineral manufacturing and processing across Ontario.

Under the previous Liberal government, mining companies and suppliers faced delay after delay. Can the minister share with this House the initiatives our government is taking to promote the industry's strong future in Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: As I said, we're taking a whole-of-government approach from the Premier's office, the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Labour, skills and trades, and the Minister of Natural Resources. We also have the support of the Associate Minister of Small Business. In the modernization and efficient Ontario act, we're proposing a number of amendments, in particular to the Mining Act. For example, this would provide proponents submitting a closure plan amendment with greater certainty by creating a 45-day timeline for those decisions.

You know, Mr. Speaker, these mines need certainty. They need certainty when it comes to the regulatory environment. They need certainty when it comes to the cost of energy. That's why one of our first acts last summer was to make sure that mines that are particularly electricity-intensive experience significant savings on their per-monthly costs of operation—of course, celebrating in Borden a completely electrified mine, Mr. Speaker.

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We're going to continue our work. We celebrate the Ontario Mining Association's day today because, Mr. Speaker, mining matters.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, it's good to be back here; it's good to see you in the chair.

For months the Premier has laid low while details of his patronage appointments leaked out, handing lucrative foreign postings to a former PC Party president and the lacrosse-playing friend of his chief of staff's son, stacking government agencies with friends and relations. Today we've learned more details of the close ties between the Deputy Minister of Community Safety and the man he wanted to make the OPP commissioner.

The Premier claimed that the government was conducting a review of the appointments process. He has had five months to do so. Speaker, what is the status of that review?

Hon. Doug Ford: Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I thank the honourable member for the question. The member knows, obviously, that the public appointments process is something we are constantly working on, striving to make it more open and accountable, and in fact, transparent. We have made a commitment that we will continue to do that, not just over the last five months but for the entire time that we have the honour of serving Ontarians from this side of the House. I hope if the honourable member has some suggestions, he and the members of his party will send those forward. We are working on that. There is more to come.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I have a lot of suggestions, Speaker. One would be for the minister to review the committee reports and the Hansard from the committee. We've made lots of suggestions to open up that committee for transparency and accountability for Canadians and Ontarians.

Speaker, the sad reality is that nobody trusts Doug Ford and his government to investigate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. I assume the member for Essex is aware that we don't refer to each other by our given names. We refer by our riding names or a ministerial name, as appropriate. I would ask the member to rephrase his question.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The sad reality is that nobody trusts the Premier's government to investigate the Premier's government scandals. The PC caucus has shut down any effort to have appointments reviewed openly by the government agencies committee and there's no evidence that this government will conduct a review at all, much less an open and transparent one.

Will the government commit today to a truly open and independent review of the appointments process?

Hon. Paul Calandra: As the member knows, obviously, when it comes to the committee process, we are following the process that was actually put in place by the previous NDP government. Now, there's a lot that I would like to forget and have forgotten about the NDP's time in office, Mr. Speaker, but here's one thing they can celebrate: They brought a process in that we have been using.

But we are continuing to work on improving the process for public appointments, making them more open and transparent. These are people that do very good work on behalf of the people of Ontario, Mr. Speaker, but we want to make sure that they are in it for the right reasons, that they're doing it, and that the work that they do is in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

And while I have the floor, let me just ask the honourable member—I know there is a new Conservative member of Parliament for Essex. I haven't had the chance to contact him, so I wonder if he would express my congratulations.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to welcome everyone back to the Legislature and direct my first question to the Premier. The Premier's stickers that don't stick continue to ignore how the carbon rebate will leave eight out of 10 people with more money in their pockets. I'm shocked, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier doesn't understand how markets work. We can put a price on pollution, we can reduce emissions and put money in people's pockets. The Premier says he wants to make life more affordable, but he continues to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Guelph. The member for Essex will come to order. Member for Guelph, I apologize again.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Speaker: The Premier says he wants to make life more affordable for people, but he continues to waste our hard-earned tax dollars fighting a program that actually puts money in the pockets of 80% of Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, why does the Premier want to raise taxes on 80% of Ontarians by taking away their carbon rebates?

Hon. Doug Ford: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the honourable member. I would point out to him that the only problem we've had with the stickers are Liberal staffers actually peeling them off gas pumps. You might want to check your Twitter account and see one who openly admitted it.

They're ashamed of that tax, Mr. Speaker, because they know that when ambulances and school buses and families fuel up their cars, when buses in Kenora are taking school kids and sports teams over to Dryden or across to Ignace, they're paying more to operate those buses. It's costing the people of Ontario more money. We are not standing down from this exercise in transparency to send a clear message that we reject this job-killing, regressive carbon tax.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm sorry; the government cannot have it both ways. They say it's a job-killing carbon tax. Meanwhile, the next day, they talk about how we're creating more jobs in Ontario. As a matter of fact, if you look around the world, the economies creating the most jobs have a price on pollution.

The bottom line is, the people of Ontario are problem-solvers, not problem-deniers. They do not want their tax money wasted on a lawsuit against the federal government that's actually going to increase taxes on 80% of Ontarians.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Will the government back off on this wasteful lawsuit and work with the federal government on developing a real climate plan to create jobs and reduce climate pollution?

Hon. Greg Rickford: If the member could just provide any evidence that a carbon tax, especially here in Canada, has actually reduced GHG emissions—the only thing that has happened, Mr. Speaker, is that it has increased the cost of living in those jurisdictions. That's a fact.

It's another fact that we know that at least one Liberal staffer took pride in saying that he peeled off a hundred of those stickers. Mr. Speaker, we know why he did it: Because that government at the time issued a job-killing carbon tax that's still having an impact on regions.

I can speak as a guy from northwestern Ontario, Mr. Speaker. We're having some hard times. Some of those jobs that are created here are still a challenge for us in northern Ontario. The last thing that mill up in Ear Falls needs is to spend a million extra dollars a year, to the member from Kiiwetinoong, on the carbon tax alone to operate. That is unacceptable.

We'll stand with woodland operators. We'll stand with our mills. We'll stand with our mines and the people of this province who are paying way too much—

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

The next question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. With an investment of \$72 million this year over last year and the creation of a new ministry dedicated to long-term care, it is clear that our government is making long-term care a priority. We know that the stresses of our long-term-care system are serious, but I am proud that our government has taken quick and concrete action to improve the situation—for example, our investment of \$1.75 billion to build and redevelop 30,000 beds across Ontario. With her background as a physician, the minister will have first-hand exposure to, and experience with, how we deliver health care and long-term care in this province.

Can the minister provide some insights as to how she plans to build a sustainable and resident-centred long-term-care system right here in Ontario?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member for Thornhill for the question and for the good work she does.

As Minister of Long-Term Care, I'm working to build a system that focuses on residents and supports our province's most vulnerable in a place that they can call home. We are committed to building a 21st-century long-term-care system that ensures people are treated with dignity and respect, and one that will continue to be there for those who need it.

We are committed to helping long-term-care providers be more responsive to the needs of residents while maintaining safety and the highest quality of care. That means looking at ways to offer homes more flexibility to fund priority areas, and reducing red tape responsibly.

For the first time in the province's history, Ontario is prioritizing the long-term-care sector and putting long-term-care residents and caregivers first.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'd like to thank the minister for her answer and for all of her hard work. Building a sustainable and resident-centred long-term-care system is clearly an important priority to our government. But I know that there can be challenges along the way, and we have to work hard to achieve that goal.

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It recently came to my attention that long-term care is considered one of the most regulated parts and sectors in our province. While we need some regulation, I'm sure there is a buildup of red tape in the long-term-care system that sometimes prevents residents from getting the care they need. Speaker, could the minister please tell the House what she is doing to make long-term care more efficient and more sustainable?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: My thanks to the member again after those questions.

Our government also recognizes that sometimes we experience a buildup of red tape that interferes in the ability to deliver high-quality care for residents. We are working to reduce regulatory burdens and administrative barriers and to get shovels in the ground faster as we develop new long-term-care beds and redevelop older beds to ensure that residents can get the best possible care when they need it.

Recently, we also made changes under Bill 66 to modernize the long-term-care licensing process. Our hope is that this will reduce the administrative burden for home operators and expedite the approvals associated with the development.

We are committed to reducing red tape, we are committed to getting beds built and we are committed to getting Ontarians off of wait-lists and the care they need when they need it.

NORTH SPIRIT LAKE FIRST NATION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.
Remarks in Oji-Cree.

My question is to the Premier. North Spirit Lake First Nation, also known as Memekweseo Sakahekan, is in a state of emergency. The community has been devastated by a breakdown in its most important infrastructure. They

have suffered over the past two years intermittently without essential services such as power and running water. Their sewage system repeatedly backs up into the community due to faulty pipes and pumps.

Mr. Speaker, this is Ontario. It is 2019. Will this government continue to stand by and use the excuse of jurisdiction to avoid stepping forward and helping North Spirit Lake?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member opposite for his question. The short answer is, we haven't, and no, we won't. At every turn, we have clearly understood some of the structural, long-term, long-standing issues that some of the isolated and remote First Nations communities are facing, and we work in lockstep with them on ensuring they don't come to a crisis situation.

In the case of North Spirit Lake, a series of unfortunate events happened in a very short period of time, and the community was unable to mobilize and respond to them. That's why we worked effectively with NAN. I spoke with Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler last week. We offered our full support. It was a coordinated effort through the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre and Indigenous Services Canada. We mobilized to lead the response on water system issues, public safety and the health needs of the community, and we remain committed to working with them on a day-to-day basis as they work through this difficult time.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: North Spirit Lake doesn't need just phone calls; they need actual emergency support.

Two weeks ago, I was in North Spirit Lake. The community spoke to me about the social breakdown that occurs when you don't have the basic human needs. Teachers and nurses have been forced to leave the community because of a lack of basic services needed in the facilities to do their work, to do their jobs. They are experiencing an addiction epidemic and they need help. The children are experiencing trauma as a result of this and they need help. They have said to me that just because they are small, it's not right to be ignored and neglected by governments.

Will this government be part of the solution to help North Spirit Lake—yes or no?

Hon. Greg Rickford: The answer is yes, and we have been. I had an opportunity of serving that region as the member of Parliament. That was not a small community to me; it was an important community. That's why we built a brand new school in North Spirit Lake at the time. We recognized the importance of putting that asset in that community so the children had a better place and a better space to go to school.

We are in the midst of an acute crisis, and that's unfortunate. That's why we've provided funding support, and I have pledged, beyond phone calls, to send mental wellness teams to cover the crisis and surge response to the community, like basic needs for the children and families and travel costs for NAN crisis workers.

I'm looking forward to continuing to work with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation in particular and Indigenous Services Canada to ensure that we work through the acute crisis at North Spirit Lake and find solutions for some of the long-standing challenges that they have faced in the past.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. I would like to congratulate her on assuming this new portfolio. Your expertise as a health care provider will serve Ontarians well.

Every member of this House is aware of the crisis that hallway health care poses to our province. One thousand people are receiving health care in hallways and closets every single day in Ontario, and over 36,000 are waiting for a long-term-care bed.

Mr. Speaker, the situation in my region of Peel and in Halton is serious, with the long-term-care list being the longest in Ontario. This is a sad legacy left to us by the previous Liberal government, which had largely ignored this sector during their mandate.

Residents of Peel and Halton and all Ontarians across this province should not have to wait so long for the care they desperately need and deserve. Could the minister outline what action she has taken to shorten long-term-care waiting lists in the region of Peel?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I'd like to thank the members from Mississauga for their dedication to the Peel region. The member is correct in stating the seriousness of the problem, especially in Peel region. Earlier this summer, I was pleased to join the members for Brampton South and Brampton West to announce the allocation of 168 new beds and the redevelopment of 280 beds for Brampton at Tullamore Care Community and Greenway.

That same day, I was pleased to stand with several members from Mississauga to announce the allocations of 457 new beds and the redevelopment of 275 upgraded beds in Mississauga at the Village of Erin Meadows, Trillium Health and a new project by the Mississauga seniors' care partnership project.

These beds will make a real difference in Peel and reduce wait-lists to ensure that Ontarians who need to be in a long-term-care home are there and not in a hospital.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I'd like to thank the Minister of Long-Term Care for that answer and for the work she is doing in my region and for long-term-care residents across the province.

I'm also excited to see new projects going ahead to ensure that the residents of Mississauga and Brampton receive the care they need, when and where they need it. However, I know that with 15,000 new beds to be built across this province and 15,000 existing ones to be renovated, there is still a lot of work to be done. We need to take action today to ensure that our most vulnerable are

getting the care they need now and for generations to come.

Speaker, could the minister tell this House what she is doing to move these beds forward and ensure that Ontarians are getting the care they have been waiting for for so long?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member again for their questions.

To date, our government has allocated almost 8,000 new long-term-care beds, fulfilling more than 50% of our commitment. Our government is moving one step closer to fulfilling our commitment to create 15,000 new long-term-care beds and redevelop 2,000 existing beds over five years.

We have started accepting applications from current and potential long-term-care-home operators to build new long-term-care beds and redevelop existing beds in Ontario. This call for applications is designed to build the remaining beds.

With an aging population, these new and redeveloped beds will help more families and residents get the support they need and the high-quality care they need, when they need it.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, Ford Motor Co. announced that they're laying off another 450 workers at their Oakville plant.

For months, our highly skilled, hard-working auto workers have been asking this government to stop hiding, get off your hands and do something to protect this industry. Unfortunately, the only time the Premier is not sitting on his hands is when he's waving goodbye to good-paying auto jobs.

He said that not a single job would be lost on his watch, but it turns out that's just talk. Empty promises won't pay these families' bills. It's time for action.

Will the Premier commit today to finally developing an auto strategy and actually start fighting for what matters to everyday families, not just his rich friends?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We're all disappointed to learn of Ford Motor Co.'s decision to issue layoff notices at their Oakville assembly plant. We want the employees to know that our government stands with them and with their families. But, Speaker, it was not all that long ago that the CEO of Fiat Chrysler told former Premier Wynne that she had made Ontario the most expensive jurisdiction in North America in which to do business.

That is why our government took swift action to make Ontario open for business and open for jobs. Since taking office, we have reduced red tape and reduced the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$5 billion. This gives the sectors that had once lost hope under the previous government a fighting chance.

Speaker, our plan is working, as we have seen the creation of over 272,000 new jobs in Ontario since our election.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I just want to reply to that quickly: We have the best auto workers in the world. I want to say that clearly.

It's not just families in Oakville who have been left to suffer, thanks to this government's inaction and indifference. On the Premier's watch, we've seen thousands of job losses in Windsor, in Oshawa, in Ajax and more. I've heard from many families in the auto industry who are already struggling, thanks to the Premier's cuts to health care and education, and the sky-high cost of living that this government has only made worse.

The Premier needs to immediately start working with Unifor and the Ford Motor Co. to secure a new product line for the Oakville plant. Will the Premier finally take action to save auto jobs? Will more workers have to be sent to the unemployment line before the Premier finally does something to protect this important industry in Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Again, Speaker, we want the employees at the Oakville assembly complex to know that our government stands with them and their families. Yesterday, when the Premier talked to Ford Motor Co.'s president, and in my calls with their team, we said that we are actively working with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development on how we can help with support.

But this situation is exactly why we developed Driving Prosperity, our \$40-million plan for Ontario's automotive sector, with Ford adding 400 connected and autonomous research jobs in Ottawa, and GM adding 700 of those same jobs in Markham. With Uber adding 300 of those same connected and autonomous jobs here in Toronto, we are preparing for the future.

We also want to congratulate Toyota on their J.D. Power award, making them the single best automotive plant in all of the world.

Speaker, we do know how to build cars in Ontario, and the rest—

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

The next question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great to see you.

My question is for the Minister of Transportation. A reliable and robust public transit network is what Ontarians expect. The GTA's relentless gridlock problem calls for real solutions, solutions that will make life easier for commuters so they can get to work and home faster and easier.

Just recently, an independent study from University of Toronto experts was released that examined how exactly the Ontario Line, the centrepiece of our historic subway transit plan, will benefit GTA commuters. Can the minister please share the findings of this report?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for the question.

Mr. Speaker, for decades, political squabbling has prevented us from moving forward together on building transit in the GTA. This report confirms that the Ontario Line stands to benefit all Toronto commuters, including marginalized communities that have had limited access to public transit until now. The report concludes that the benefits of the Ontario Line are concentrated “among low-income, visible minority, and recent immigrant populations, compared to the average benefit received across the entire population.”

Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Line will grant access to public transit to communities that need it most. It’s a pathway forward to lift up the city’s most vulnerable by connecting more people to more jobs and to more opportunities.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the minister for that answer. It is great to hear how far-reaching the benefits of the Ontario Line will be. Residents in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore are looking forward to finally seeing real progress being made on getting subways built right here in Toronto.

The study conducted by U of T experts underscores just how important it is that we work together to get the Ontario Line built. Could the minister tell us more about the Ontario Line and what it will bring to Toronto commuters?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you again to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for the question.

Mr. Speaker, we have put forward a proposal that was endorsed by the mayor, by city staff and by the federal government. The new Ontario Line will cover 15.5 kilometres, creating a new access across the city centre, connecting Ontario Place through downtown Toronto to the Ontario Science Centre. The Ontario Line will benefit all walks of life, and the study shows it. The report confirms that “low-income populations are likely to see more reduction in transit travel time than the Toronto population on average.”

The Ontario Line and our remaining three priority projects are good for Toronto, they’re good for the region and they’re good for the province. Today, I’m calling on all members of this House to join us and the city of Toronto to support us in our efforts to build transit in the GTA.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Premier. This summer, the Ontario NDP Black caucus hosted deputation meetings where we heard, time and time again, that food insecurity was disproportionately impacting Black communities. And last week, a study released by FoodShare and the University of Toronto confirmed this: 28% of Black Canadians are at risk of going hungry, compared to 10% of white Canadians. Yet, just like the Liberal government before them, this government has failed to commit any real resources to anti-racism initiatives.

My question for the Premier: What steps is your government taking to address this crisis?

Hon. Doug Ford: The Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You know, the Anti-Racism Directorate and the staff working there are actually doing some really exciting things. We have worked with them on some of the reporting that the member opposite would know full well is coming forward in the coming months. I’m proud of the work that they are doing. I think, respectfully, that the member opposite is not having a deep understanding of what the role of the Anti-Racism Directorate is and what it does. The fact that she continues to basically suggest that these very valuable individuals working within the directorate have been doing nothing for the last months is disingenuous at best.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Withdraw.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I withdraw. My apologies.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Again to the Premier: Racism is not an abstract problem; racism is causing Ontarians to go hungry. That, I understand.

When the Conservatives’ cuts have squeezed people struggling with the cost of basic essentials, Black families have been disproportionately hurt. That means that Black children are more likely to go to school hungry and Black parents are more likely to be forced to choose between paying their hydro bill or paying for groceries this week, and now we have data to prove it.

So again, I ask the Premier: When will this government begin collecting and analyzing race-based data and find solutions to systemic problems that are causing very real suffering for Black communities across this province?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: On this, I believe the member opposite and I can agree. We are focused on ensuring that we have good-paying jobs in the province of Ontario, which is why, frankly, we need to applaud the fact that 272,000 jobs have been created since our government formed.

There is no doubt that when our families are challenged with paying additional costs like the carbon tax on gas, it has an impact on their ability to serve and look after their children. We are looking after the people of Ontario. We’re making sure that those jobs are there, and that’s why we have created things like the red tape commission where we can actually unlock some of the amazing potential that we have in the province of Ontario with our job creators.

I’m proud to stand with Premier Ford on this very important work, and I will continue to do that with all of our cabinet and caucus.

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

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Davenport has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Education concerning the elimination

of teaching positions. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks concerning the court challenge of the federal carbon tax. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask for the House's attention.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kitchener Centre has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Solicitor General considering food insecurity disproportionately impacting Black communities. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Joel Harden: I'd like to welcome to the people's House Leslie Kulperger, who's here from the charity Myles Ahead. Its mission is to create cohesion in our fragmented mental health system, specifically for children, moving us toward a culture of compassion and empathy. Leslie, I'm really glad you're here.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Introduction of visitors? The Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, you're looking as young as usual.

I would like to introduce to the House a number of individuals who are here for the introduction of the PAWS Act: Kevin Strooband, executive director of the Lincoln County Humane Society, and other provincial inspectors including Scott Sylvia—no relation—Rachel Vandenkroonenberg, Rachel Banks and Troy Reddington.

As well, from the ministry are Debbie Conrad and Abdul Malik, who have done incredible work on this file, as have my own staff, Joshua Johnson and Alexandra Brenner.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HALLOWEEN EVENTS IN SPADINA-FORT YORK

Mr. Chris Glover: Three years ago, I moved into a condo on the waterfront in Toronto, and one of the questions I had when I moved in there was, would there be a sense of community? The answer has been: Absolutely. There are more neighbourhood associations in my riding than any other place that I've ever lived, and they are

incredibly active. It's the fastest-growing part of the country, the riding of Spadina-Fort York, and a lot of the direction for development is being given from the neighbourhood associations, because they want parks, they want schools and they want daycares. They want all the amenities that go with a proper community.

This Thursday, on Halloween, it's no exception. The neighbourhood associations have organized incredible Halloween events. The CityPlace neighbourhood association is a partnership between the businesses and the condos, and they've got 60 locations for kids to go and pick up candy. They've got a corn maze in the park. They've got all kinds of events. Liberty Village also has distribution points for Halloween candy.

The most important thing about these Halloween celebrations in these neighbourhoods is not just that kids get their loot bags full—and they will get them very full—but it's also that it builds a place in downtown Toronto for families to raise children and for children to feel welcome and to have all of the celebrations that you'd have in other parts of the province. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for letting me talk about this.

THE TURTLE PROJECT

Mr. Stan Cho: As I'm sure members of this House will remember, in April 2018 my community of Willowdale suffered an immense tragedy. In the weeks following the Yonge Street van attack, our community came together to support one another and prove that kindness, love and community can stamp out hate and division.

Today I'd like to share that more light is coming from this darkest of events. Anne Marie D'Amico was one of the victims that day—an inspiring young woman with a passion for helping others. In remembrance of her spirit, her family has created the Anne Marie D'Amico Foundation to raise funds for causes that embody Anne Marie's spirit and her desire to effect positive change.

On Tuesday, December 3—Anne Marie's birthday—the foundation will be holding their inaugural fundraising event, the Turtle Project, at the Meridian Arts Centre in Willowdale. This evening of dance, live music and magic will raise funds towards a revolutionary new facility for the North York Women's Shelter as part of the foundation's mission to end violence and abuse against women.

Mr. Speaker, I have gotten to know the D'Amico family over the last year, and have been inspired by Anne Marie's story and the incredible work that her family has done to honour her memory and her legacy.

I would like to encourage all members of this House and all Ontarians to join me in attending the Turtle Project and supporting the Anne Marie D'Amico Foundation.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yesterday, we learned that the Ford Motor Co. Oakville plant will be cutting 450 jobs. That's 450 families who are now worrying about their future. When I heard this news yesterday, I felt gutted for these workers and families, and now I'm angry.

I'm angry because Ford's Oakville plant already lost 200 jobs in September. Chrysler's third shift in Windsor is still in jeopardy, and GM Oshawa is ending their vehicle production. At Nemak in Windsor, the employer has tried to break their contract with the workers at that plant, cutting 270 direct jobs. When the workers took over the plant in protest, myself and many of my NDP colleagues were on the line with them.

I'm outraged because my NDP colleagues and I have repeatedly implored the government—both Liberal and now Conservative—to create an auto and manufacturing strategy. We must protect and grow the industry and ensure that government investments are made, with ironclad commitments to keep jobs here. But for the past year, the Premier has done nothing but sit back and watch as tens of thousands of jobs have left Ontario. For every one direct job lost, we lose as many as eight indirect jobs. That could mean over 5,000 losses because of job cuts at Ford's Oakville plant alone.

Corporations have moved production to Mexico, where they can pay workers next to nothing and in some cases only allow men to apply.

I'm asking the Premier today: When will enough finally be enough? How many highly skilled, hard-working people have to lose their jobs before he takes action?

Speaker, for the sake of our friends, families and communities, let today be the first day that the Premier and this government finally get to work on Ontario's auto strategy.

HALLOWEEN

Mrs. Robin Martin: I think I'm on the same page as my colleague from Spadina–Fort York. We also, this past weekend, had a pumpkin giveaway in the Fairbank Village business improvement area in my riding. I participated in that, as I do every year. It's certainly a sure sign that Halloween is on the way in our riding and, of course, across Ontario.

Speaker, it is getting dark earlier in the evening. Halloween is quickly approaching, and I know that the children in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence and across Ontario are counting down the days and hours until they can put on their costumes and go trick-or-treating on Thursday evening. It's really a time full of excitement, but I want to encourage everyone to put safety first this Halloween.

So please, everyone, drive with caution on Halloween night. Be on the lookout for trick-or-treaters, both in the afternoon and in the evening.

If you're out enjoying the evening, carry a flashlight with you, or choose a costume which will allow you to be visible, and to see yourself. Avoid wearing long or oversized kinds of costumes which could be a tripping hazard. Please walk. Don't run. Always stop, look and listen before crossing the street. Never jaywalk, and only use crosswalks or intersections. I also want to say, never trick-or-treat alone. You should always go in a group with an adult. Stay in familiar areas, and only go to homes that are well-lit and that are taking part in Halloween. And, of

course, never go inside a house, as my little son did, to get your treat when the door opens. He was a little confused.

Parents, last but not least, don't forget to check the Halloween candy that your children bring home, and make sure that they have both a happy and memorable night.

I wish everybody participating a very happy and/or very spooky Halloween.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge serious errors I made on May 28, 2019, as I spoke about Myles Kulperger, an 11-year-old child who died by suicide in 2018. I read about Myles online but misconstrued important details. I stated that he had died in 2014 and that he was dyslexic. Neither of these claims were accurate.

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To make matters worse, I did not approach the parents to request permission to cite the story in the Ontario Legislature. I take full responsibility for these mistakes and, working with the family, I intend to move a unanimous consent motion in a moment to expunge mention of Myles Kulperger from Hansard on May 28, 2019.

His family has requested this course of action, and there are two reasons why I hope it will pass. First, the Kulperger family name is unique, so Internet searches of Myles currently produce a link to my comments in Hansard. Understandably, his family does not want false information circulating about their loved one.

Secondly, as I mentioned earlier, a legacy charity has been formed called Myles Ahead, advancing child and youth mental health, and significant effort is now being put into building something positive and meaningful out of this tragedy. It is deeply troubling to those engaged in this important work to have my erroneous comments readily available.

With all this in mind, Speaker, to make amends for my actions and to respect the wishes of the Kulperger family, I will now seek unanimous consent to expunge any mention of Myles Kulperger from the electronic version of Hansard from May 28, 2019, as well as any future printed editions of that Hansard.

I would like to move that motion, Speaker, yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa Centre is seeking unanimous consent of the House to expunge any mention of Myles Kulperger from the electronic version of Hansard for May 28, 2019, as well as any future printed editions of that Hansard. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Are you finished?

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm finished, Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay. Thank you. Members' statements.

THUNDER BAY POLICE SERVICE

Mr. Michael Gravelle: We know that guns, gangs and drugs are significant issues in major urban centres such as Toronto. In fact, that has been recognized with significant

funding support from the province. But what is perhaps not as well known by this government is that those issues have spread to northern communities like Thunder Bay, where gangs from southern Ontario have infiltrated the community, putting an enormous strain on the Thunder Bay Police Service and, unfortunately, putting Thunder Bay near the top with respect to murders per capita in Canada.

When the federal government allocated \$65 million to the province to deal with those challenges, those of us in the north were shocked that none of that financial assistance came our way, despite the strong case that was made by Mayor Bill Mauro and police chief Sylvie Hauth. Speaker, let me add to that case just a bit.

First of all, the creation of a major case unit is a real priority, as the police service remains understaffed in properly responding to the high volume of violent crimes in our community. We continue to be ranked by Statistics Canada as second in the country for violent crimes—we had, in fact, over 1,600 in 2017—and we are ranked first in homicides.

The time has clearly come for the province to financially support the Thunder Bay Police Service so that they can effectively deal with guns, gangs, drugs and human trafficking issues in our community.

LISA RAITT

Mr. Parm Gill: I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize my friend and a former colleague, one of the hardest-working individuals I know, the Honourable Lisa Raitt.

Lisa served as the member of Parliament for Milton for over a decade and served in cabinet as part of the federal Conservative government. In her various roles as a minister—of natural resources, labour and transport—Ms. Raitt continued to skilfully serve the citizens of Milton and Halton.

While Ms. Raitt was in government, she single-handedly brought funding to Milton in order to build the velodrome, the sports centre, the tennis centre and the Milton arts centre.

The result in last Monday's federal election saw the election of a new MP for Milton. I know I speak for all Miltonians and all of my constituents in thanking Lisa for her service to our community.

Lisa, it was a pleasure to work with you as an MP and then as an MPP in Milton, and I want to personally thank you for all you have done to make Milton a better place to live, work and play.

I would like to wish Lisa all the very best in all of her future endeavours, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity.

ISLAMIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Mr. Speaker, I wish to offer a warm welcome to you and all members of provincial

Parliament as we resume the legislative session. We are returning to this place at a later date than usual, but I am pleased that there is still time to remind the House and members of the public that October is Islamic Heritage Month.

Over the last few weeks, I have enjoyed the opportunity to share this rich heritage with all our neighbours. Ontario has welcomed immigrants practising their Islamic faith from the earliest days of Confederation. Because of our history and the journey we have made, our roots are deep in this land. Some of us are recently arrived and still adjusting to a new life and home; others this month will celebrate many years and multiple family generations as Canadian citizens.

In October, Muslims share their heritage with the entire community. Across the province, you can find Islamic heritage on display and celebrated in cultural exhibitions, film screenings, open houses, and speeches and seminars. Muslim community groups open their doors and send a message of peace, love, respect and tolerance. I invite all Ontarians to share in this rich cultural tradition.

I'm so proud to call Ontario my home and proud to join my fellow Muslims to celebrate Islamic Heritage Month.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROVINCIAL ANIMAL WELFARE SERVICES ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LES SERVICES PROVINCIAUX VISANT LE BIEN-ÊTRE DES ANIMAUX

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 and make consequential amendments with respect to animal protection / *Projet de loi 136, Loi édictant la Loi de 2019 sur les services provinciaux visant le bien-être des animaux et apportant des modifications corrélatives concernant la protection des animaux.*

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 would invite the Solicitor General to make a brief explanation of her bill.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It's a privilege to rise in the House today to introduce the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act. As the honourable members will recall, last spring our government introduced temporary measures to ensure the welfare of animals after the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals announced it was withdrawing from its role of enforcement. Temporary measures were necessary while the government worked with animal welfare stakeholders and partners to develop a new provincial enforcement model.

If the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act is passed by this House, Ontario will be taking a bold new step in

animal welfare enforcement. We will become the first province in Canada to introduce a provincially operated enforcement system that will include locally deployed provincial inspectors, and specialized inspectors for agriculture, zoos, aquariums, and equines.

After months of consultation, we believe that a provincially operated system is the best approach to ensure the highest standard of animal welfare enforcement province-wide. This system will be supported by a more accountable and transparent oversight framework and the introduction of the strongest penalties in Canada for offenders. The public wants tough enforcement to ensure the welfare of our animals. It is a responsibility that this government takes seriously.

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The Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act will strengthen enforcement and hold offenders accountable for their actions. I look forward to discussing the many aspects of this proposed legislation in this chamber.

MOTIONS

ADJOURNMENT DEBATES

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the two late shows in the names of the members for Ottawa South and Kitchener Centre.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding the two late shows in the names of the members for Ottawa South and Kitchener Centre. Agreed? Agreed.

