

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 123

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N^o 123

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Tuesday
5 November 2019

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Mardi
5 novembre 2019

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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



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

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 November 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 novembre 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FOUNDATIONS FOR PROMOTING
AND PROTECTING MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTIONS SERVICES ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LES BASES
NÉCESSAIRES À LA PROMOTION
ET À LA PROTECTION DES SERVICES
DE SANTÉ MENTALE ET DE LUTTE
CONTRE LES DÉPENDANCES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 31, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to enact the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence Act, 2019 and the Opioid Damages and Health Costs Recovery Act, 2019 / Projet de loi 116, Loi édictant la Loi de 2019 sur le Centre d'excellence pour la santé mentale et la lutte contre les dépendances et la Loi de 2019 sur le recouvrement des dommages-intérêts et du coût des soins de santé imputables aux opioïdes.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to be doing the lead on Bill 116 on behalf of the NDP. Actually, I'm doing it on behalf of my colleague Bhutila Karpoche—sorry, the member for Parkdale—High Park—who is at home with her newborn right now.

Bill 116, An Act to enact the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence Act, 2019 and the Opioid Damages and Health Costs Recovery Act, 2019, has, as the title will say, two parts. The first part has to do with the creation of the centre of excellence, and the second part has to do with how the province of Ontario could position itself to be able to sue the manufacturers of the drugs that are behind the opioid public health emergencies that we have.

Before I go on to start my remarks, I wanted to share some of the work that the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions did. It was actually the Minister of Health who had put together a request for a select committee. At the time, we hadn't had a select committee in this assembly for decades. She did her work. She made sure that people understood how important it was and, much to everybody's surprise, a request for a select committee coming from a then member of the opposition was

supported by the entire House, and the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions started its work.

I was the NDP representative on that committee. We started our work in 2008 and completed it in 2010. At the time, I was relatively new. I had been elected in 2007. I was coming out of 25 years of working in health care so, I figured, listening to comments on mental health and addictions, I had this preconceived idea there wouldn't be much new in this. I came from 25 years in health care. I had seen thousands of cases of mental health and addictions before. Let me tell you something: I knew nothing and I had heard nothing.

We heard from 230 people who came and did presentations in front of the committee. The stories that we heard, some of them I could repeat word for word what they told us—the intensity of the hardship was such. People who were facing mental health and addictions themselves had reached out for help, how our system let them down completely or led them down a path with catastrophic outcomes. A lot of those stories, it was their loved ones who would come and talk to us, simply because their loved one was no longer with us.

It was just really, really tough. I would say that rarely a day of hearings would go by that you did not come out of there having cried for half of what you heard and in really, really deep thought. We put out an interim report of what we had heard, and then we put out a final report in 2010, in August of 2010, with 33 recommendations as to what needed to be done to change this. How can we continue to fail so, so many people in need with mental health and addictions? We had to do better.

I will always remember we had a press conference in the press gallery here at Queen's Park to launch the report. All of us—there were three parties represented in the House in those days. All three parties, all members of the committee, stood together on the little stage in the media studio to launch the report, to show how important it was to really push the idea that action was needed immediately, that things needed to be done.

Much to my chagrin, the media covered the event as to the first time that all three parties held a press conference together. They did not go deep into the issue. They barely covered the recommendations that we were making. They were focused on the fact that all parties in the House were in agreement. But like many others, the systemic discrimination toward mental health and addictions was there. They did not want to talk about mental health and addictions; they wanted to talk about the fact that we had gotten along. I would say that we should have expected it. It was disappointing.

So the report was tabled. There were five members—at the time, it was the Liberals that had the majority government. There were five members of the government on the report. We had unanimous support. We really expected this to bring upon change, to bring upon action, and nothing happened. The 33 recommendations sat in that book. I would say, when the Minister of Health and I talked every now and again, we would talk about them. The previous Minister of Health, Helena Jaczek, also talked about them, because Helena had been—I'm allowed to refer to her by name now that she's not here, right?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes. So we would talk about it and talk about the work that we had done, but nothing came of it.

I would like to read into the record the first recommendation of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions in our final report. The first recommendation is, “A new umbrella organization” called “Mental Health and Addictions Ontario ... responsible to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—should be created to ensure that a single body is responsible for designing, managing, and coordinating the mental health and addictions system, and that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively across Ontario.”

0910

The second part was, “All mental health and addiction programs and services—for all regions of the province and for all ages, including children and youth—should be consolidated in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.” We had detailed recommendations regarding the new Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. What the mission statement would be, the strategic goals and the responsibilities were all detailed into the body of the report.

So I would say, it is not a surprise to me to see an act to create the centre of excellence in mental health and addictions—I would say not exactly the way that we had put it forward back in 2010, but certainly the spirit is there.

When we first started the select committee, we heard at the time from 13 different ministries. Every ministry that had some delivery of mental health and addictions services came and talked to us. Some of them, I would say, were brutally honest in telling us that they knew nothing about mental health and addictions. That was one part of their portfolio of their ministry that they knew they were not very good at and that they would be more than willing to give to anybody else who would want it; but they understood that the clients who they were serving needed this access to mental health and addictions and that it should be part of it.

The act to create the centre of excellence in mental health and addictions is in that spirit. It's really to give mental health and addictions a home, to make somebody responsible, to identify best practices, to put together a basket of services that will be available to all of us. No matter how old we are, no matter where we are, no matter who we are, if the need is there, you can count that the service will be available.