Again, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the late show in the name of the member for Ottawa South be rescheduled to Wednesday, October 30, 2019, and the late show in the name of the member for Kitchener Centre be rescheduled to Wednesday, November 6, 2019.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that the late show in the name of the member for Ottawa South be rescheduled to Wednesday, October 30, 2019, and that the late show in the name of the member for Kitchener Centre be rescheduled to Wednesday, November 6, 2019.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: “Whereas the ... Conservatives’ cuts represent an all-out attack on municipalities, health care, schools, universities and social services; and

“Whereas ... 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 support the petition and am adding my name to it.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas currently Peterborough city and county has seen a major increase in the amount of opioid-related overdoses, poisonings, and deaths;

“Whereas in Ontario and across the country it has been deemed that there is a current opioid crisis; and

“Whereas Peterborough currently does not have a consumption and treatment site to help in the reduction of overdoses and deaths in the area;

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

“Work to put forward an application for a treatment and consumption services site to follow the mandatory services, such as:

“a) supervised drug consumption (injection, intranasal, oral) and overdose prevention services;

“b) on-site or defined pathways to addiction treatment services;

“c) on-site or defined pathways to wraparound services: primary care, mental health, housing, other social supports;

“d) provide proper harm reduction services such as education, first aid/wound care, distribution and safe disposal of needles, and provision of naloxone and oxygen;

“e) removal of any discarded harm reduction supplies around the consumption and treatment area;

“f) support ongoing discussions to address local community and neighbourhood concerns on an ongoing basis.”

I fully support this petition, will sign my name to it, and give it to page Davina.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition for a meaningful climate action plan.

“Whereas our planet is undergoing significant warming with adverse consequences for health, for agriculture, for infrastructure and for our children’s future;

“Whereas the costs of inaction are severe, such as extreme weather events causing flooding and drought;

“Whereas Canada has signed the Paris accord which commits us to acting to keep temperature rise under 1.5 or 2 degrees Celsius;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario to develop GHG reduction targets based on science that will meet our Paris commitment, an action plan to meet those targets and annual reporting on progress on meeting the targets. We call on the government to commit to providing funding through carbon pricing mechanisms for actions that must be taken to meet these targets.”

I fully support this petition. I'll be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Nathan.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Toby Barrett: This is a petition 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 agree with this petition and affix my signature.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas in the absence of adequate services, parents of autistic adults experience significant stress in their efforts to provide the necessary care;

“Whereas there is a lack of respite crisis beds available for autism;

“Whereas there are approximately 15,000 adults with developmental disabilities waiting to be placed in a residential facility;

“Whereas the all-party Select Committee on Developmental Services, including ministers now serving in the Ford government, called for the elimination of all wait-lists in 2014;

“Whereas in the absence of adequate residential space, autistic adults in crisis situations are often placed in

unsuitable facilities such as hospitals treating people with mental health issues;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to provide the necessary funding to ensure all people with autism receive the support they need to avoid such crisis situations.”

I fully support this petition. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Christian to bring to the Clerk.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr. John Fraser: “A Petition to Reverse the Decision to Change the Definition of ‘Disability’ in ODSP.

“I'm a resident of Ontario and call upon the government to:

“—recognize that the Ontario Disability Support Program is a social welfare program. Its purpose is to act as a last resort for low-income individuals who are unable to work or earn enough money to survive because of a medical condition;

“—recognize that the current definition of ‘disability’ used for ODSP has fewer restrictions on who can qualify. It also better reflects the reality of how having a disability impacts people's lives;

“—recognize that if the Ontario government changes the definition used for ODSP to a definition of a disability such as the one used for the Canada Pension Plan program, a significant number of disabled individuals who currently qualify for ODSP benefits no longer will;

“—recognize that the CPP definition of ‘disability’ is more restrictive than the ODSP definition. The CPP definition is meant to encompass individuals that are prohibited from any employment, whereas people receiving ODSP benefits are encouraged to work if they are able;

“—recognize also that the CPP definition is also meant to encompass people with prolonged or lifelong illnesses, whereas people on ODSP benefits have disabilities that will last a year or more or on an episodic basis or continuous basis;

“—recognize that if the Ontario government changes the ODSP definition to be a more restrictive definition, low-income individuals with disabilities who can work part-time but not full-time at low wages no longer qualify for ODSP benefits; and

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“—recognize that, if the Ontario government changes the new ODSP definition to a more restrictive definition that does not include episodic or time-limited disabilities, low-income individuals with breast cancer, multiple sclerosis, addictions, mental health issues like depression, chronic pain and chronic fatigue may no longer qualify for ODSP benefits; and

“—recognize that people with disabilities who do not qualify under a more restrictive definition will instead have to rely on Ontario Works. This means getting a lot less in monthly benefits, despite having additional

disability-related costs. A single person on OW currently only gets \$733 a month, while a single person on ODSP gets \$1,169. That represents a 37% cut in benefits, which would push people with disabilities, who are already very poor and have few other options, into even deeper poverty.

“Therefore, I call on the Ontario government not to change the current definition of ‘disability’ used for ODSP.”

I agree with this petition. I am affixing my signature to it and I am giving it to page Alisha.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I knew we were in petitions, but I thought that was a bit of a filibuster. Further petitions?

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas almost one year ago, Premier Ford’s PC-led government was elected with an overwhelming majority; and

“Whereas the government was elected on a mandate of restoring Ontario’s finances, as well as delivering responsible, accountable and transparent government; and

“Whereas since being elected, the Premier Ford government has passed a historic amount of legislation to get Ontario on the right track, including:

“Bill 2, Urgent Priorities Act, 2018;

“Bill 4, Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, 2018;

“Bill 5, Better Local Government Act, 2018;

“Bill 32, Access to Natural Gas Act, 2018;

“Bill 34, Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018;

“Bill 36, Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act, 2018;

“Bill 47, Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018;

“Bill 48, Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, 2019;

“Bill 57, Restoring Trust, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2018;

“Bill 66, Restoring Ontario’s Competitiveness Act, 2019;

“Bill 67, Labour Relations Amendment Act (Protecting Ontario’s Power Supply), 2018;

“Bill 68, Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, 2019;

“Bill 74, The People’s Health Care Act, 2019;

“Bill 81, Supply Act, 2019;

“Bill 87, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019;

“Bill 100, Protecting What Matters Most Act (Budget Measures), 2019;

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

“Continue to fulfill your mandate to protect what matters most to the people of Ontario while working to reduce immense debt and deficit shamefully left by the previous Kathleen Wynne Liberal government.”

I fully support this petition, affix my signature underneath and pass it on to page Bernat to give to you.

SERVICES D’URGENCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier M^{me} Nicole Shank de Hanmer dans mon comté pour la pétition, qui s’appelle « Interventions d’urgence 911.

« Alors que lorsque nous sommes confrontés à une urgence nous savons tous que nous » devons appeler « le 911 pour de l’aide; et

« Alors que l’accès aux services d’urgence par le biais du 911 n’est pas disponible dans toutes les régions de l’Ontario, mais la plupart des gens croient qu’ils le sont; et

« Alors que plusieurs personnes ont découvert que le 911 n’était pas disponible alors qu’elles faisaient face à une urgence; et

« Alors que tous les Ontariens » et Ontariennes « s’attendent et méritent d’avoir accès au service 911 partout dans la province; »

Ils demandent « à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario : de fournir une intervention d’urgence 911 partout en Ontario par des lignes téléphoniques ou cellulaires. »

J’appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer, et je demande au page Owen de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dave Smith: I have a petition entitled “To Ensure the Safety of Residents of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Justin Trudeau government is not doing enough to protect the people of Ontario from convicted terrorists; and

“Whereas safety, security and peace of mind is of the utmost importance to the Ford government; and

“Whereas Ontario residents who have not been convicted of criminal acts could find themselves unable to gain access to various privileges they enjoy; and

“Whereas there are no provisions to prevent convicted terrorists from accessing privileges in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 46 and disallow anyone convicted of a crime under section 83 of the Criminal Code of Canada and any international treaties that may apply from receiving:

“(1) a licence under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997;

“(2) health insurance benefits under the Health Insurance Act;

“(3) a driver’s licence under the Highway Traffic Act;

“(4) rent-geared-to-income assistance or special needs housing under the Housing Services Act, 2011;

“(5) grants, awards or loans under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act;

“(6) income support or employment supports under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997;

“(7) assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997;

“(8) coverage under the insurance plan under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.”

I emphatically support this petition, will sign my name to it, and give it to page Mackenzie.

HEALTH CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: This petition is entitled “Save Our Health Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this, will affix my name to it, and give it to page Robbie to bring to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The time for petitions has expired.

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 2019, on the motion for 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 (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this one-page letter that has been written by a 17-year-old student named Brook Morneau from my riding that I would like to read into the record, as it has to do with the bill. You will see how I will tie it all in as soon as I’m done reading that page, Speaker.

Brook’s father worked at Clarabelle Mill in my riding, for Vale. Here’s what she had to say in her essay:

“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, such as 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 benefits are not improved. That is one of the reasons why removing the Labour Relations Act is horrible for workers in the industry.

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“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 company to move along their negotiation, because without workers they are not making any profit. We can also establish more mandatory workshops throughout companies informing workers on possible health conditions or accidents in the workplace. Therefore, the workers are better prepared for the work environment and understand how important it is to wear the proper equipment.

“Without the Labour Relations Act,” Ontarians “are at risk of working in unsafe health and work conditions. I believe removing the act was not made to help” Ontarians, “but instead the companies. This is the biggest problem in the labour movement act since negotiations are not being made.”

I thank Brook Morneau, a 17-year-old student, for sending that to me.

The reason I wanted to read this into the record is that here again, with Bill 124, An Act to implement moderation measures in respect of compensation in Ontario's public sector, we are again doing away with the right of workers to negotiate fairly.

I want to focus on what is in the bill. The bill, on page 3—anybody can read it—shows who this bill will apply to. Basically, the bill will limit the wage increase in the broader public sector to a maximum of 1% per year. This has been brought about because the government tells us that this is the way to manage the budget.

It also brings other things, like not being allowed to travel, that I will talk about in the next few minutes, but let me start by reading the application to employers. Who will this bill apply to? We have “every board within the meaning of the Education Act.” That is our four school boards, Catholic, public, French and English—everybody who works within our education sector. That means teachers as much as educational assistants, anybody who works within the education system, which is mainly dominated by women.

Then, “every university in Ontario and every college of applied arts and technology and post-secondary institution, whether or not affiliated,” etc. Here again, you look at who the workers are. It's more split at the university level, but at the college and post-secondary levels, here again you have a large contingent of women.

The next sector, which is the biggest, is the hospital sector, so everybody who works within the hospital sector. You're talking about everyone. We're talking about certainly the nurses, the RPNs, the PSWs, the physiotherapists, the occupational therapists, the speech language pathologists, the audiologists, the lab techs—everybody, people who do the scheduling, people who help with portering, people who work in an OR or an ER. Everybody who works within the hospital system, whether it be a specialized hospital in mental health or specializing in a chronic condition—it doesn't matter—it applies to all of our hospitals. It's no surprise to you, Speaker, or to anybody here, that the great majority—I think we average about 95%—of hospital workers are women. This bill will affect women.

The next on the list: “Every licensee under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, other than a licensee that carries on its activities for the purpose of gain or profit to its members or shareholders.” So the first part of schedule 5(1)—anyway, what I just read—is long-term care. Who works in long-term care? The great majority of workers in long-term care are personal support workers, better known as PSWs. They do everything. They're the ones who are there for our loved ones, who support them, who help them with their activities of daily living, who make sure they are fed, they are clothed, they are clean and they are brought to the dining room. You also have many practical nurses. You have registered nurses. You have a few nurse practitioners who work, as well as everybody who cooks, who cleans, who makes sure that our long-term-care homes are up and running. Again, if you look at who works within our long-term-care system, it is dominated

by women. Women are the ones who are going to be affected by this bill.

Then there is this odd part of the bill that says, “Other than a licensee that carries on its activities for the purpose of gain or profit to its members or shareholders.” We all know that since Mike Harris was in power, a big part of our health care system has been moved into private hands. It started with a competitive bidding process in our home care system, where the not-for-profits were decimated and the for-profits—big, mainly American companies—came into the Ontario market. Their requests for proposals made it sound like they had been able to clone Mother Teresa, that the care was going to be so good and warm. Years later, we know that none of that worked out. Our home care system is broken. It fails more people every day than it helps. But I can tell you that the for-profits certainly fight for those contracts. Why? Because there is money to be made. There is money to be made on the backs of the personal support workers, the PSWs, who go out and provide the care in all of those people's homes for, most of the time, a salary of about \$15 or \$16 an hour. Those are the workers who will be limited to 1% wage increases.

Then the next one is Ornge. Ornge is our air ambulance—a good mix of men and women in there.

The next one is children's aid societies, number seven. The children's aid society—same thing. This is a society that helps children that have been identified as being at risk of harm. Children's aid steps in. There are a ton of social workers who work within children's aid so we can make sure that every child in Ontario gets the best start possible. Sometimes that means getting the help of children's aid. Who works for children's aid? Mainly women.

I think you are starting to get the picture, Speaker, that this bill will have a huge impact. Who are the people who will only see their wages increase by 1%? They are the PSWs. They are the people who do the work, who do the caring work within our community. Historically, and still today, those tend more to be women.

Let's put that into perspective a little bit. For all of the PSWs out there who make \$14 an hour, a 1% increase will, if you work full-time—if you're one of the lucky ones who gets full-time and we'll assume that you work 40 hours a week, your wage increase will be limited to \$280 a year. Everybody in here—we just spent five months in our constituencies because the Legislative Assembly was not in session. I bet you each and every one of us has met with at least one exhausted, tired family who came and saw you and said, “I need home care, but we are not able to find a PSW to come and provide the care that is needed.”

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I have shared the story of Robert Hyslop, who is a 78-year-old veteran from my riding, in Azilda. Robert had his hip replaced this summer. His physician prescribed home care. He wanted him to have a PSW to help with his recovery, to help him go home safely and have a shower, and help with getting dressed and doing his morning routines and all of that.

We cannot find a PSW to work in Azilda. That means that Marie Claire, his 76-year-old wife, tried to provide the care for him.

It was stressful. It was not the way it should have been. They were at great risk. She is much smaller than he is. She had a hard time getting him up and about. There were a few close calls of him falling over and squishing her on the way down. Had a fall happened, then both of them would have been admitted into the hospital and going onto the list of people needing alternate levels of care in Health Sciences North, which was already at about 115% occupancy every single day this summer, although the flu season had not even started.

Those are the people whom we are not able to recruit. What are we doing as recruitment? We're saying that if you work as a PSW in the public sector, we will limit your wages to 1%. For somebody who makes \$14, \$15 or \$16 an hour doing really hard work—doing home care as a personal support worker, whether you're in home care or you're in a long-term-care home, is hard work. It is rewarding. You can be happy to see how you help people, but it is still very hard work. When you see a government that says, "I know we need more of you, and I know that we have shortages throughout our province, but we will limit you to a 1% increase. So you won't make 14 bucks an hour anymore; you'll make \$14.14. You won't make 15 bucks an hour anymore; you will make \$15.15," that's not a good strategy to bring more people into this field, whether we talk about home care or long-term care or hospitals or everywhere else where those people are needed.

I just saw the clock and saw that there are two minutes left. I will go on to a part of the bill that affects the north. The minister—actually, the PA—was really proud to say that the bill will bring in efficiencies through supply chain centralization. I have nothing against good supply chains, but it always means the same thing for me, who lives in northern Ontario: None of the suppliers in the north will win those bids. Those bids will all be with bigger companies in southern Ontario. We will have to wait for shipments to come to the north—God knows when, if we have an accident on Highway 69 that closes the 69 for hours and sometimes days on end, or a snowstorm or things like this.

The idea behind supply chain centralization makes sense, but you have to look at what the impact will be on northern Ontario. In northern Ontario, we will be the ones whose local businesses will lose the contracts they have with our hospitals, with our schools, with our long-term care, because those contracts will be given to big stores down south.

It's the same thing with the limit on travelling. For most professionals in northern Ontario, continuing education means that you have to travel. Now that there is a freeze on travel to try to save money, that means that continuing education for all of us who live in northern Ontario becomes really, really difficult to do, because your employer is in a very strong position to say, "No, you're not allowed to travel." There are very few opportunities to do continuing education.

I could go on. There are CarePartners in Sudbury that have been on strike since May 30 this year. They provide home care, and there is no—they are not on strike; they are on lockout. There is no end in sight for those workers.

There are problems with that bill, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I would like to thank the member from Nickel Belt for her comments here today.

I know that when one of your members was first elected in 1990, your government found itself in a similar and very difficult fiscal position. As the member put it on June 21, 1993: "The government found itself in 1990 in a position of having to make a very difficult decision about how much of a debt we felt at the time that the province can be able to deal with...."

"We also looked at the question of expenditure reduction...."

He said at the time: "We looked at how ministries spent dollars at the time and we said: 'Do ministries have to do as much travelling as they're doing now in order to conduct their business? Do ministries have to have the level of expenses when it comes to the amount of things that we buy to keep our ministries going as we did in the past?'"

"We said, as responsible government, we need to be able to manage down the cost of these ministries, so we did so. Was it difficult? Of course it was difficult."

Speaker, I am sure it was, and it's difficult today. But in 1993, our debt-to-GDP ratio was 25%. It's now about 40%. The need for more responsible government has never been greater, and I hope the NDP will join us to recognize this.

As Roy Romanow said in Saskatchewan, without fiscal responsibility, government can't afford to be a positive focus on society. "The reason we sacrifice so much," he said, was "to ensure that we could ... rebuild the social and physical infrastructure of the province." I ask my friends opposite to consider this and to join us in supporting Bill 124.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm happy to rise to speak on Bill 124, the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act. The sad thing about this bill is that it does very, very little to nothing to actually protect the future because what it's doing is taking away the opportunity for a livable wage from some of our front-line workers and some of our already marginalized and vulnerable working populations.

I want to share two postcards that I received from people in my riding who use local food banks. One was from Marty, and it read: "Less financial resources means less of all essential food groups, which results in malnutrition and illness, which will further burden our health care system."

Mignon said: "My children go to bed hungry already and have no money for lunch at school."

These quotes say nothing about sustainability. What this sounds like is that people are actually at their last

straw. They're at their wits' end, and this government's Bill 124 is not doing anything to protect workers who are already feeling the pinch, in many cases, of precarious work.

The Canadian average rental is \$22 an hour. That's what you need, \$22 an hour, to rent a one-bathroom—averagely speaking in Canada. In Toronto, that average goes to about \$33.70 an hour to rent a room in Toronto. For Marty and for Mignon, it's not a possibility.

Bill 124 is not working for front-line workers and for those who are most in need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, I want to refer back to what the Honourable Minister Bethlenfalvy said yesterday at the opening of his speech because I think that really lays out the land. It also reinforces the reason that our government was elected back in June of 2018 and the mandate that the people of Ontario really gave us.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, for the past 15 years the Liberals have more than doubled the Ontario debt load. Currently, Ontario has \$1.5 billion of interest on its debt every hour, which means that every day we are paying \$36 million just to sustain the debt, without paying a penny back—\$36 million a day, which could be going to health care, education or to protect what matters most, which is the people of Ontario.

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The entire purpose of Bill 124 is to cut down our costs, reduce our debt load so that we can actually use taxpayer money for what it's meant to be used for, which is enforcing and promoting social services and provincially funded programs instead of paying interest to lenders. No one wants to pay interest to lenders. Yet, if we don't start now, then what future are we creating for our children and our grandchildren? What future are we creating for Ontario?

The people of this province elected us to reduce the debt and fix the economic finances, and I'm pleased to support the minister because that's exactly what Bill 124 is going to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm proud to stand today in support of workers and I'm proud to stand speaking against Bill 124, a bill that the Ontario Federation of Labour said could affect a million workers in the province of Ontario.

But this has happened before. This actually happened under the Liberals. It happened in 2010 when they went after non-unionized public workers. It happened again under the Liberals in 2012 when they went after teachers.

I can't help but think today as I stand here speaking that somewhere in my constituency is a support worker working in a long-term-care facility. She's a tenant. Each year, her rent is increasing far above 1%, 2% or even 3%, and the cost of everything seems to be going up. Now her building is sub-metered and the hydro prices continue to go up and up and up. She's driving a car because her job

is far away from where she lives, and guess what? Her auto insurance is out of control and just continues to go up and up, and here this government is making her wages, her livelihood, her ability to put food on the table for her family, into a political issue.

It's not surprising because the former Conservative government, at an election, even talked about the elimination of 100,000 public works jobs. This is what Conservatives do. They set their sights on public workers and create legislation year after year that goes after them. But we here in the NDP opposition stand for workers.

It is something that hits home because I can't help but think that if my mother, working as an administrator in a university, didn't have fair wages and a benefits package, where would my family be?

I'm proud to stand here against this bill, and I really hope that the Conservatives will consider this and withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return now to the member from Nickel Belt to summarize what she has heard.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to reiterate that when the government goes after service workers, those are the programs and services that your children depend on, that your sick relatives or yourself depend on, that your parents and grandparents or aunts and uncles depend on.

Many of them, when it comes to personal support workers, work for very low wages. Many support workers got a raise when the minimum wage went up to \$14 an hour. This is how low what they make is. When you target them and say you will only get a 1% increase for the next three years, you have a huge effect in demoralizing them, showing that they have worth, but their government won't recognize their worth, and this is really hard. It makes it really difficult to recruit and retain a stable workforce in our home care system, in our long-term-care system. Without a stable workforce, without continuity of caregivers, you cannot have continuity of care; without continuity of care, you cannot have quality care. And all of this because the government wants to make cuts, but does not want to increase revenue.

Because you see, a budget has two pieces: You can increase revenue as well as make cuts when you want to balance, and giving huge tax cuts to profitable corporations and rich people who don't pay their fair share also plays into the balance. But, no, they won't look at the wealthy; they will look at the PSWs and take away their 15 bucks an hour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to rise in the House to debate Bill 124. It's good to be back, Speaker. This is why the people of Ontario elected us all here: to work on their behalf. It's unfortunate that we weren't here for the last five months due to, I guess, the members opposite feeling that they couldn't work while they supported their friends, the federal Conservatives.

But when we are here to talk about people's compensation and how they feed their families and put a roof over their head, that's the job that people expect us to do. I know that this compensation debate is surrounding our broader public service. These are the people who teach in our universities and our high schools and elementary schools. These are the people who keep the electricity flowing into our homes, and the work that they perform in hospitals and long-term-care centres, non-profit agencies—right across our system—and in all of the areas that are important to the people of Ontario. Needless to say, the work that they do is valuable and is appreciated, and they deserve our respect.

One of the aspects of collective bargaining is that this is a protected right under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and it's a very hard-fought and important right for many reasons, because if we didn't need to have these types of protections, then they wouldn't be there. They are there for specific reasons, and they were hard-fought and hard-won.

One of the comments that I heard from the members opposite was around the justification for putting this 1% cap on that Bill 124 will impose, and that the justification is the provincial deficit. This is something that this government, under Premier Ford, has really sold to Ontarians, that there is this deficit and, therefore, you have to experience deep cuts to public services.

We know that the Financial Accountability Officer has shown that the deficit in Ontario is not what the government has purported it to be; that, in fact, it is much less. In the recent public accounts that were published, it was not a \$15-billion deficit that we've been told is in Ontario under Premier Ford's government; it is actually a \$7.4-billion deficit.

We also know that hidden within that number there are decisions that are being made by this government to inflate that deficit. So is there really that justification to cut services that people depend on, to hold back the ability of these very important employees to assert their right to collectively bargain for that reason? That is something that has been created by the government.

When we look at Bill 124 imposing a three-year compensation cap at 1% each year and really taking away that freedom to negotiate based on the work that is being performed, based on the conditions in that work environment, based on market conditions, cost of living conditions, I think that's an injustice. This government needs to recognize that we are already doing very much in Ontario to keep the costs of public services low.

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In fact, when you compare what Ontario spends on a per-person basis, per-capita basis, we are the lowest in Canada of all provinces in terms of program spending. In fact, we are also the lowest in Canada in terms of revenues per capita as well. So we're already, as Ontarians, being as efficient as we can. Of course, if there are other ways that we can become more efficient, we should do that. That's the prudent thing to do. But to put that all on the backs of our public sector workers, those who are in hospitals, long-

term-care facilities, crown corporations, power workers, children's aid societies—we know the valuable work that is being performed by our broader public service.

And then what about the freedom to bargain, the freedom to collectively bargain which is guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? Under section 2(d) of the Canadian Charter of Rights, freedom of association is protected, and with it is the right to collectively bargain. This is something that we as legislatures should uphold. We should actually fight fiercely for that.

You know, many years ago I worked in an organization, and I was very surprised, actually, that there was a union that represented the workers, given the mission of the organization. The union that we were working with was the Teamsters union. They're a pretty strong union. When I was speaking with the president at one point, I asked him, "Why is this union here?" And he said to me that at one point in the history of this organization it was needed. The services and the support of the union were needed to protect those workers, and that's how this particular workplace became unionized.

We don't want to be in a society where we in any way diminish those rights that have been hard-fought and are protected under the charter. This government has targeted collective bargaining before, and we've seen that in the removal of workers' rights and the right to collectively bargain, starting with Bill 66. It has been echoed in recent budgets, and it is clear that they're not done, that this is still an area that they are going after in this bill.

You know, many members have stood in this House and have talked about the consequences of this and its effects and its impacts on real people, people like those in my riding in Scarborough–Guildwood. Speaker, the household income in my riding is well below the average of the city of Toronto, and I know how hard people are working. When the former Liberal government that I was proud to serve in raised the minimum wage towards what would be more of a living wage, to \$14 and it was to go to \$15, I know that that affected many, many individuals in my own community: their ability to put food on the table, their ability to put clothing on their children, their ability to keep a roof over their head.

We know that housing affordability is one of the challenges that we face in this city and in many communities across Ontario. What people earn and their ability to pursue wages that reflect their own value is very important. I believe that the minister has thoughtfully put together this bill, but it needs to be reconsidered in terms of its impact on the everyday lives of people and their ability—especially our front-line workers, who work tirelessly to ensure that everyone in this province has access to services.

And what about those areas in the province that are struggling, in fact, to attract some of those front-line workers? I recently visited northern Ontario, where they are telling me about the challenges of attracting personal support workers and individuals to do that front-line care. What wages they are earning and potentially will earn for the value of their work is important. What signal are we

sending when these wages, by Bill 124, are capped and held at 1%, regardless of the rate of inflation, regardless of the cost of living, regardless of the circumstances? What message are we sending to those workers in terms of their value and the value of their work to this province?

Speaker, with the time that I have left, I do want to come back to the false message that the government is sending when they talk about the need to slay this deficit—a deficit that they have themselves manufactured so that they can justify cutting valuable public services in health care, social services, education and public health. I actually just saw people marching with placards demanding that their public health services be restored, because we know how valuable those services are to individuals. These types of cuts are just reckless because they're putting people's lives and livelihoods at risk. This government promised when they were running for office that they would not cut any jobs. That was one of the promises that was made, but that's been broken time and time and time again.

When we look at our autism workers, they are losing their jobs because of the chaos being created in the autism sector. We know that teachers and education workers are losing their position. The Financial Accountability Officer estimates that to be 5,000 teacher positions that will be cut or, as the government likes to put it, not replaced. What's the difference when young people, students in classrooms, won't have that caring adult in the classroom? Whether you fire that teacher or you don't replace a retiring teacher, the person who loses is that student. They lose the impact of that caring adult in the classroom.

As I said earlier, when you look at what we are currently spending on government programs and services in Ontario, it is far below what other provinces are spending. It's far below. It's actually \$2,000 per person on provincial programs on average that is spent less in Ontario than all other provinces in Canada. That's 20% lower than the other provinces. This gap under the current government continues to widen, and there's a consequence and a cost for that widening.

I want to reflect, just in the few minutes that I have left, Speaker, on when I worked in the charitable sector. I remember when former Premier McGuinty was raising minimum wages in Ontario for the first time in over nine years and as an executive team, we looked at the cost to our organization of that increase and we put it in our budget. We said, "We've got to do this. This is the law. We've got to raise the wages." What happened on the day that minimum wage was raised? I remember the confidence of those employees with a little bit more money in their pocket. In fact, the organization benefited from that confidence with the rise in productivity.

I also remember, because it was a retail environment, that people were coming in to our stores and our sales went up with the rise of the minimum wage because people had a little bit more money to spend that day. So when we take care of individuals in our communities—and we have to remember that some of these wages that we're capping are lower-wage earners. We have to remember that. This is the broader public sector. They're not all middle-income, high-wage earners.

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We have to do what we can to make sure that people can feed their families, put a roof over their head and have a life that they deserve in this province. That's why the people of Ontario elected us, sent us all here: to work on their behalf. Bill 124 is a caution, Speaker, because it caps wages and takes away some of those long-fought bargaining and negotiating rights that people have earned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Parsa: I'd like to take a moment to remind the House of how we arrived at this point. For 15 years, Ontarians had to rely on the Liberal government spending recklessly and unsustainably, jeopardizing the critical public services that they count on. Waste, scandal, and a total disregard for the fiscal health of the province: Those were the orders of the day.

Last year, for this reason and for many more, the people gave our government a clear mandate to ensure that those public services will be there for them when they need it—not just today and not just tomorrow, but for decades to come. We are committed to the goal of fiscal sustainability. I'm proud to say that Bill 124 represents a big step forward towards that goal. You see, Speaker, our government understands that Ontario taxpayers do not have bottomless pockets or endless patience. Every day, the hard-working people of this great province make difficult decisions in an effort to make ends meet. We, in government, must do the same. We all need to do our part to ensure the sustainability of public sector jobs and services.

When Ontarians went to the polls in 2018, they chose fiscal responsibility over reckless spending. They chose to confront our province's challenges head-on rather than ignoring them. They chose reality over fantasy, and they chose correctly.

Between 2003 and 2018, Ontario's debt increased nearly two and a half times under the previous government. Currently, our debt is at \$360 billion. To service the debt, it costs \$1.5 million every hour. That's \$36 million every day. That's over \$13 billion a year—and that's \$13 billion a year that is not going to the services people rely on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: This bill is another clear example of a pattern by this Conservative government, which is to cut first and ask questions later. When you talk to folks, everyday folks, they will tell you that life is getting really tough. It's harder to get by. But instead of investing in the kinds of services that everyday people need to get by, this Conservative government is bringing in cuts to those very services.

Let's look at the priorities of this government: cuts to education, jeopardizing the future of our children; cuts to our universities, including the dream of a university in Brampton so folks and young people could live and learn in our city; cuts to health care, a system that's already over capacity. Let's look at Brampton alone, where we have Peel Memorial health centre operating at 587% over

capacity; and Brampton Civic, our only hospital, operating at 100% over capacity.

This is the reality. These are the realities of these kind of cuts. They're making life tough for folks, and it's not acceptable. It's wrong. And that's why we in the NDP are going to be fighting these cuts at every single turn and angle. Whenever we see these cuts come forward, we'll be opposing them, because we believe in an Ontario where people aren't being left behind. We believe in an Ontario where folks are getting investment in education, where people are not being treated in hallways, like they are in Brampton, which is ground zero for hallway medicine.

That is the kind of province we should be fighting for. That's the kind of province and that's the kind of government that the people of Ontario deserve, where we create a province and government that take care of one another, where we invest in services and, more than anything, we create a province that doesn't leave anyone behind. That's the future we deserve and that's the future that, in the NDP, we're going to continue to fight for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments? The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. You're getting much better at that.

It hurts when I listen to members opposite talk about the budget and this bill. It has become a thought that we can just spend. I mean, it's easy to borrow money, to a point, and spend and spend without thinking where you might spend it strategically. I don't think it's strategic when we're spending \$36 million a day in interest alone. That's money that could do so much in the way of making life affordable.

The member opposite talked about life not being affordable, and he was right. Life has become unaffordable in this province. We've taken a mandate, and the Premier has taken a mandate, to make life affordable again.

Getting rid of the carbon tax—if people remember, not that many years ago, gas was up around \$1.30 or \$1.40 a litre. I didn't see people cutting back. So the five cents is nothing but a tax grab.

When he talks about what's worth cutting, yes, we have cut some things. We've cut tuition costs in this province by 10% for every student, and I don't hear that. When I hear the other cuts—I'd like to correct the member opposite, because it's very clear that we haven't cut health care; we've actually increased spending. We haven't cut education; we've increased spending on education.

Our hospitals: I just was part of an announcement where we increased local hospital spending for every hospital in my riding and, I would guess it's safe to say, every hospital in this province. In talking to the CEO, they were very happy with what we announced, saying that our spending is at the highest levels they've ever seen.

Yes, there is a problem still there. We have to fix the mess that has been there after 15 years of Liberal leadership in this province where we built no new net

long-term-care beds. That's a huge deficit, going ahead, when you think of the high percentage of seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I just would like to remind the government that I was in Nathan Phillips Square for the Raptors celebration, when two million people booed loudly about this government tearing apart the social contract and tearing apart affordability for average people, who are finding it increasingly difficult to live and who are being pushed increasingly into poverty. It is not okay. This bill is yet another move in that direction—and no thanks to the previous Liberal government, which cut a lot of money to things like social housing and which, in fact, kept the minimum wage from rising for such a long time that when it finally did, businesses were a little bit concerned about the jump—not the fact of minimum wage itself, but the jump and the rapidity of that. That should never have been allowed to happen.