Right now in Ontario, we have some centres of excellence. Whether it be for children's mental health or for addictions or for mental health for the elderly with cognitive impairment etc., we have the knowledge, we have the skills. But it's a patchwork, so that if you happen to live here, you'll be able to gain access, but if you have the same problem needing the same type of care but you happen to live there, none of this is available to you.

Some of what we find as a government offering services—we have no idea if those services are of value, if they bring out outcomes. For some, we have in-depth knowledge that this is a service that should be available to all of us. It has proven to be effective, but it continues to be funded half-assed.

Most—all—of the public mental health and addictions services were caught under this salary freeze under the previous Liberals. There's a very low rate of unionization in the mental health and addictions system. There are some in our hospitals and stuff, but in the community it's very low. Remember there was this wage freeze that applied to everybody that was not unionized? Those people have been caught with no budget increase for over a decade, a salary freeze for a very long time; and I must say, this government has been in power for a year and a half, and things have not changed or improved in our mental health and addictions system. We continue to have this patchwork of some good services with clear, defined outcomes available to some of us, but not to most of us, and not all of the time. So this is where we are.

I would also like to read some of the other recommendations, and I will tie it to Bill 116. Recommendation number 2 from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions:

“Mental Health and Addictions Ontario”—which is the name that we give to this new agency—“should ensure that a basket of core institutional, residential and community services is available in every region of the province for clients of all ages, identify gaps, and eliminate duplication. Referral patterns must be put in place for the provision of those specialized services only available outside of a region. Each region must also have sufficient capacity to care for clients with concurrent disorders.”

None of this is in this particular bill, Bill 116. But I hope that the spirit of this is there, that the centre of excellence—in health care, most of the time a centre of excellence is there to identify best practices and then to show the rest of the health care system how to roll them out. But from the existing centres of excellence that we have in our health care system right now, they have no way of funding those services. It is fine to say, “Oh, you need to have an integrated health record,” let's say, to make sure that the transition is done from primary care to mental health and addictions. So this could very well—the centre of excellence, there's a good chance that they're going to identify this as a best practice.

But when there is no money, when there are no resources, when your agency hasn't seen a budget increase for the last 10 years, when you have a hard time recruiting and retaining qualified staff because you haven't been able to

give them a pay increase in close to a decade, this becomes pies in the sky. You can identify the best practices all you want, but if you haven't got the means to roll those out, we will be no further ahead. It will be another bunch of recommendations that went nowhere.

The third recommendation was, "Clients and their families should have access to system navigators who will connect them with the appropriate treatment and community support services."

There, you went outside of just the mental health and addictions system. We talked about housing. We all know: housing first. If you are homeless, nothing else matters. Remember Maslow's hierarchy of needs—food and shelter? If you don't have a place to call home, if you don't have food, you will never be able to start therapy for your mental health and addiction. You will never be able to get better because the basic human needs would always be there. We need food and shelter to live, and we go through the hierarchy of needs—food and shelter.

We all know that, unfortunately, we have homelessness in most parts of Ontario. I can speak to the homelessness situation in Sudbury. You look at the statistics, and when I used to be the executive director of the community health centre, we ran the Corner Clinic. It was a clinic for homeless people, and 90% of our clients had severe mental illness and addictions. One of the big reasons why they became homeless was because they had a mental illness or an addiction.

If you want people to be able to get the care they need, mental health is like any other health issue; it is treatable. There are treatment options out there that allow you to live a normal life, to get better. But none of this will be feasible if you are homeless, if you don't have food and shelter. This is what the system navigators—when you look at what is happening right now with housing, affordable housing is an issue in pretty much every community. When you have a hard time treating your mental health and addiction, if, unfortunately, you become homeless, finding a place that you can afford, finding shelter, becomes priority number one.

So we had identified housing, then income support. Our system of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program—you don't live on Ontario Works; you survive on Ontario Works. Ontario Works gives you just enough money so you don't die, but not enough to keep you living. And the increases in the payments we make to Ontario Works are very small. Any of us trying to make ends meet on \$560 a month—I don't know how they do it. You survive, but you cannot live.

0920

The third one that we wanted the system navigators to work on: housing—finding affordable housing, or shelter if you are homeless; income support so that you can afford to live, you can afford the basics of life, food and shelter, a little bit of clothes and maybe a bus pass so you can go to your next doctor's appointment; and then employment.

The systemic discrimination against people who have or have had a mental health issue or an addiction issue is still there throughout our society, but it is especially visible in employment services. They are the first ones to

lose their jobs. They are the first ones to be reprimanded. My colleague from Sudbury often makes this—comparing the two: If you tell your co-worker or your boss, "I'm leaving early because I have a dental appointment," nobody looks at you. Who cares? Go to the dentist. It happens to all of us. But if you tell your co-worker or your boss that you have a mental health appointment, things are not handled the same way. This is what systemic discrimination looks like. So you're not at ease to say you need help when, really, one of the first steps to help you feel better is to have people around you that support you. Yet, if you say that you have an appointment for your mental health, your co-worker won't look at you the same way and your boss won't look at you the same way. There's a good chance that a little note will go into your file that you had gone for a mental health appointment, and somehow everything else that ever happens to you will be related to this, although it may have nothing to do with anything. The systemic barriers are there to employment.