The deficit, of course, is actually, in reality, half of what the government claims it is. In fact, this government has a tortured relationship with the facts. I think that that's an ongoing theme that we're having to deal with again and again. It includes those gas stickers, which claim erroneously that people are losing with the carbon tax when, in fact, the vast majority of them are getting more money back than they would in the absence of the carbon tax. Those stickers are in fact misconstruing reality to people, and the government needs to take responsibility for that.

Finally, as long as the Premier of this province is bent on pursuing a vanity legal court case on the carbon tax and spending egregious amounts of this province's taxpayer dollars, it has no right attacking the wages of lower-income health care and education workers. It's a disgrace.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That's the end of our time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Scarborough–Guildwood to wrap up this portion of the debate.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's always a privilege to rise in this House on behalf of the people of Scarborough–Guildwood, who elected me for the third time to represent them.

Many of the individuals in my community are going to be affected by Bill 124. They are front-line workers who work very hard to serve the people of this province. As I stand here today, I stand here because of them and on behalf of them.

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For this government to think about cutting services and programs through this bill, when they inherited from the former Liberal government a province that had the lowest unemployment rate, a province that was leading the G7 countries in GDP growth, a province with the highest foreign direct investments that were coming here to set up businesses—why? Because of the excellent labour force that we have in this province, with skilled and talented people and the investments that we were making in education, both at the elementary and secondary levels and at the post-secondary level.

Sadly, this government chose to make those cuts. When you cut student financial aid through OSAP, you're creating hardship on young people who are trying to get ahead in life. I've talked to many of those young people, many who live in my riding and across this province, who are really now struggling to pay for tuition. Your lowering of tuition might have helped very wealthy families and wealthy students, but your cuts, your \$750-million cut to OSAP and to post-secondary education, is hurting those young people who are struggling the most, from low- and middle-income families.

This government needs to rethink. The deficit is half of what you said it is, and with your manufacturing of an inflated deficit, it's even lower than that. There's no justification for this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good afternoon, Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair again.

I'm pleased to continue the debate on Bill 124, Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, future generations like my children, Neil and Melissa, and my beautiful granddaughters, Annette and Sophia. That's what we're talking about today: future generations.

President John Kennedy said shortly after his election in 1960, "When we got into office, the thing that surprised me most was to find that things were just as bad as we'd been saying they were." Speaker, I echo that same thought almost 60 years later. Between 2003 and 2018, Ontario's overall debt increased nearly two and a half times. This means that under the Liberal government, the province's debt nearly tripled over a 15-year tenure. The debt of \$360 billion is the highest of any sub-sovereign state in the world, and obviously, no other North American province or state is as indebted as we find ourselves here in Ontario. As my colleague the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill so starkly described, our provincial debt is larger than the individual gross domestic product of 75% of the world's countries.

For all that debt, one would assume that we could easily uncover some significant benefits. Sadly, it's quickly obvious that there are no rewards, none whatsoever, for the people of Ontario. Instead, we have congested hospitals and what is now called hallway health care. We have some of the worst traffic jams in North America and, yes, abysmal math scores in our public schools. In skilled labour, we have an estimated shortfall of 200,000 workers by 2032 in the construction industry alone.

Overriding all these negatives is our annual provincial deficit. Each year, even in an era of historically low interest rates, our yearly deficit is \$13 billion, over \$1 billion each and every month. How often, Speaker, must we remind ourselves of the value lost to so many of the provincial programs in each year simply because we're paying such huge interest on this massive debt? That is the backdrop to Bill 124 and the very reason why the President of the Treasury Board, the Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, immediately grasped the need to take thoughtful and dramatic action. Indeed, he's done that. He recognized that

to lead our province to recovery, we first had to restore sustainability to provincial finances. To do that, we had to make smarter choices.

Let me take you back to a year ago, Speaker. The government announced the results of its line-by-line review of government spending. In that process, the goal was simple: How can we, the government, spend money smarter and more effectively? That review, as the President of the Treasury Board has stated, identified bold ideas to transform both services and programs. Everything would be done to ensure sustainability, value for the dollars spent—that's what taxpayers expect—and that each program did what it was intended to do: benefit the people we have the privilege of representing.

Based on the findings of that report, coupled with especially huge spending increases between 2003 and 2018, our government moved to introduce some common-sense initiatives. These included the elimination of telephone landlines, placing a hiring freeze on non-essential staff and introducing new restrictions that better controlled expenses for public servants. As the Treasury Board president so aptly put it, "The drive to build a strong fiscal foundation is a province-building moment. It's an opportunity to do government differently"—and, Speaker, smarter.

You know, Speaker, that after an extensive consultation process, Bill 124 is one of the key outcomes. I would emphasize that it's been created in partnership with the public and stakeholders, as well as the employers and bargaining agents in the public sector.

Turning to the public sector for a moment, public sector compensation represents approximately half of all expenditures by the government of Ontario: \$72 billion annually, employing one million people across multiple sectors. That is one of the principal reasons why the government commenced this new series of consultations, focusing specifically on public sector bargaining agents. Again, it was a collaborative process. We did not enter that process with preconceptions. We challenged everyone to look at what we could do creatively together to alter the landscape.

The government introduced the legislation we're discussing today in June 2019, legislation that would enable the government to manage compensation growth in a way that respects and allows for reasonable wage increases. Within that context, we knew that we had to protect—as we have—front-line services. The legislation provides a framework that would allow up to 1% increases to salaries and overall compensation for the public service in Ontario, both unionized and non-unionized. It would not impact existing agreements and would last for a period of three years.

Speaker, the legislation does not create a wage freeze, a rollback or job cuts. The approach we've taken is both fair and time-limited. The government committed to continue the consultation process during the summer months. I know that many MPPs, I'm sure including yourself, ensured that their constituents across all sectors were part of that consultation process. We again challenged all stakeholders who participated and asked them

to review the proposed measures and provide additional feedback. The resulting information included questions, comments, ideas and proposals, all of which allowed the government to respond and, more importantly, allowed us to maintain a dialogue on what the legislation did and did not mean.

1640

That's an important point; let's stay with that just for a moment. We listened, and we have continued to listen and engage. Why is that level of engagement so important? We wanted to ensure that all dimensions of the dialogue had been analyzed, and in doing so, we asked ourselves several questions: What is the policy issue? Does the issue necessitate legislative amendments? Are there other impacts or considerations? Can the issue be dealt with in the absence of change to the legislation? And what other steps could be taken to address the issue?

As you know, Speaker, it's easy to speak in broad brush strokes about consultation, but if one is doing it well, with drive, focus and commitment, consultation takes real effort. All MPPs here in the Legislature have committed to that effort. And as we also all know, effective change only comes from that level of effort.

If passed, the legislation would allow for reasonable wage increases while protecting the province's front-line services, restoring the province's financial position and, critically important, respecting taxpayer dollars. It would put reasonable, time-limited requirements on new compensation increases for unionized and non-unionized employees in Ontario's public sector while maintaining existing opportunities for pay increases, such as movement through salary ranges. Additionally, Ontario's public sector employees would maintain eligibility for compensation increases and be able to negotiate terms and conditions.

Since being elected, the government has made great strides in restoring sustainability to the province's finances. At the same time, we understand that we need to protect front-line services and public sector jobs while ensuring a strong and sustainable fiscal situation now and for future generations, as the bill was properly named.

Through this legislation, we're proposing a fair, consistent and time-limited approach to moderating compensation that applies across the provincial public sector. By taking steps to ensure that increases in public sector compensation reflect the fiscal realities that I've laid out earlier in my remarks, the government is working to protect jobs, workers and vital services, now and going forward, as the government continues to tackle Ontario's massive debt.

Our government will continue to work with all public sector employers, employees and bargaining agents to protect what matters most. This legislation, if passed, would apply to bargaining and non-bargaining employees, managers and leadership whose compensation is not otherwise moderated across the provincial public sector.

As drafted, the proposed legislation will 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 broader public sector executives covered by the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014, whose wages have been frozen for much of the last decade.

Speaker, I'd now like to move to how the act would enable the government to manage compensation growth. The proposed legislation would set requirements that could allow for up to 1% increases to salary and overall compensation for unionized and non-unionized employees in the Ontario public sector. As stated earlier, the provisions, if passed, would apply for a period of three years upon the expiry of existing collective agreements. 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 or effect or cause any public sector job losses. Public sector employees would still be able to progress through salary ranges, be eligible for increases and be able to negotiate terms and conditions including compensation. The proposed legislation, if passed, would limit future annual wage increases to the maximum of 1% per year for a three-year period across the provincial public sector.

Now, Speaker, after the completion of internal deliberations and the public consultation process, several amendments have been brought forward and will be dealt with at the committee stage, should the proposed legislation pass second reading. The amendments include an exemption for native communities and organizations from the application of the legislation. These communities are unique within the public sector mosaic and should be treated differently.

Another amendment would, if passed, allow exceptions for employers moving to joint pension plans and create regulatory power to add exceptions in other specified circumstances. Again, long-term cost savings are the goal of the exceptions.

Another of the amendments deals with agreements reached in good faith prior to June 5, 2019. This amendment recognizes the need to protect agreements reached in good faith before the Legislature has had the opportunity to consider this bill.

The goal of our government continues to be the restoration of the financial accountability and sustainability of our province. The proposed legislation is but one piece of the total work, but an important piece. Most importantly, we have listened and we continue to listen. That is why, should this bill pass second reading, we are proposing the amendments that I outlined.

The Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act is an absolute major step in our plan to address the long-term financial sustainability of the province. We are shattering the silos and taking a holistic approach to the analysis of how the government functions. Our focus is results-driven as we examine the Ontario public service and the broader public sector generally. Finding efficiencies, rooting out duplication and maximizing the quality of government services at every opportunity is the absolute ultimate goal.

Now, I think what's clear is Bill 124 significantly and positively impacts the restoration of trust for Ontarians. This is not only smart, but necessary. It's why the people of Ontario elected this government. We have a plan that addresses the deficit and we are committed to following it. It is a plan that enables us to continue the work of building Ontario together. What this bill will do is help restore the province to fiscal sustainability and demonstrate respect for taxpayer dollars. Clearly, we find ourselves in a situation where that did not occur, and that is the very reason we are here today: to move forward and take a measured approach to fiscal sustainability.

Again, I want to repeat some of the key facts that I said at the very beginning of my comments. Over 15 years, the Liberals more than doubled Ontario's debt load. Currently, Ontario owes \$1.5 billion in interest on its debt every hour. That means we're paying \$36 million every single day to sustain this debt without paying a penny back. Public sector compensation represents roughly half of all government expenditures, totalling over \$72 billion annually. The proposed legislation, Bill 124, will enable the government to manage public sector compensation growth in a reasonable, fair, sustainable way.

1650

Now, I talked at the beginning of my comments about the name of the bill: Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations. All of the actions that I just referred to in my comments will move to a point where future generations, whether it's my daughter, Melissa, my son, Neil, and my granddaughters Sophia and Annette, and everyone else's children and granddaughters—this is what this bill is designed to do. It's the future of our province. Together, we have an opportunity to build our future together. Let's take that opportunity not only today but in subsequent days as we continue the debate on Bill 124.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I have a suggestion for this Conservative government. Instead of freezing the wages of hard-working folks, freeze the profits of billion-dollar insurance companies—billion-dollar car insurance companies—that are making profits hand over fist off the backs of Ontarians. Folks are already struggling in Ontario. There are some households that pay more for car insurance than for their household mortgage. Communities in Brampton are already paying the highest car insurance rates in this country despite having clear records. Billion-dollar insurance companies have already overcharged Ontarians over \$4.5 billion despite making record profits. But instead of going after these companies, this Conservative government would rather go after hard-working Ontarians. Speaker, this is unacceptable.

Ontario deserves better, and that's why we in the NDP are going to stand up for Ontarians. We're going to stand up to these super-rich companies and we're going to fight for everyday folks, to bring down rates and fight for a more fair Ontario. But instead, we see a complete lack of priorities by this government. Instead of going after the super-rich, they're going after everyday folks—folks who are struggling already to make ends meet.

Now, let's look at the situation in Brampton. Just by virtue of living in Brampton—it's now a punishment to live there because you will be overcharged rates despite the fact that your driving record is clear. You take one individual who lives in Brampton with one car and a clear rate—they pay one car insurance rate. You take them to another community outside of Brampton; sometimes that rate will drop as much as 50%. This is unacceptable. We need a priority from this government, and we need to be pushing this government to ensure that they're putting Ontarians before super-rich corporations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to remind everybody in the House that we're spending \$35 million a day on interest on the debt and people are furious. They're coming to us, not just on this side of the House, but to all of us. All members here hear from their constituents with their concerns and what we could do to make things more affordable, more efficient and just generally a better life for everybody in Ontario.

One of the people I heard from just this week, Avi Lipton, is concerned about the two fares. He wants fare integration. People go north of Steeles and it's a separate transit system, so they're expected to pay another fare. You could imagine somebody is going from a few blocks south of Steeles to a few blocks north of Steeles and they have to pay two fares. So, yes, we agree that we want to help people. We would all love to see fare integration; we would all love to see lower costs for commuters who take public transit. We would like to see the Yonge subway get built up in my area, up in Richmond Hill.

We'd like to see a lot of things, but when we hear that \$35 million a day is being spent on interest on the debt, I think that most of us start to understand what the problem is. We need that money. We need it for health care, we need it for education and we need it for infrastructure, so we need to get the deficit and the debt under control. We understand that.

The member from Whitby spoke beautifully, and before him, we heard the member from Scarborough—Guildwood from the Liberal team that's here. The way she spoke, she made it sound like if we just give people more money—that we should somehow borrow and give people more money—they'll have money to go shopping, and they'll pay higher taxes, and that somehow is going to boost us. That type of logic is just unreasonable; I think that is the word I would use. It doesn't make sense on anybody's books. Any accountant would cry if they heard that type of logic, that somehow, by borrowing and having the money to spend, we're going to end up with more money in the long run. That's probably why we're in this mess, because that was the type of logic that was driving the decision-making.

We all need to now focus on what we can do to make life affordable, to get those efficiencies going. We're looking forward to discussing a lot of initiatives that our team is working on in terms of digital and smart technology.

I think this is a very exciting turning point for the province of Ontario to work and make sure that the money is not to pay interest on the debt that the Liberals accumulated but, instead, going to what matters most.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Hearing the Ontario government speak about their concerns with debt and interest payments—you've got one solution. This government has one solution, but this government is also ignoring other very sensible solutions that are out there. One could be to raise taxes on the rich or increase our corporate tax rate. Currently, our corporate tax rate is one of the lowest in North America. What this government has done instead is reduce taxes on the wealthy, and that contributes to the considerable interest payments that we're paying today.

What also concerns me is that when this government talks about addressing our budget issues, the plan that is outlined here in Bill 124 affects people, front-line workers, who are really struggling to get by, and many of those workers live in my riding of University–Rosedale. They include people like sessional instructors who work at the University of Toronto, people who are making very little, many of them struggling to do their PhDs and beyond. They are the backbone of the University of Toronto, and they can't afford to live in my riding because the rent is so expensive. They're the people who are going to be affected by Bill 124.

The Toronto Western Hospital—I was just there recently—is one of the busiest hospitals in Ontario. People there literally jog because they are so crowded. There are cleaners and nurses and assistants there who are going to be affected by Bill 124.

Then we have teaching assistants at the public schools in my riding, people who have very little job security and who earn very little—\$36,000 to \$40,000 a year. They'll be affected by Bill 124.

Instead of creating a more fair economy, this bill creates a more unequal economy, where it cuts taxes and then justifies not increasing wages for people who really need it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Deepak Anand: It's always a pleasure to speak in the House. Well said, to the member from Whitby. I'd like to echo what you said.

The pressing question that we have right now is why we are even introducing Bill 124. Bill 124 is an interim solution to a big problem of debt. It is an interim solution to a problem: We cannot keep borrowing from our children. Time and time again, we heard from all the members that Ontario is paying \$36 million on its debt every day. Mr. Speaker, just in one hour, we pay \$1.5 million, and that's unacceptable.

As a government, it is our responsibility to take action to restore fiscal sustainability and protect the vital services Ontarians rely on. Every time we borrow more than we bring in, we are adding to the interest payment, thereby taking away investment from the important services.

Bill 124 will enable the government to manage public sector compensation growth in a reasonable and balanced way. Mr. Speaker, I used the word “growth.” The bill would not impose a wage freeze. There is no wage rollback, and there are no 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. Bill 124 would manage compensation—allow wage increase while tackling Ontario's growing debt, at the same time respecting front-line workers, taxpayers and services we rely on.

1700

Mr. Speaker, as the debt gets lowered, we all should be proud of this measured approach. We value the important role the public sector plays, and I'd like to thank everyone for doing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I'll return now to the member from Whitby to wrap up this part of the debate.

Mr. Lorne Coe: My thanks to all MPPs who provided comments, both my colleagues on the government side and the official opposition.

Speaker, we talked about the consultation process. Out of that consultation process, people from across all sectors told us this: They wanted us to find efficiencies. They wanted us to root out duplication. And they certainly wanted us to maximize the quality of government services at every opportunity. They told us unequivocally that that should be our ultimate goal. This is not only smart, but it's absolutely necessary.

We have a plan. Yes, we have a plan that addresses the deficit, and we're committed to following it. And it's a plan that enables us to continue the work of building Ontario together. That's what people told us during the consultation process: They wanted to stand up, they wanted to be a part of rebuilding Ontario together. That's what they told us. They told us that because they believe it would help to restore the province to a position of fiscal sustainability and at the same time demonstrate absolute respect for taxpayers' dollars. That's why we're here again today debating this bill: to move forward together and take a measured approach to fiscal sustainability in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate today and to bring the voices of the good people of Waterloo to the floor of this Legislature. I've had a lot of time to gather those voices over the last 144 days that we were shut out of this place of work and place of law.

I've been interested to hear some of the language that the government members are using, because we hear a lot of language around moral authority and moral responsibility and respecting taxpayers. I think that there's this general consensus for the people of this province that this government has forgotten that they are working for the people of Waterloo and they need to respect the people of Ontario as we move forward in this new fiscal reality.

It is true that the former Liberal government has left this province in dire straits and they made decisions that put the people of this province last. I bring this to the floor of the Legislature so that my colleagues on the other side can learn from that experience, because already we have seen a pattern of behaviour, of decisions, that is very similar to the former Liberal government, and I'm going to get into that.

I've been reflecting on the comments that the Treasury Board president made about Bill 124, ironically named Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector—you will not be able to protect the public sector if you do not have the people doing the work. We are ultimately talking about sustainable public services. You do not maintain those levels of services by disrespecting the very people who are on the front lines doing the work. Yesterday, we heard about what kind of jobs those are: bus drivers, nurses, teachers, educators, early childhood educators—the very people who build this province up. There is a disconnect that we continually see from this government when they talk about respecting tax dollars. Clearly, they have forgotten that we are ultimately talking about the citizens of this province.

Yesterday the Treasury Board president adopted an attitude like, "Don't worry. This is going to be a piece of legislation which will not disrupt those important relationships around the collective bargaining tables already." This piece of legislation was dropped on the second-last day of the Legislature in the last session. It has been hanging over every negotiation's discussion across this province for the last five months, and because we were shut out of this Legislature so that the Premier could hide during the federal election, we have been denied our role and our responsibility in addressing the impact of Bill 124.

I want to bring to the attention of the legislators in this House that there are now many legal opinions about Bill 124. One of the major themes—because it's accurate—is that "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."

I have to say that if the Liberals had brought forward a piece of legislation like this when my colleagues were on this side of the House, you would have been outraged that a piece of legislation like this was being tabled.

Bill 124 also provides that the power of the minister to void collective agreements or arbitration awards is "to be exercised in the minister's 'sole discretion.'" Never would a PC member that I had served with for the last seven years—would I ever think that a member would support that kind of power going into one ministry, having the sole discretion to override any legally binding collective agreement in the province of Ontario? It defies logic.

"Bill 124 also contains a number of provisions designed to prevent persons from seeking legal remedies" for losses

that result from the operation of the law. Specifically, Bill 124 provides that no complaint under the Employment Standards Act may be made or investigated in respect of any provision of Bill 124. I'm going to tell you why this is so concerning. There have been a growing number of workers across this province who do not see the Ford government as friendly, as worker-friendly. They see it as very problematic that legislation that comes through this place continually undermines their rights as workers or even walks back any advances that they have made across this province. To further that point, Bill 124 removes any potential avenues for redress for workers and unions. Of course, these rights are clearly abrogated by the bill's overriding restrictions on the salary and compensation increases that can be negotiated.

We're not just talking about moderation here. We're not just talking about fiscal restraint. This goes way beyond being hawkish, Conservative hawks across the province. It has to do with the fact that not only are you limiting the terms and negotiations that are being discussed around those collective bargaining tables, but you are undermining any redress that people would have. These rights have been fought for across this province by workers for the entire history of this province, so when we read this kind of language, it's impossible not to consider how far back we are going with regard to worker safety, for instance, in the province of Ontario.

My colleague raised the recent death of the worker at Fiera Foods, a temp worker for five years. Temp workers used to be 30 days or 15 days, not five years. That's not the proper definition of what a temp worker is. I have to say, when I think of all of those years that Fiera Foods got corporate welfare from Liberals, from the federal government, from the provincial government, and five workers have died at that factory in this province—politicians showed up at that factory for photo ops and to present a cheque, and to date, five temp workers have died at that factory.

1710

I always talk about Amina Diaby, who was 23 years old, and who received so little training that when her hijab was caught in the machinery at the factory, the workers around her didn't even know how to stop the machine, and that is how she was strangled. Safety information, safety orientations, proper training of workers and safety protocols matter. There is no reason why a company like this should ever receive any government money. I understand that Mr. Ford was about to do a photo op there on October 15 and was advised not to.

The political environment around worker rights in the province of Ontario has never been so important. So when you have a piece of legislation like Bill 124, which explicitly gives sole discretion to one ministry to override the terms and conditions of worker rights in the province of Ontario, as New Democrats—everyday citizens have genuine concerns about this piece of legislation.

The language that the government used also had to do with "moral imperative." The debt is unconscionable, as they have pointed out. I have to say, there are ways for this

government to save money. There are Auditor General reports dating back the last 10 years that have tangible, measurable courses of action that would save the government money. It's right there. It's right there as a matter of public record. The Financial Accountability Officer has also made recommendations to this government around cost savings.

One area that I would like to talk about around the moral imperative has to be the revenue-generating tool around pricing pollution and tackling the climate crisis with a price on carbon. The cap-and-trade system: The FAO reported just in October that the Ontario government would lose \$3 billion in revenue by cancelling the cap-and-trade system. Three billion dollars: That's a lot of money, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the cost savings around public sector compensation and ensuring that a bus driver only gets an extra \$1.25 an hour versus \$3 billion in revenue that should be coming into this Legislature—you can't even compare those two numbers. I suspect, actually, on the cap-and-trade, that the number will be even higher, given that in 2018-19, the government lost \$1.9 billion in revenue compared to 2017-18.

Not only has this revenue been lost, but the government has spent millions of dollars and valuable time in court fighting the federal government's carbon pricing backstop. I want to point out that the Supreme Court has already determined that the federal government has the jurisdiction, the right and the constitutional responsibility to put a price on carbon. So Mr. Ford, the Premier of this province, is fighting a fight that he will lose, and intentionally—with knowledge—wasting \$30 million. Imagine if those millions of dollars were instead set aside to ensure that government employees received fair wages for their work. Imagine putting the people who deliver public services first in the province of Ontario.

Fighting the climate crisis is also a moral imperative. Is this government doing anything about it? No. I can say, with great assurance, that the government bill that's coming forward from the Minister of the Environment has a day dedicated to litter reduction, a clean-up-litter day. The problems that are facing our climate—we are in a climate crisis. Scientists have confirmed it. Legislation and regulations should be informed by science. Having a day to reduce litter? Great idea, but a climate crisis solution it is not.

The people of this province have spoken loud and clear every Friday for the last year for climate crisis action. Inaction on the climate crisis is irresponsible. You have no targets. You have no plan right now except for a day to clean up litter.

I have to say, the economists have weighed in. I'm very happy to report that Mark Carney, the Bank of England governor, has said that "companies and industries that are not moving towards zero-carbon emissions will be punished by investors and go bankrupt." Mark Carney has also said that it is "possible that the global transition needed to tackle the climate crisis could result in an abrupt financial collapse." Inaction is economically irresponsible.

Finally, I'd like to say that failing to act would have severe consequences. We are actually seeing insurance companies weigh in heavily because their bottom line is being compromised. Climate change—a climate crisis—and climate inaction is bad for business. Someone should put that on a T-shirt over on that side of the House.

This is James Gorman, who is the CEO of Morgan Stanley, one of the largest banks in Britain. He says, "If we don't have a planet, we're not going to have a very good financial system." Ultimately, that is true, and fairly obvious.

While we are actually on the topic of a climate crisis and the inaction that this government is taking, we could be saving hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies by ending the oil and gas subsidies that the province of Ontario distributes right here every budget year. The International Institute for Sustainable Development recently released a report that states that Ontario provides nearly \$700 million in public subsidies for the fossil fuel industry. At a moment in time when the effects of the climate crisis are being felt more and more every day, we should not be subsidizing the industry that has most significantly contributed to climate change. Now that is a moral imperative, Mr. Speaker.

So we have the government saying one thing. They are fighting the debt by legislating a pay cut for public sector workers, because if you are not compensating workers at the rate of inflation—when they sat on this side of the House, they used to believe in the rate of inflation as a real number—then that is a cut. But when you are legislating a pay cut for public sector workers because it is a "moral imperative" to fight for our fiscal health, but they ignore the multiple ways that the government can address the province's fiscal health—talking about moral imperatives, let's talk about some of the missed opportunities that the government could act on in a moral way.

It's like this government has presented this as the solution to a problem, when it is nowhere close to the solution to the larger problem that we are experiencing in this province. It does beg the question: What are the real priorities of the Ford government? So far, we have seen the government make choices, and they've called them "smart choices." But I have to say, spending \$30 million in court to fight a losing battle against the carbon tax or the pricing of pollution is not a smart choice. It isn't a smart choice for the economy, it isn't a smart choice for the environment, and it's actually costing taxpayers a great deal of money.

The government is willing to spend up to \$100 million by breaking the Beer Store contract so that we can buy Pabst Blue Ribbon in the corner store. Mr. Speaker, this is not a priority for the people of this province. A \$100-million price tag to ensure that, as the Premier said at the Toyota plant last spring, you can go down after your shift to the Short Stop and get yourself a Coors Light. There is such a disconnect between what the real priorities are, the moral imperative of decisions that need to be made in this Legislature and the actions of this government to date.

So what other decisions are they making? They've ripped out the charging stations at GO stations. Electric

vehicles: When I was at Toyota—I mean, they would welcome an open discussion around how to take the lead on electric vehicles, but do you know what you need for electric vehicles? You need charging stations. What did this government do? You ripped them out of GO stations. So you are actually putting up barriers to commuting.

What else did they do? They're currently in court right now fighting the midwives of the province of Ontario. The midwives won a Human Rights Tribunal case. This was a hangover from the Liberals, I'll give you that, where they have been disproportionately discriminated against because of their profession.

1720

We are actually seeing a trend where this government is very focused on female professions. When you talk about the public sector and the medical profession, the nursing, the child care, the PSWs, this is predominantly women who are in these roles. You are indicating, through a piece of oppressive legislation, through Bill 124, that women should pay the biggest price for that fiscal mismanagement that the Liberals brought to the province of Ontario.

I have to say that when you look at the equity lens of how policy affects the people we're serving, you are disproportionately punishing women through Bill 124 and through this process. Be mindful of that, please, as you go forward.

What else are they doing? Well, they've spent some money on not-so-sticky stickers, but that pales when compared to the \$3 billion in lost revenue through the cap-and-trade decision and the cancelling of that.

And, of course—how can we forget?—this government pulled us here through midnight sittings and went to court to cut the Toronto city council in half—a directive that has not saved the city of Toronto any money whatsoever. It has, however, compromised the services that the people of Toronto depend on.

What we have here is a government that is willing to bring in a public sector compensation moderation agenda, with overriding powers to the minister that will compromise the confidence that the people of this province have in government itself. I can tell you that that is also very bad for business.

Then, through it all, we have a Premier who has come out of hiding and has said to us, as a matter of public record, that the people of this province just “want us to keep going.” You know what? The people of this province don't want you to keep going in this manner. The people of this province want the Premier to stop, drop and roll, but mostly just stop, Mr. Speaker, because the harm that this government has already caused the people of this province in the 16 months is real; it is tangible.

You heard stories and questions about it this morning in this House, in our health care system, in our education system. I truly don't understand why this government is so determined to intentionally hurt the people that you are serving, to compromise and undermine their value, and to disrespect the public servants who deliver public services when the theme that we are hearing—and I'm sure you are

hearing it as well—is that those public services are good jobs. They contribute to the economy.

Ultimately, we have to remember who we work for and not adopt a philosophy that everything should be thrown out with the bathwater because the Liberals left us in dire straits. Make smarter decisions for the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member from Waterloo for her remarks.

Mr. Speaker, let me just read the title of this particular bill and maybe help the member understand what it says. Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019: That's exactly what it says, Mr. Speaker. What we're trying to do with this piece of legislation is protect possibly tens of thousands of jobs that may be at risk unless we take action.

The member talks about a lot of the initiatives our government is taking, and how they are possibly wrong-headed and aren't in the best interests of the province. We communicated these policies very clearly during the campaign last year and received a strong mandate. Things like the carbon tax—which, of course, the member mentioned that we're fighting the federal government on—absolutely. If the member remembers that correctly, our party was absolutely clear, and actually, one of the main planks of our platform that we ran on was that we would eliminate a carbon tax, which we did. That was a promise our government made, our party made, and we took action immediately after getting elected and we delivered on that promise. Of course, the federal Liberal government decided to impose their own carbon tax, which we're fighting. We're fighting because that was part of the mandate that was given to us by Ontarians by electing a majority PC government and sending us to this House to protect their interests.

Mr. Speaker, unless we act on some of these initiatives right now, there's a huge potential that tens of thousands of people's jobs will be at risk in the future, and we will not let that happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to thank the member for Waterloo for giving a great depiction of what this bill truly means to the people of this province. I'm going to give an example of a woman that I know who is a developmental service worker and works for one of our organizations that's quite popular in this province. This woman has worked for them for 26 years. She works in a home that has four individuals living in the home—very high needs, wheelchair transfers, a lot of non-verbal. She needs to take care of their medication. She needs to make sure she gets them to doctor appointments. She needs to make sure that she shops for their birthdays, and everything that it takes to make sure that these people have a quality of living. Like I said, she has done this for 26 years because she truly loves the people she takes care of. Can you imagine, Speaker, how much she makes as a team

leader, which is the highest position underneath management, with all of the responsibility? She makes a whopping \$22.58 an hour.

If we think that this is proper, then we have a serious problem. The Liberals have allowed this to happen for many years, but this government, who says that they're for the people, cannot possibly think that \$22 an hour is an appropriate wage for a person who works within our public sector and takes care of our most vulnerable population. There is something seriously wrong with the priorities of this government when they think that they need to give increases to deputy ministers and they need to create new parliamentary assistants and create new associate ministers with all of the offices and all of the administrative costs on top of it, and yet we're paying people who take care of our most vulnerable people in a most pitiful form.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I would also like to take a moment to speak about an issue that has been brought up here many times: the 14% increase to deputy ministers. It's true, Speaker. The order-in-council shows the minimum salary increase for deputy ministers from \$205,000 on April 1, 2016—by 14%—to \$234,000 on October 1, 2017. But, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to remind the members opposite that our government took office in June 2018. Our government order-in-council last month kept the minimum salary unchanged at \$234,000. It is true that under the previous government, as the cost of living skyrocketed, deputy ministers received automatic pay increases, regardless of their performance, but we put an end to that. In fact, one of the first actions we took as a government was to cancel the scheduled automatic pay increase that would have seen deputy ministers' salaries rise by 11%. Instead, we put a system in place that puts taxpayers first. Under our new pay-for-performance, modest pay increases are provided, and only to leaders who deliver progress towards key government objectives. The reality is, since we have come into government there has been a modest increase of only 2% to the upper salary range of the deputy ministers, and that is only for those deputies performing at a level of excellence.