We also had asked that the system navigators handle peer support. We know peer support is one of those best practices. It works. It has helped a lot of people. It has a possibility to change the course of treatment for many, many people, if you give them access. We have some excellent peer support programs in Sudbury. We don't have too much that works good in mental health in the northeast, but we have a few peer support programs that work really good. But it's always the same thing: Their budget is iffy from one year to the next. You never know if you will continue to have a job after the end of the fiscal year. Your budget that's supposed to start on April 1 is not shared with you till October sometimes, and the first things to get cut are peer supports.

We have to not only say the right thing, but we have to do the right thing.

The system navigator would also help with recreational opportunities. We're all human beings. We all need some time off every now and again. We all need some recreational activities. Although they may be there, they may be accessible and they may be available, oftentimes it is those systemic barriers, the systemic discrimination, that makes it hard for somebody who has a mental health and addiction problem to be able to reach them.

The system navigators were a best practice that had been identified by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. It is something that we all believed in—I would say it's something that we still believe in—but there is very limited access to system navigators, if at all. There are a few of them linked to a specific agency that often has a limited mandate and a very questionable stability of their funding—not exactly what we had in mind when we made those recommendations.

Recommendation number four was that, "Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should conduct an assessment of the need for acute care psychiatric beds for both children and adults by region."

We have very few specialized psychiatric hospitals—very few beds, also. Those are even fewer if you talk about children. I won't pretend to be an expert in any of this. It

had been identified as something that the centre of excellence should look into. At the time, we called them Mental Health and Addictions Ontario.

Recommendation number five was, “Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should ensure that primary care providers and relevant staff in all levels of the education and long-term care systems have access to common, age-appropriate, evidence-based assessment and screening tools.”

That came because, especially for children and adolescents, the first episode of serious mental illness is often experienced in the late teens, while people are still attending high school. It is not always picked up by our school system, who just don’t know that it is time to refer this person to the health system rather than punish them for what is seen as bad behaviour. Of the 230 people who came and did deputations, we had quite a few people who shared those stories. We also had teachers who had seen the results of letting those kids fall through the cracks.

Recommendation number six was one that resonated with me in northern Ontario. It was, “Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should facilitate the creation of more 24/7 mobile crisis intervention teams.”

We saw that in some big centres they had a mobile bus that went around at night, mainly—the end of the afternoon and late into the night—and became available to anybody who was in need, whether it was a person to talk to, a cup of coffee or warm clothes if it was winter etc., but also be staffed by people with knowledge in mental health and addictions so that you could service other areas of the riding.

I service a large northern riding in and around the city of greater Sudbury, but the people who are serviced live hours away from Sudbury. On a good day, it will take you at least two hours to drive to Gogama, yet there are people in Gogama who get sick, who have mental illness, who develop addiction issues, just like everywhere else in Ontario. A mobile bus would be very helpful.

Recommendation number seven: “The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should expand and do more to publicize Telehealth Ontario’s ability to respond to callers with mental health and addictions issues.”

This also has never happened. It is a resource that exists for all of us. As long as you have a phone line, you can call Telehealth Ontario. They won’t give you prescriptions or do a diagnostic, but they will certainly listen to you, they will try to help you connect with some of the services that exist in your community, they will help you make a decision as to whether it’s time to go to emerg, to go see your family physician or a nurse practitioner if you have one, whether this is something that a community agency can help you with. The service exists, but I would say that the statistics continue to show that most people facing mental health and addictions are not phoning those numbers.

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The next recommendation is that: “Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to review emergency department protocols in order to increase their capacity to deal effectively, efficiently and sensitively with people appearing with mental health and addictions issues, and when

appropriate, redirect or connect them to community-based services and supports.”

The stories we heard about the failings of our emergency departments were horrific, Speaker, just horrific. The people who work in our emergency departments, I’m sure, are qualified, good people, but they come with the same systemic discriminations that every other Ontarian has. Those have started to go down. I thank Bell Let’s Talk, who first started to talk about people who—the athletes and the people who came forward, to try to tone down the stigma. But it is still very visible, and it is still very present.

People who present themselves in one of the hundreds of emergency departments that we have in Ontario, if you present with a mental health and addiction, there is a good chance that inside of those hospital walls you will be discriminated against. Add to this the overcrowding in our emergency department: It does not make it a very suitable environment for somebody who is in the midst of a mental health and addiction crisis to find themselves in. It is noisy; there are a lot of people around. I would say, aside from inside a prison—and I will get to this—it is a very bad environment for people in the midst of a mental health crisis.

And then you have the stigma and the discrimination that are still present within our hospital walls. I’m not proud of this. I’m really proud of our hospitals, and I’m proud of the people who work in there, but this is one part that really needs some work. We had identified this and put it in a recommendation in 2010. It has had a bit of an improvement, but it is still, in general, very present.

Yet we have best practices. We know how to provide good emergency care to somebody who presents with a mental health and addiction problem. Those exist. But the resources to make sure that our hospitals are able to provide those are not there. At the first triage, if you see that it is somebody with a mental health and addiction crisis, there should be a quiet emergency room part in your hospital to handle mental health and addictions. Don’t let them in with the crying babies and everything else that goes on. It’s just going to make things worse.

We have a bill that will give us a centre of excellence, which is something wonderful, but when we have already identified best practices—this is why I was going through. When we’ve already identified best practices, when we’ve already identified how to do better and how to provide quality care to people who are in need, we know what to do. But there hasn’t been the resources available to our hospitals to make this happen.

A lot of our hospitals would like to revamp their emergency department, but when you are funded for 100,000 visits but you get 500,000 visits a year, it’s pretty hard to think about anything but the next patient. This is what the system looks like right now. We were given examples through the summer and fall when we were not sitting. We filed—I couldn’t count—hundreds of access-to-information requests to all of our hospitals and many, many other health care providers to have a sense as to where things are at. Hallway health care is there to stay.

I have a story of a child with severe mental illness who was admitted into Health Sciences North, our hospital in

Sudbury, and spent five days in a hallway. Let's just say that the quality of care—you cannot provide quality care in a hallway, and you cannot provide quality care to a child who has a severe mental illness in a hallway for five days in a row. Health Sciences North managed to open a few more pediatric beds—they're not really beds; they took a room that used to have a TV in it. Anyway, they do the best they can, but you cannot provide quality care in a hallway, in a TV room, at the end of a hall or in a patient lounge. It's just not happening. But this is what we have.

When we have a bill that says that we will put in a centre of excellence, the centre of excellence will continue to identify best practices, and then what? Where is the strategy that will make sure those best practices, once they are identified, are actually implemented or are actually available to us and become part of our care pathways? None of this is in the bill.

I've gone through quite a few of the recommendations that the select committee had made. A lot of those recommendations—I'm hoping; I'm guessing—will be very similar to what the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence will be identifying. Unfortunately, things have not changed in the last nine years. I would say that in many circumstances things have gotten worse, not better, in the last nine years.

The recommendations that we made back then, the best practices that we identified back then—I'm expecting the centre of excellence will identify very similar best practices, and then what? Then you put them on a piece of paper, and nine years from now a health critic for the NDP will read those recommendations into the record and say, "Nothing has been done"? I'm worried. I want action. I have nothing against a centre of excellence. I have nothing against giving mental health and addictions a home. I think it's a good first step, but it is just that: a good first step.

I can't help but to contrast this with some of the actions that have been taken already. There was planned funding of \$330 million in mental health. We already know that some of those best practices—there are agencies, hospitals, mental health associations and agencies that know that they're not using the best practice because they haven't got the resources to move to the best practice. That money could have been helping, or could have moved us closer to best-practice health care in mental health and addictions, but this money was not available.

Same thing: We just came out of estimates. I don't know how many questions my colleague Bhutla and I asked about the \$69 million for child and youth mental health services. The government continues to tell us, "Oh, no, no, no. We did not cut the \$69 million." But if you didn't, show me an estimate as to where that has gone. I can be pretty persistent, asking the same question over and over, and when I get no answer, then I have my answer, Speaker. If there was \$69 million in new dollars, they would be able to show me, and they were not.

0940

Mind you, for some of the questions, they said that they would get back to me. That was in May. We are now in November, and I still haven't received my answers. The

last time I saw them, I told them that I don't want to die of old age before I get answers to estimates questions. They laughed, but they did not say that it was coming. So I will keep my fingers crossed that I am wrong, that they did not cut \$69 million from child and youth mental health services, that they will be able to show me that in the estimates, that I was wrong, that the \$330 million planned for mental health was actually—but so far, it looks like I'm right. But I'm really sorry to be right, because this money could help to change things right now.

I'm surprised to see that there's 21 minutes. There are a couple of other things that I want to talk about.

One thing is the opioid crisis. The second part of Bill 116 is the Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, 2019. If you're a lawyer, I'm sure you will love this part of the bill. I am not a lawyer, but what I get out of this part of the bill is that we are giving ourselves the tools to be able to bring the big manufacturers, that make those drugs that people get addicted to, to court.

I can tell you that the NDP government in British Columbia has already done that: They have brought the manufacturers to court. A number of other provinces are in on the lawsuit. It is not clear to me why we don't just join in, but I'm not a lawyer. I'm sure that there will be a lawyer someplace who will say something. Whether I'll understand this or not, I don't know, but all I can tell you is that many, many jurisdictions have brought the opioid manufacturers to court. Some court settlements have been reached, but the opioid epidemic—the public health emergency that it is—has continued.

Oftentimes, the amount of money that is given leads the manufacturer to declare bankruptcy. They are structured in such a way that a part of their business can declare bankruptcy while the other part continues to go. Why this happened, I don't know, but it is what it is. So to give ourselves the tools to go after the manufacturers—more power to you. I would say to join in with BC and let's get this done—the sooner, the better.

But this is but a small part, Speaker. If you look at what BC is doing, the first thing they have done is declare the opioid crisis a public health emergency. I don't know how many times I've stood in this House, how many letters, how many requests, how many motions we've put forward to declare a public health emergency—the last one was last Thursday, by my colleague the MPP from Sudbury—and this government has always refused to do this.

Declaring it a public health emergency allows people who have very, very big caseloads to suddenly not deal with the opioid epidemic as a small, important task among 100 tasks but to focus on it so that we can have a real impact, so that the solutions that are available to us that are feasible, that we have the knowledge and the skills to do right now—we would suddenly have the time to carry them through.

I can also tell you that the BC government has launched a 10-year strategy to tackle mental health issues. When I see the creation of a centre of excellence I want to say that the centre of excellence will be located under Ontario Health.