In addition, funding has been provided and costs are being managed within existing allowances. This ensures that all compensation adjustments more than offset the efficiencies and savings. It has also helped to end the culture of entitlement and create a new culture of excellence. The taxpayer of Ontario expects more from us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Speaker, the Conservative government has no problem giving money away to the super-rich and cutting programs that fight climate change. They have no problem wasting millions of dollars of taxpayer money in pointless court cases to stop green initiatives to fight climate change, but the Conservatives have a problem giving working people a break. Instead of fighting working people like the Conservatives are, these

are the initiatives and these are the priorities that the NDP would put forward.

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Number one, we would be fighting the climate crisis that we are facing right now. We've all seen the footage. From the fires in California to the burning of the Amazon, we are truly facing the greatest threat that humanity has ever faced in our existence right now. That is where our priorities should be.

Expanding health care: It is so unjust right now that there are folks who cannot afford the medication that they need to get better. There are stories of individuals who are cutting their pills in half to try to make ends meet because they can't afford their medication. This is wrong.

Dental care: There's such a huge backlog in our medical system right now because people can't afford the dental care that they need, and so when they do get sick because of something that could be prevented by going to a dentist early, they end up in our emergency rooms.

And, ultimately, fighting student debt: Money should not be a barrier for our young generation in accessing the education that they need so that they can be their best and brightest selves.

These are the priorities of a progressive government. These are the priorities that the NDP would be fighting for, but instead we have a Conservative government that is putting the super-rich in front of working people. That's wrong and that's something we're going to stand against.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We return now to the member from Waterloo to summarize what she has just heard.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks very much to the members from Milton, Hamilton Mountain, Brampton East and Mississauga-Lakeshore. I would also just like to point out that there was a cabinet shuffle this summer. You'll remember this. This summer there was a cabinet shuffle which increased the size of cabinet and added assistant and associate ministers and new parliamentary assistants.

They increased the number of parliamentary assistants by 72%, from 18 to 31; they make 13.7% more than the rest of the rest of the MPPs in this place. They added five associate ministers; they make 19.2% more than a regular MPP does. We have been frozen for 11 years. 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.

Remember that trust is a very important thing to the people of this province. When that member says that 2% is very modest, and then he's asking the front-line workers in this province to accept a generous 1%, that is a serious disconnect that this government has with the people of this province.

I would argue that there are smarter choices that this government can make around where they allocate money. For instance, I would rather see an elderly person have access to \$150 worth of insulin a month than that elderly person ending up in a hospital bed at \$1,500 a day.

What I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleagues on the other side of the floor is that Bill 124 is

an overreach of power. It will undermine the confidence that the people of this province have not only in this government and in this Legislature, but in our very democracy, and it is a dangerous piece of legislation that cannot be amended and should not be supported by any individual in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I recognize the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: You got it, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to see you in the chair today. Welcome back, everybody. It's really nice to see even the folks across the aisle.

Let's get right into it. I'm the last speaker of the day. I'm going to close it out with a bang. I just want to say that this piece of government legislation that we are debating here today, Bill 124, the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019, sends a clear message to the people of Ontario. It sends the message that our government is committed to fulfilling the mandate we etched out just over a year ago. Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, Bill 124 reflects our government's vision to be responsible but also fair in reversing the misguided plan of the previous Liberal government and putting this province back on a path to prosperity.

Our government recognizes that the role the public sector plays is vital to delivering services that Ontarians rely on. We have moved quickly to protect what matters most to the people of this province, and Bill 124 is part of that.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that I have to remind the members of this House, but it's important to highlight that our province continues to pay \$36 million in interest on our debt every single day. Can you imagine for a moment what our government could do for families across this beautiful province with that \$36 million a day if it was not needed to service the debt? We need to find efficiencies wherever necessary in order to not only pay down the debt, but get our economy back on track. Bill 124 is a reasonable proposal and a fair proposal that helps achieve this.

Before I delve deeper into the nitty-gritty of the sensible reforms that this legislation will enact, I want to highlight some of what I have been up to since assuming my new role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry over this past summer. I wasted no time getting up to speed on my new portfolio and acting on my mandate. I have received a wide range of briefings on a number of policy issues that are key to my portfolio. Under my mandate is everything hunting- and fishing-related, and I could not be happier to be taking care of those things for the people of this province. I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that as an outdoorsman myself, I am very excited to be overseeing wildlife management.

Allow me to briefly highlight some of my work thus far. On the invasive species front, I took an informative trip down to Nashville, Tennessee—don't worry, this is all going to get tied in; I'm not straying too far off the topic. I was in Nashville with my fellow representatives on the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly to attend

the National Conference of State Legislatures, and I made the most of my time in Nashville by also conducting business related to my new ministry portfolio. My office reached out to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency and scheduled a meeting with their assistant executive director, Bobby Wilson. This was a very constructive meeting and allowed me to gain valuable insight from what the TWRA is doing with respect to how their jurisdiction is mitigating some invasive species that have the potential impact to be here in Ontario.

One thing I learned early on in business before becoming a representative of this government is that new ideas and innovations are constants to success. One of the ways that we can boost—sorry, that we can best open our doors to innovation is by being open to new ideas. It is in keeping with this philosophy that our government has exercised such a high degree of transparency in its policy formation and process. We have engaged in a wide reins of—blah, sorry. Apologies. It's nice to be back, but it's been a bit of a time since I've had to deliver a sermon.

We've engaged in a wide range of consultations on reducing red tape with a vast array of stakeholders from across Ontario. This principle informed my visit to Tennessee, and it informed the most recent proposals issued by the ministry on our new baitfish and big game management files. The live bait industry has long made a significant contribution to the economy of this province, but it is also an industry that suffered continuously under the neglect of the previous Liberal government, and we are fixing that now. Upon forming government, we acted quickly to undertake consultations with bait operators from all regions of this province to gain a strong grasp of what has been mitigating their success in recent years.

Building off the work of the new parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Toby Barrett—I hope it's okay that I mentioned his name—our ministry recently introduced a proposal for changes to the regulation of the baitfish industry of Ontario. The aim of this proposal is to make the rules for operators fairer and in keeping with the long-term interests of the industry.

We recently also issued postings on the Environmental Registry regarding our big game management plan. Our proposed changes are centred on moose management, and moose management is something very near and dear to my heart. It is very important that the Ontario government listen to the voices of hunters and outdoor advocates across this province, because they know best where the inconsistencies in regulatory design lie. I truly believe that in this government and in the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the Honourable John Yakabuski, hunters and trappers have found a government that listens.

After a year of thorough consultations with stakeholders, our government's Big Game Management Advisory Committee, or BG MAC committee, issued its findings to the ministry. Using the insight of the BG MAC report, our ministry released a proposal that answers both to the interests of those hunters and sustainability. That is ultimately what hunting is all about in this province:

conservation. I'm in favour of conservation for the same reason why I am in favour of Bill 124: because, as a member of this government, I have a vested interest in this generation and those to come in protecting what matters most.

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Over the recess, I had the opportunity to hear from constituents in Kitchener–Conestoga. Whether it was at fall fairs, at community festivals or in my Elmira office, I heard time and time again that they are extremely concerned about the province's debt. They understand that you cannot get another credit card to pay for the interest on your debt. They expect the government to act responsibly with their hard-earned tax dollars. Without taking action to right the fiscal course of the province, we cannot take the necessary steps to tackle hallway health care, repair our schools or ensure the safety of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, every hour, we are spending \$1.5 million on interest payments to service the province's debt—\$1.5 million every hour—all while our schools wait for repairs, family and friends are treated in hospital hallways, and commuters spend hours stuck in gridlock. We are committed to getting Ontario back to balance through legislation like this. We are making significant progress.

Along with my regional colleagues the members for Kitchener South–Hespeler and Cambridge, I have welcomed various ministers and the Premier to Waterloo region to make significant announcements—funding announcements only possible because our government has taken deliberate actions to tackle our deficit and debt so we can protect what matters most. This included hosting the Minister of Infrastructure and the Premier in Kitchener in July to announce that our government had approved the region of Waterloo's full slate of public transit infrastructure projects through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program—17 out of 17; that's not bad, Mr. Speaker—projects worth \$60 million, including a brand-new \$25-million bus facility on the border of Waterloo—which I'm sure the member from Waterloo appreciates as well—and the township of Woolwich. That month, I was happy to announce that our government was approving the \$3.2-million reconstruction of the Bridge Street bridge in Wilmot township, which complemented an approval earlier this year for the \$1.2-million Glasgow Street bridge rehabilitation project in Woolwich.

July was a very busy month, as I also welcomed the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health to St. Jacobs to announce \$1.2 million in additional funding for midwifery services, including \$231,912 for the St. Jacobs Midwives to support their expert client-centred care. As a parent and recipient of this primary care on four occasions, this funding and further study on allowing midwives to prescribe more medication is an exciting step forward. As an aside, I'm looking forward to hosting the Association of Ontario Midwives lunch tomorrow here at Queen's Park.

In August, we added 50 additional trains to the Kitchener GO line. With five new trains operating from the Kitchener GO station, this is beyond the 25% increase

in services we implemented in January, including a mid-afternoon and night service to Toronto and midday and late-night trips heading back to Kitchener.

Recent expansions to our rush hour and off-peak service in both directions are moving us toward two-way all-day GO service, a commitment our government intends to deliver on ahead of schedule, a commitment only possible because we are debating a bill today that puts Ontario back on track towards fiscal sustainability.

In September, I visited the hard-working staff and volunteers at Community Care Concepts in St. Jacobs to announce \$1.24 million for expanding home and community care, including 800,000 for the Grand River Hospital and another 120,000 for Community Care Concepts' take me home program. This echoed the Deputy Premier and health minister's announcement that Ontario is investing an additional \$155 million this year to expand home and community care services across the province, including \$45 million for new targeted, innovative, integrated care models in high-needs areas.

Also in September, I announced on behalf of the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade \$3.25 million for 18 local research projects at the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University and Conestoga College. This month as well, I hosted the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at RJM Cattle and Poultry in Woolwich township, where we launched the market access initiative program, which will help Ontario farmers who have hit trade barriers to diversify their products and help them to expand into new markets.

Earlier this month, the province gave the green light for the Waterloo Catholic District School Board to tender the new St. Boniface Catholic Elementary School in Breslau. I'm very excited about that one, Mr. Speaker. This is great news for parents of Woolwich township who have been waiting for nearly a decade—a decade, Mr. Speaker—for this to go ahead. This \$11.4-million investment will include 257 new elementary student spaces and provide a new quality learning environment.

In the coming months and years, I will continue to advocate strongly with regional colleagues for additional investments in infrastructure, and support long-term care and transportation. Again, these investments are only possible because of the type of legislation we are debating here today.

Our government has been clear since day one that we are committed to restoring the fiscal sustainability of this great province. We immediately took action to get a complete understanding of the state of the province's financial landscape. Let me refresh the members opposite on what the work of the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry uncovered. Mr. Speaker, the previous government was running a deficit of \$15 billion for 2018-19. It is clear that after 15 years of the status quo, things needed to be done a little differently.

This legislation would enable the government to manage public sector compensation growth in a reasonable and balanced way. Why is it absolutely necessary to address

compensation growth, Mr. Speaker? Well, the answer is fairly straightforward. Public sector compensation accounts for more than half—again, more than half—of all provincial expenditures, totalling \$72 billion annually.

Now, it is undeniable that our one million public servants play an important role in delivering services and programs to the people of Ontario, and our government values the work they do. However, I must echo the words of the President of the Treasury Board and ask the members across the floor if it is acceptable that after a decade of economic recovery under the Liberals, Ontario is still running a deficit. Is it acceptable that the annual interest payments on the province's debt are larger than the annual budget of most provincial ministries, and is it acceptable that we leave our children and grandchildren to foot the bill?

Let me be absolutely clear: No, it is not acceptable. To ignore the current landscape would be completely irresponsible and a disservice to future generations in this province. Mr. Speaker, I know my kids are actually watching at home right now, and you know I'd be remiss if I didn't mention them. This really is one of the key reasons why I wanted to get involved in politics. I think that when we look at what's going to happen to our future generations, it's very, very, very important that we keep that in mind as we craft new policy and new legislation. There's no reason why our children and grandchildren should be left to foot the bill for the Liberals' mistakes. It's something that's near and dear to my heart, and I think it's really something that we need to keep in mind. I know there are a ton of members here who have children, and on the other side of the House as well. I actually just attended a convocation ceremony at Waterloo-Oxford high school where the member for Waterloo's daughter graduated. We all have a part to play in this.

When we talk about sustainability and when we're looking at allowing people to still slide up and down in their salary grids, there's no reason to jump the shark, so to speak, and say that a 1% cap is going to drastically affect what is actually happening here. You could still have a 2%, a 3%, a 5%, a 10% increase in your salary within your sliding grid, for the people who have that built into their collective bargaining agreement. I think that when we talk about that—that's something that's not really getting talked about very much. I know the people on our side of the House and our members who sit across the way, they'll mention it, but it's all doom and gloom from the other side. We don't really get to hear the true story. When we look again at what we're doing and making sure that we craft good policy, good legislation, this is very important.

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We're going to move forward with this. I'm really excited to be standing here in support of it. I'm getting multiple notes passed to me on whether or not I'm supposed to use up the next three minutes or whether I'm supposed to sit down. It's getting very confusing.

At this point, I'm going to—

Mr. Lorne Coe: Three minutes.

Mr. Mike Harris: You want me to? Okay, I'll run the clock out. That's fine. That's not what the first note says, though. So I will keep going.

Again, when we look at the sliding grids, it's something that I think we really need to focus on. It's something that I was going to touch on a little bit more, after the first note was passed to me, but now I'm extremely confused as to what I'm supposed to be doing.

Interjections.

Interjection: Do what you want.

Mr. Mike Harris: Exactly. You know what, Mr. Speaker? I think we've really covered a lot of the good points here today. I like that we've got a constructive back-and-forth going. The discourse in the House over the last couple of days has been fantastic, and I'm excited that we've got some really good debate going on this. We're hearing some good points from all sides.

But when we talk about fiscal sustainability, one thing that often gets overlooked is that we have the largest subnational debt in the world: \$360 billion. It's a staggering number. When we have to look at ways that we can maintain that, we want to have a sustainable path back to balance. We're doing that now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to wrap up. I really appreciate the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): And you didn't even say hello to your five kids. I mean, that's impressive.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I want to expand on a point mentioned by the member opposite and talk about the issue of transit.

We have to acknowledge that in Brampton, we don't receive our fair share. When you compare the amount of investment that our community receives in comparison to how much we contribute, it's not fair. The result is clear: Brampton is being left behind, especially when it comes to transit.

Drive around Brampton and you'll see very clearly how huge this issue of gridlock is in our city. Hours are being lost in commutes; hours are being wasted away because we don't have a proper transit system to address our traffic issues. The solution to traffic is a robust public transit system. That's how you actually fix the issue of traffic, by getting people off the roads and into trains and into buses.

But when you look at Brampton, you see that we've been left behind so severely in this respect. In my riding of Brampton East, we don't even have a GO station. Instead, folks have to travel outside of our riding and go to Malton, go to Bramalea station, to get onto a train to get where they need to go, and the result of it is that our city has been left behind. We are not getting the investment we need. People as a whole have this continual feeling that Brampton is not being made a priority, and it's because of the decisions of successive Liberal and Conservative governments that have not made Brampton a priority, be it in health care, education or transit.

That's why the NDP recognizes this as an issue and will fight for Brampton. We're going to fight to make sure we

get the investment in transit that we deserve. We're a growing city, and if we don't invest today, this issue of traffic is going to get worse and worse.

We're committed to fighting for a better Brampton, and the NDP is going to get our city where we need to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments? The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good evening, Mr. Speaker. It's wonderful to be back here in the House.

Since the Legislature returned yesterday morning, we've accumulated almost \$50 million in interest on our debt, money that's now out of our province's coffers and into the hands of creditors. This money isn't building our hospitals. This money is not building bridges and infrastructure, and it isn't keeping our buildings habitable and in a state of good repair. It's just interest.