Ontario Health is this new agency that will be responsible for the planning and the delivery of hospital services;

long-term-care services; interdisciplinary primary care; home care and community health; and mental health and addictions, as well as palliative care. Six programs within the Ministry of Health, within the health services that are available to us, are now under the governance of Ontario Health.

Under Ontario Health, you will find the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence, not unlike, I guess—we used to have the Trillium Gift of Life, which was focused on best practices for organ donation and organ transplants, which have been very effective, and not unlike Cancer Care Ontario, which identifies best practices in cancer services, which are also being rolled into Ontario Health. So Ontario Health will have one more centre of excellence, this one in mental health and addiction.

As I say, the spirit of this is something we support, is something that we know we needed in 2010 and we still need now. Is it the right place? Remember when I was reading some of the recommendations? A lot of what we need to have excellent mental and addiction care is outside of the health care system. It has to do with housing. It has to do with income. It has to do with all of this stuff—employment, peer support, recreational opportunities etc. None of this is part of Ontario Health; none of this is part of the Ministry of Health; and now the centre of excellence is three times removed.

What will be their relationship with, let's say, the Ministry of Corrections? We all know that as MPPs we can go and visit the provincial jail, which I have done on a number of occasions. The statistics speak for themselves: I think close to 20% of the people that are there should not be there. The only reason they are there is because they have a mental health issue or an addiction, and they should be receiving support. Aside from a noisy, crowded emergency room, a prison cell is not conducive to treating mental health and addictions.

I want to put into the record a letter that was sent by the John Howard Society of Sudbury. It was sent to the Solicitor General as well as to the Minister of Health, and said, "First, and foremost, we commend the government for following through with this issue and for supporting the work of Dr. Turnbull and his expert committee. We have read his report, as redacted by the government, and know that the report presents a very true and vivid picture of the state of health care in correctional facilities."

The report from Dr. Turnbull is quite clear that the way that we are offering mental health and addictions support to people in our correctional facilities has to change. He puts forward good best practice as to how this should change. So I'm having a little bit of difficulty making the leap of faith that the centre of excellence that is being created under Ontario Health under the Ministry of Health will have the leverage necessary to make sure that the recommendations for best practice, for health care in our correctional facilities, will finally be able to change.

0950

If you have an opportunity, go see the health facility in your local provincial jail. I was in the Republic of the Congo in Africa—that was a really, really poor health facility, but

they had more modern examination tables than we had at the Sudbury jail. You're talking about a Third World country, where those tables had actually been donated by nurses in Montreal. They had made the donations to the health facility in the Republic of the Congo. Their equipment was better than what we have in the Sudbury jail here in Ontario—just as an aside.

The John Howard Society says, "Our organization would like to know what initiatives are occurring with your ministries to implement the Turnbull report. The John Howard Society of Sudbury will work with work with your ministries to implement Dr. Turnbull's recommendations for correctional facilities. We can be contacted"—and they go on. It's signed by Michael Sabo, their president, and John Rimore, their executive director. It was copied to me, to the MPP for Nipissing and to the MPP for Sudbury. That was on September 17. No response has been received.

I was reading that into the record because, again, the centre of excellence under the Ministry of Health, within their six portfolios—how do you make those connections? Certainly, the bill doesn't touch on that at all. I have no idea if it could even happen. Yet we all know that to improve the outcomes of the care we offer to people with mental health and addictions issues—the solutions are not just under health, and certainly not just under the six portfolios. So I continue to be a little bit worried.

Coming back to the opioids and the different strategies that different provinces take: When you look at consumption and treatment services in Ontario, for reasons unknown, the government decided that there could not be more than 21. They have never been able to justify or show us the body of evidence that says that Ontario needs no more than 21. How could it be that in British Columbia, which has a population of five million, they have 30? In Ontario, with a population of about 14 million, we are restricted to 21, and right now only 16 of them are funded.

There's a huge disconnect between what they would like us to believe will happen and, when they have an opportunity to act, what really is happening. We speak with our words, but we speak even louder by our actions, and when we see the actions that have been taken, they seem to be inconsistent with the words that are being spoken in that bill.

I am forever an optimist. I see bits and pieces that give me hope, but I certainly do not see a strategy that will bring us to the place where we need to be, where we don't let people with mental health and addictions issues down, where we don't lead them down a path that leads to catastrophic outcomes anymore, where we learn from the best practices that already exist, where we invest to make sure that the mental health and addictions agencies don't continue to go 11 years without a basic funding increase and do not continue to go years and years without a pay increase to their staff that are not unionized. All of this we could change.

The ministry has said a number of times—certainly through estimates—that the government will be increasing mental health and addictions by \$174 million in this fiscal year. That was repeated a number of times in estimates and even pointed to so we could see that there has

been some investment, but when you follow the money—and for those not familiar with estimates, this is what estimates is all about. We follow the money that comes. When you follow the money, this is all money that came from the federal government.

The federal government has promised us \$1.9 billion to go towards mental health in the next 10 years, and the provincial government has matched that money, \$1.9 billion. You will often hear a \$3.8-billion increase in mental health and addictions services, which is great news. There haven't been too many announcements of big investments like this by this government, but mental health and addictions is one. So yay, except, is it all going to come in the ninth and 10th years? In the first year there was zero investment from this government in new money in mental health and addictions. There was an investment of \$174 million, but through estimates it didn't take long to realize that this money came from the feds. It did not come from the province.

The province's commitment is over 10 years; we all know that, but we couldn't invest a dollar of our own money? You say that it is an emergency, and you say it is a priority. You're proud of repeating the \$3.8-billion investment that you will make over 10 years, but here again, the actions don't support the same level of enthusiasm that I would like to have for the whole thing—very simple things that don't cost anything. The provincial Opioid Emergency Task Force—the name says what it is. It's a task force of people who know a whole lot more about mental health and addictions than I do, people who know a whole lot more about opioids and how you deal with them. There's an Opioid Emergency Task Force at the provincial level. Those people have been identified. The task force has been recognized and all this.

Do you know how many times they meet, Speaker? They have not met under this government. Really? Here's a resource that is available that doesn't cost anything. All those people come and all you have to do is listen to them. We all know that the opioid epidemic is a crisis. I call it a public health emergency—

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is, and yet, a task force that wouldn't cost the government anything has not been called back together. Why? How can you look at the number of deaths, how can you look at a thousand Ontarians dying of opioid overdoses and not find the time to reconvene the task force that will help you deal with it? I find that hard, Speaker. I find this really hard.

I want to believe that this government wants to do the right thing. I want to believe that Bill 116, the creation of a centre of excellence in mental health and addictions, will bring us the changes that we all know need to be done, that will bring us the changes that we had identified way back by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and many other best practices that exist. This is what we want; this is what we need. We want the strategy that will go with it.

We want to know that it is taking this issue seriously, that we're not going to have the centre of excellence that

will identify best practices and then wish upon a star that those best practices will find the money themselves to make it happen in every corner of the province. I don't believe in wishing upon a star. I don't.

1000

The centre of excellence will be there. They will identify best practices. We have the \$3.8 billion. We have the review of the services that are already there, that could facilitate. But none of this has been put together, and the little actions that have been taken since this government has been in power leave me very insecure that this will be a priority, that we will not only identify best practices but that we will roll them out, that the levers will be available for either the Ministry of Health or the centre of excellence to work across ministries, whether it be with children and youth; with children's mental health services; the ministry of children and youth; Ontario Works; the Ontario Disability Support Program; correctional services; schools; colleges, training and universities—because we have bits of mental health services available in our colleges and in our universities and in our high schools and in our correctional services and in our community support services and all over the place. This is why the number one recommendation of the select committee was to give mental health and addictions a home.

We are seeing the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence Act creating a centre of excellence. I sure hope that we don't only identify the best practices but that we see a strategy to roll them out; that we see the provincial Opioid Emergency Task Force called back together; that when a community comes forward to say that they need consumption and treatment services, they're not going to be told that because you don't have the rehab services, because you don't have community mental health, you're not allowed to have that either. Because this is very much what may happen to all of the northern and rural communities because we have zero access to mental health but wait times.

I realize that my time is gone. You have been more than patient with me. I still have a lot to say, but I will sit down.

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the comments made by the member for Nickel Belt with respect to Bill 116, the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act.

I did have the opportunity to serve with the member on the select committee almost 10 years ago. I have to say that your comments brought back many memories for me—mostly good memories, some bad memories, in the sense that we did hear some very tragic stories from people who had not been receiving the services that they needed to receive for mental health and addictions problems in Ontario, and also some sadness that many of the recommendations that we made have not been implemented and 10 years have gone by. I think if we had proceeded with those recommendations, we would be in a much better place in Ontario right now.

But what I am very happy about is the fact that we were all able to get together, all of the members of the committee, and we were able to put aside our political differences and really listen to the people who came to speak with us. We had several hundred people come and speak with us who told us what they wanted, what they felt that they needed. We actually wrote that report together, all of us together. I hope that there will be other opportunities for similar select committees in the future because I truly feel that we did some great work together.

The first recommendation that the member spoke of was the suggestion that we made then, that we have Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, which is now really being mirrored by the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence that's being proposed in this bill. This, I think, is really the essential foundation for a mental health and addictions system in Ontario to be able to set best practices, to deliver equity across the province in terms of making sure that there's a core basket of services that everyone in Ontario can receive, to be able to reset the clinical guidelines and to be able to review the data.

I'm sorry, there's more that I'd like—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to commend the member from Nickel Belt for really putting the issue of mental health and addictions into a historical context. It's important for us to remember the work that happened in 2010 through the select committee. This is work that needs to be put into action. That was the main theme that I took away from her comments.

But the pushback always is that there isn't enough money and there's never going to be enough money, so it has really paralyzed action. I want to share my frustration with the Liberals, who at least enabled this work to happen, but then not to act on it is almost unethical—it is almost unethical. The emotional labour that the member from Nickel Belt touched on, that the committee went through, we can't lose that. That should be driving us forward and propelling us forward.

There's a story out today in the National Post, where companies have realized—I'm the economic development critic, so maybe putting a different lens on it may propel action—that in Canada, there are some 500,000 Canadians who are "unable to work at some point due to poor mental health problems or illnesses," according to a recent study. This costs the Canadian economy \$56 billion every year. Ontario is one of the largest provinces in this country. These are direct costs to Canadian companies. This government says that they're open for business. Think of the cost to lost productivity. But these direct costs also include health care benefits and drug costs, as well as short-term and long-term disability payments totalling more than \$50 billion annually.