Each and every member in this House is here for a reason. As legislators, it's up to us to ensure the actions we take are not just to benefit and protect the Ontarians of today, but also, and perhaps more importantly, benefit the Ontarians of tomorrow. The member from Kitchener–Conestoga alluded to it perfectly clearly: Our kids, grandkids, nieces and nephews are relying on us to do the right thing and leave the province in a state where we can continue to deliver the world-class programs and services Ontarians expect and deserve.

The previous government had no problem doing this. They tried to pass off our costs of today to the Ontarians of tomorrow, not just through the never-ending accumulation of debt on the books, but off the books as well.

Let me be clear: There was nothing fair about the Fair Hydro Plan, and we also took action to correct that mistake through our Fixing the Hydro Mess Act. Thank you to Minister Rickford for your leadership on that file.

While I can't speak for all members in this House, I think we all appreciate all of Ontario's public sector workforce and acknowledge that they do great work. It's members of the OPS and the broader public sector who work for all of our ministries, agencies, boards and commissions and support the work of this House and this government.

The proposed legislation has taken a fair and managed approach. I encourage all members of this House to do the responsible thing and support this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Well, that was quite remarkable. We just listened to an extended version of "What I Did on My Summer Vacation." The government, at this point, isn't even trying to defend this indefensible bill.

I want to turn the rhetoric back on the member opposite.

Is it acceptable to attack relatively low-wage workers and to keep them from even having wages that rise with inflation in a world in which this government has rewarded many of its friends and relatives with contracts that have been significantly above the rates previously paid?

Is it acceptable to attack relatively low-wage workers, especially women, especially people of colour, in a world in which a government has absolutely no poverty reduction strategy, in a world in which we've just had a report that shows that Black families are twice as likely to experience food insecurity as white families? When my colleague asked the government about this today, the response was absolutely abysmal. It showed that the government has no plan to attack anti-Black racism or racism of any kind, and that it has no poverty reduction strategy and, in fact, wasn't willing to grapple with the question.

In that world, and particularly in a world where the government is wasting egregious amounts of money on a vanity tax case to combat climate change action, this makes absolutely no sense. This bill should be trashed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Parsa: The proposed legislation, Bill 124, 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. For example, a public sector employee making \$64,000 could be eligible to receive up to an additional \$1,900 over a three-year period, not including any salary range movement that they may be eligible for.

Speaker, the proposed legislation would not impose wage freezes, wage rollbacks or public sector job losses. If passed, public sector employees would still be able to progress through the salary ranges, be eligible for compensation increases, and be able to negotiate terms and conditions, including compensation.

Our government values the important role all public sector employees play in delivering programs and services to the people of Ontario. We have stated this clearly and often. Our government is committed to protecting those front-line workers and the vital services they deliver. Enacting this legislation will help protect those very things.

One of my colleagues was asking what the Premier has been up to. I can tell you right now, Speaker, the Premier has been leading and governing. The last few months since getting elected, he's been travelling the province and even across south of the border to promote Ontario to everyone, to let them know that we are open for business and open for jobs, which is why the 272,000 jobs that were created are a result of his hard work, his leadership and his vision for our great province and our great cabinet, and I thank him very much for that on behalf of the people.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return now to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga to summarize what he has just heard.

Mr. Mike Harris: It's a real honour to have the member from Brampton East, Mississauga–Streetsville, Beaches–East York and, of course, the venerable member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill take part in questions and comments here today.

I'm going to go back to the original sentiment of what this bill really does, and it is about sustainability, Mr. Speaker. When we look at the programs and services that we deliver here in the province, we have to be able to maintain these programs in a sustainable way. If we have a debt of \$360 billion, if we're giving away, theoretically, \$1.5 million every hour to service that debt, that's real money that we can't put back into these services. When you look at the amount of money that theoretically gets wasted away on interest on that \$360 billion, it's staggering. It really is staggering.

I want to be able to see programs be expanded. When we talk about what we're doing with health care, when we're talking about what we're doing with education, when we're looking at all the good things that this government wants to be able to put forward, we need to make sure that we have the capital to back it up, Mr. Speaker. I think that the real hallmark of a Conservative government, certainly in my eyes, being someone who is fiscally conservative, is making sure that we're doing this in the most sustainable way possible, that we're still able to deliver these services and still able to offer the best to the people of this province. I think, for all of us here in this room, that's what we want to see. We might have a different way to get there and we might differ on opinions now and then, but we're all here to work for the people of Ontario, and I know that this bill is going to do that.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer given earlier today by the Minister of Francophone Affairs. The member will have up to five minutes to state her case, and the minister's parliamentary assistant, the member from Thornhill, will have up to five minutes to state her case.

We turn now to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Je vais garder ça vraiment court, parce que ce n'est vraiment pas compliqué.

Donc, la question était simple. On retourne à l'an dernier lorsque le gouvernement a décidé de placer le bureau du Commissariat aux services en français sous l'égide de l'ombudsman. La justification à l'époque était les économies. Il fallait à tout prix épargner les fonds. Donc, c'était la justification du gouvernement. Un an plus tard, on ne sait toujours pas c'est quoi les économies exactes, après tous les calculs.

Je veux être claire qu'on ne parle pas ici de l'indépendance du commissaire, là. Ce n'est pas ça du tout la question. La question est factuelle, donc quelles sont les

épargnes réelles réalisées après tous les calculs des dépenses, des nouvelles dépenses, du bureau sous l'ombudsman? Donc, ça c'est la question.

La question de l'indépendance, c'est complètement à part. On pourrait avoir tout un autre débat là-dessus.

Vraiment, ce qu'on veut savoir, c'est combien d'argent le gouvernement a-t-il épargné suite à cette mesure?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll turn now to the member from Thornhill to give the minister's response.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je veux commencer par exprimer à quel point c'est une chance pour moi d'être en mesure de servir ce gouvernement en tant qu'adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires francophones. La semaine dernière, par exemple, j'étais au festival Cinéfranco avec Marcelle Lean, la créatrice du festival. C'était à Toronto, où j'ai pu rencontrer quelques-uns des artistes francophones des plus créatifs et uniques dans l'industrie du film.

Premièrement, je remercie la députée de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell pour sa question d'hier matin au sujet du Commissariat aux services en français de l'Ontario. Notre gouvernement a été élu avec un mandat clair des électeurs pour rétablir la viabilité à long terme des finances publiques du gouvernement de l'Ontario en 2018, après 15 ans de gouvernement libéral irresponsable. Ayant accompli un vaste effort pour générer des gains d'efficacité dans tous les ministères, notre gouvernement a transféré ce bureau au sein de l'ombudsman.

L'ombudsman de l'Ontario, M. Paul Dubé, a confirmé au printemps dernier que le commissaire détient le 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. Le nouveau commissaire conserve une unité spécialisée, composée de membres du personnel actuel du Commissariat aux services en français, pour traiter les plaintes et va continuer de mener des enquêtes relatives aux services en français.

Le ministère des Affaires francophones travaille en étroite collaboration avec le Bureau de l'ombudsman et les ministères provinciaux pour protéger les acquis et s'assurer que les Franco-Ontariennes et les Franco-Ontariens aient accès à des services de qualité dans la langue de leur choix. En tant qu'adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires francophones, je collabore avec la ministre pour offrir aux Franco-Ontariennes et aux Franco-Ontariens des services francophones de première qualité.

Tous les députés de l'autre côté de la Chambre savent très bien que le poste et le rôle du commissaire, y compris son mandat de surveiller la prestation des services en français et d'en faire rapport, demeurent inchangés sous l'autorité de l'ombudsman. La totalité des dispositions de surveillance sont maintenues. Ils rendraient service aux francophones en cessant de propager de la désinformation à ce sujet.

Notre gouvernement travaille avec acharnement pour réaliser de vrais résultats pour les Franco-Ontariens. Nous avons consacré notre première année de gouvernement à

régler le désordre laissé par les libéraux, après 15 ans de mauvaise gestion des affaires du gouvernement de l'Ontario et un déficit record mettant en danger notre avenir et celui de nos enfants, y compris celui des enfants des Franco-Ontariens.

Malgré ces défis véritables, nous avons réalisé de grands progrès dans l'avancement des intérêts des Franco-Ontariens. Le ministre des Collèges et Universités et la ministre des Affaires francophones se sont formellement engagés à travailler avec le gouvernement fédéral en vue du rétablissement de l'Université de l'Ontario français à travers un protocole d'entente.

Au ministère des Affaires francophones, nous allons aussi allouer une enveloppe de financement de 1 million de dollars pour le Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne pour l'exercice financier 2019-2020 pour appuyer des initiatives culturelles, économiques et communautaires locales à travers la province, profitant aux Franco-Ontariens.

Finalement, parmi nos efforts variés pour promouvoir les intérêts des Franco-Ontariens, l'automne dernier, la ministre des Affaires francophones a nommé Glenn O'Farrell à titre de conseiller économique à ses côtés. M. O'Farrell va nous aider dans notre plan en vue d'utiliser les ressources du gouvernement de l'Ontario comme un levier stratégique en vue de mieux renforcer et appuyer un secteur des affaires dynamique orienté vers l'exportation vers les marchés francophones à l'international. Et ultimement, aussi, pour bâtir Toronto en tant que pôle important—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Merci. Thank you.

EDUCATION FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Don't go away, colleagues. The member for Davenport has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer given earlier by the Minister of Education. The member from Davenport will have up to five minutes for her debate, and the minister will have up to five minutes to respond.

I turn to the member from Davenport.

1810

Ms. Marit Stiles: This morning, I did ask the Premier a question, and I got a response from the Minister of Education, which I appreciate. The question that I asked essentially was, based on the experience that we know teachers and education workers are experiencing out there—the cuts, the layoffs—I raised a specific example, Mr. Speaker, of Lindsay, a math and science teacher from Chatham who has worked for 12 years in various long-term assignments but without permanent work, and she's also a new mom. This year, Lindsay was not offered an assignment at all, because there were simply no jobs available. She has taken up waitressing to make ends meet.

I asked the minister whether or not the minister thought that it was right that qualified, caring teachers are moonlighting as waitresses to make ends meet, while

students see teaching supports and courses that they really need disappear.

I was very dissatisfied with the response. First of all, I didn't get a response specifically to that case, which I appreciate—maybe he hadn't met her. But there are many others. There were 50 education workers and teachers here in the Legislature yesterday. I met some of them afterwards. Caitlin, Mark, Laura—they have names, they have faces, they have families, they have stories, and they've lost their jobs. Some of them have seen their work hours dramatically reduced, or they are working in two different locations, but most of them have lost their jobs.

I think it's really important, because I want to draw some attention to the disconnect between what the minister is saying, and what the lived reality is of the teachers and the students in our education system, and, frankly, between that and the facts.

We know that when the minister and the Premier say that they've made an investment in public education, that doesn't match the facts.

Here are some of the facts. Per-student funding has decreased under this government. For every student enrolled this fall, there is less money allocated to the education system. Fact: After adjusting for inflation, per-student funding decreased 3% for the 2019-20 school year from the previous year.

Another fact: The government has bloated their budget numbers. Let me explain that. The funding dedicated to education includes more than funding for schools. On paper, the total education funding number may look like it has increased somewhat, but that's because the new child care tax credit is accounted for in education funding—I look forward to having more of a conversation about that tomorrow in the estimates committee with the minister—despite the fact, by the way, that this tax credit is a dedicated tax credit that will not be used to fund public education at all. Don't just listen to me. Listen to the Financial Accountability Office, because that's what they said.

I have a copy of the Financial Accountability Office report here; I'm sure the minister has reviewed it as well. Let me just go through some more of what they found.

They found that to maintain current levels of funding in public education, the government needed to increase the budget by 3% annually. Instead, the government's education budget—and this is again taking into account that tax credit—only grows at a rate of 0.8% annually. I could go on.

This is basic math, Mr. Speaker. This is basic math. The minister and the Premier keep denying it, but the Financial Accountability Office has been clear. We are going to lose more than 10,000 teaching positions, jobs in our schools, within the next four years. That doesn't even count the other education workers whose jobs are going to be lost. Every one of those teaching positions represents six courses.

When you see the chaos that happened in our schools this fall, with the sort of slight adjustment of class size averages, and the impact that had, and the number of students—really, this is true: I got a lot of calls from

students, because they know I'm out there talking about this, who were in tears because they were losing courses in things like physics that they need to be able to get into the programs that they want to in post-secondary. They are just distraught. And it is going to get worse every year, and that is unimaginable for those students.

I want to end on this: Last night, I was in Richmond Hill, and I was talking to a bunch of students and education workers and families who organized to speak out against the public education cuts. Let me tell you, those students were so upset with this government that they will never forget this.

It's not about our children—it's not good for anyone. It's not good for the economy. Will the minister back away from these cuts and invest in education in this province?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We turn now to the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for her thoughts.

I think it is incumbent on all of us in this chamber to remain focused on our students, and when we look at this discussion in the context of how we can as political actors ensure that we remain constructive, particularly in the context of negotiations, one thing that was omitted from the remarks in five consecutive minutes was no mention of keeping kids in class through the process. I'm not suggesting that we disagree; I'm sure, actually, that the member opposite would like to see that outcome. I think that is something that unifies all members of the Legislature. But it is a focus of the government. It is the top priority of the government, in the context of our negotiations with our labour partners, to keep them at the table and, more importantly, to ensure we land voluntary arrangements with our labour partners, as we have done in a tentative arrangement—while it is going through the process of approval, of ratification—with CUPE, in a rather historic and expedited settlement.

Mr. Speaker, I think a few facts that permeate the mind. In the context of maintaining teachers, it was a decision point, a thoughtful intervention of the government's last budget, to allocate not a nominal amount of money, not an accounting error, but some \$1.6 billion in funding to ensure that boards in all regions of the province—north, south, east and west; English and French, public and Catholic—are able to retain those caring, hard-working educators and keep them at the front of the class.

The untold story, where we have massive headlines talking about the redundancy notice—what doesn't get written, what doesn't get mentioned in this Legislature is the recall notices in boards across the province, where we're having 99%, 99.5%, 100% recall notices of educators back in front of the class. I mentioned a few earlier in this Legislature as proof positive.

I mention, Mr. Speaker, if I may, that members who hail from Hamilton, on both sides of the aisle, in fact—that the chair of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School

Board said yesterday, independent of any intervention of government, that this year there are fewer classes over 30 than there were last year. That is an example, and not in isolation, that our investments and our focus on our kids is working.

Mr. Speaker, another fact is that under our plan, when members opposite, respectfully, criticize the government—yesterday, in one of my first interventions, I spoke about the merits of our child care plan, and the member opposite decided that that is an imprudent focus for the Minister of Education. The Ministry of Education includes child care. My mandate is from K to 12 in schools, but also for child care. The fact is, when we are making life affordable for working families, I can understand ideologically why you would reject affordability, why you would advance a one-size-fits-all approach. But if we can make life affordable, if we could create more space, if we could help invest \$2 billion on an annualized basis to help create 30,000 spaces in schools in every region of the province, that is an example that our plan is working.

Another fact, Mr. Speaker: The investment in the Grants for Student Needs, which is an important allocation, is at the highest level ever recorded in provincial history.

Another fact: In special education for the most vulnerable kids in our class, for those with exceptionalities, they should be treated with the dignity they need to achieve their potential. It is why this government is allocating over \$3.1 billion, the highest ever recorded in public expenditure.

We are increasing investment for transportation at the highest level; to First Nation education to the highest levels ever recorded in provincial history.

In the context of class sizes—because the member opposite did raise it and it's prudent for me to respond—last week, in one iteration of our negotiations before the crown, before the government, with OSSTF, one of our labour partners that is responsible for secondary education, for high schools, we proposed, in a demonstration of our aim to be constructive and reasonable, to demonstrate to the parents that we are putting forth a plan that will reduce the number of the provincialized class size average, the funded average, from 28 to 25.

That is another example, Mr. Speaker, of our determination to remain focused on keeping kids in class. When we make these types of moves, when we try to propose options that are materially in the students' interest and, more importantly, in keeping kids in class, it is regrettable that there cannot be any sense of agreement that keeping kids—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the earlier motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House is adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1820.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
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Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud- Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
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Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. 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, Hon. / L'hon. 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

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Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
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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
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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	
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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	
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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
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Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	

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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
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Vacant	Ottawa—Vanier	

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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**

Chair / Président: Vacant
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