It's interesting, because the study started in 2010. Bell Canada has brought in a number of supports for their employees. Mental health-related short-term disability relapse has gone down by 50% and short-term disability claims

have been reduced by 20% since 2010. Think of the progress that we could have made in this province.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I think we all agree here that mental health and addictions is a priority for all of us, especially all of us in Ontario, which is why we have committed \$3.8 billion in new funding over 10 years.

It is imperative that we find a comprehensive, well-thought-out, well-planned mental health and addictions strategy. Our proposed establishment of the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence is a step in the right direction to help us assist those in need. As we all know, one suicide is one suicide too many. There is nothing more heartbreaking than a child who feels that they have nothing to live for and who ultimately takes their own life.

Recently, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Community and Social Services announced Project Now in Mississauga, together with the LHINS, the Region of Peel, Trillium Health Partners, the Peel District School Board and all the community agencies. This aims to end child and youth suicide by 2027. This decision was made in collaboration with all of our partners and is a great step to provide much-needed services and the ability to recognize those who desperately need our help.

I really do urge everyone in this chamber to support the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act, because it's what we need to make sure there are no more suicides and to get people back on track.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Sudbury, and thanks for the comments I heard from the government side on this issue.

I want to agree with the consensus I'm hearing here that we need to act, but I want us to ask ourselves a question for a moment, thinking about the second portion of this bill, which will empower the government to legally pursue opioid manufacturers. If crucial substances for our children were poisoned in the province of Ontario, how long would it take for us to act? If the manufacturers of baby formula were manufacturing poisoned substances, how long would it take for us as a province to act? How long did it take for us to act with the listeriosis crisis for meat in this province? Immediate action—that is the answer to the question. But thousands of our neighbours—drug users are our neighbours—are being poisoned right now by the supply of illicit opioids in the market, and the second schedule of this bill does nothing about that.

I want to thank people from community health centres in Ottawa: Simone Thibault, from the Centretown Community Health Centre, Naini Cloutier at the Somerset West Community Health Centre, Cam MacLeod at the Carlington Community Health Centre, and the people at the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre, who are themselves working directly with our neighbours who are addicted to drugs. Because only when we see them as our neighbours, not as

an alien species needing sympathy but our neighbours, our loved ones—those of us whose families, like mine, have been directly impacted by drug overdoses—is when we'll act with the urgency this measure deserves.

This government needs to move beyond schedule 2 of this bill. It needs to commit itself to a safe supply. It needs to run the illicit manufacturers of opioids off the streets. We have to stop allowing the poisoning of drug users in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We return now to the member from Nickel Belt to conclude this portion of the debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was happy to be able to put a few words on the record about mental health and addiction. We don't talk about mental health and addiction very often in this House, and I wish we would. Bill 116 was an opportunity to do just that, to show people that have dealings with mental health and addictions or have children, spouses, family members or co-workers who have a mental illness or an addiction that there is hope out there, that hopefully things are about to change and services are about to become more accessible.

When I was on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, our recommendations were clear. First, give mental health and addictions a home. Don't let it be offered by 12 different ministries. Some of them don't want to be in the mental health and addictions business at all but have no choice. Give it a home. Give it a place that is responsible for identifying best practices to make sure that we can bring those best practices throughout the province so that there is equity of access; that the people who I represent in northeastern Ontario will have access to the same basket of services as people who live anywhere else in this province; that we will look at evidence-based; and that we will treat mental health and addictions treatment like every other part of our health care system.

We'll look at what works, we'll analyze the data, we will identify best practices and we will move forward in a way that will give hope to thousands and thousands of people who have reached out for help but so far have gotten nothing but a wait-list.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We still have a couple of minutes left before our morning recess, so we have time for an abbreviated debate. Further debate?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: It is a great honour to rise today in support of Bill 116, the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addiction Services Act. This legislation promises to put the people of Ontario first. It promises to improve the quality of our mental health and addictions services, and for that, I thank our Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, who has worked tirelessly to protect and transform our health care system.

Mental health is health. Unfortunately, our current mental health services do not meet the needs of Ontario's patients. The system is difficult to navigate, is fragmented and is not equitable. That is why creating a robust and innovative mental health strategy is a priority for this government and why we have recently designated an Associate Minister for Mental Health and Addictions.

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Minister Tibollo on his new portfolio. His clinical and academic expertise will serve him well in this role, but moreover, his passion for this subject is the driving force behind many of our efforts, and it is highly contagious.

As I was driving in this morning I heard on the radio that in the city of Toronto we are seeing more pronounced homelessness. There are tents being set up along our city's main streets. With the temperatures getting colder, people are looking for a way to stay warm at night. Shelter spaces in our province's capital are at about 93% capacity right now, and we know that with the opioid crisis it is putting more people at risk of homelessness. People who suffer from mental health challenges are at a greater risk of homelessness as well. That is why it is so important that we meaningfully address the problem of the opioid crisis and mental health and addictions—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt. We have run out of time this morning to continue this portion of the debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The House will stand in recess until question period at 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: We have the representatives from the Canadian Credit Union Association here with us today. Soyez les bienvenus à Queen's Park.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce a number of chicken farmers from the province of Ontario. The Chicken Farmers of Ontario are hosting a reception this evening, and I encourage everyone to come out and support our province's chicken farmers, the best chicken farmers in the world.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to welcome Adrienne McKenzie, Glenn Pollinger and Arnold Denton of the Luminus credit union, which is located in my riding of York South–Weston. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's a real honour to welcome two visitors from my riding, Danielle and Ronald Richer, who are the parents of page Mackenzie Richer from Guelph. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm honoured today to have two local chicken farmers from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: Carolyn Cornelissen and Brian Lewis. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to introduce Susan Stockwell Andrews, a good friend of mine from the Windsor Family Credit Union. Welcome to Queen's Park, Susan.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to welcome Amogh Ravishankar, my LA, to Queen's Park. He's been working for me since the summer and today is his last day. I just wanted to wish him well as he continues his studies.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to welcome Sally Harding to the House today. She's a resident of my riding and owns Nightingale Nursing.

Mr. Jamie West: I'd like to welcome back Faith Munoz and Michau van Speyk from the autism community. Welcome to Queen's Park again.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome Home Care Ontario to Queen's Park today. Home care providers are a valuable part of our health care system.

Welcome to Queen's Park. I hope you have a wonderful day here today.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to welcome, from the amazing riding of Huron—Bruce, two very successful chicken farmers: Adrian Rehorst and Rick Kaptein. I thank them for all their advocacy. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Ed Benjamins and Doug Duimering of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the privilege of welcoming to the Legislature today two chicken farmers from my riding of Niagara West: Jordan Fois and John Kikkert. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Ms. Donna Skelly: It's an honour to rise today to welcome from my riding Murray Opsteen from the Chicken Farmers of Ontario—a sector that contributes almost \$2 billion every year to our local economy.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'm very pleased to see, in the members' gallery today, constituents Tom Beischlag and Henk Lise with CFO.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Good morning. It's my honour to welcome and introduce, from my riding of Cambridge, Mark Hermann, who is part of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario and one of the best chicken farmers in the riding of Cambridge. Welcome.

Mr. Mike Harris: I also have a chicken farmer from my riding here today—all the way from Wellesley township, Scott Buchan.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I want to welcome Mr. Hubert Wong and his two children, Tatyana and Alexander. The children are here to learn about our Canadian parliamentary system and how it operates. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming—joining us shortly for question period—students from Ellwood Memorial Public School in Caledon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Premier. Since the Legislature resumed, families have been concerned by growing evidence that the Ford government is taking hallway medicine from bad to worse: hospitals operating over capacity; an urgent care centre receiving five patients for every one that is funded; and a government that's only brought in 21 new long-term-care spaces, despite exploding wait-lists for long-term care.

The government effectively froze hospital funding in its last budget. Does the Premier think this will fix hallway medicine?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question, but the leader of the official opposition

will know that this is not a problem that just sprang up overnight. This happened after 15 years of Liberal ineptitude on this file. This is something that we are working very hard on to change.

We know there are many different strategies that need to be employed; there is no one, single answer to this. But with respect to any suggestion that our hospitals are not being funded properly—of course they are. We have added \$384 million more this year to hospital funding, a 2% increase for each and every hospital. Plus, we have just recently made an investment of an additional \$68 million to help those small and medium-sized hospitals that had structural funding deficits—again, according to a funding formula that was created by the previous government.

I will have more to say in my supplemental with respect to the other strategies we are employing to end hallway health care.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, with all due respect, funding the hospitals at the same dismal level that the Liberals did is not going to fix hallway medicine in our province.

Last week, we revealed that the government was ignoring overcrowding in Brampton and Etobicoke hospitals. It led to more hallway medicine as patients waited longer and longer. But it's not just limited to those communities, Speaker: In Markham Stouffville, freedom of information reveals that the Liberals left the hospital at 103% occupancy last summer, and it's grown to 116% occupancy this year.

Will the Premier acknowledge that the Ford government budget has taken health care in Markham from bad to worse?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, we are working hard to improve the situation with hospitals, having hospitals, long-term-care providers and home care providers work together in a way that hasn't happened for years and years.

I'm very proud of the work that the home care association, the community care association, the long-term care association and the Ontario Hospital Association are doing. They all recognize there is a patient to be served here. It's not up to any one organization to act on their own; we all need to act together. That is why we were bringing forward the transformation of our health care system: to make sure that care is centred around the patient.

With respect to the concerns that the leader of the official opposition is expressing, we are activating a number of different areas in order to reduce the need and the crowding in our hospitals. My colleague the Minister of Long-Term Care is working very hard on creating the 15,000 long-term-care spaces that we've promised the people of Ontario we would provide within five years, and we are going to do that. We are also opening reactivation care centres—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, things are getting worse and not better, Speaker. That's the reality.

Sudbury's Health Sciences North hospital has also been left overcrowded. A freedom-of-information request shows it has been operating at 100% capacity each and every month over the last year. The problem is so bad that patients have taken to social media to share their horror stories. One woman said that her mother hadn't had a shower in 12 days.

Hallway medicine in Sudbury under the Liberals was horrific—nothing less than horrific. Will the Premier admit now that it's worse under his government?

Hon. Christine Elliott: What I can say, Mr. Speaker, through you to the leader of the official opposition, is that unlike the previous government that did nothing with this, except to let the lists grow, we are taking action on many fronts. As I indicated previously, we have opened reactivation care centres in a number of areas, where alternate-level-of-care patients—i.e., those who don't need to be in hospital who are stuck there—are able to go to a reactivation care centre where they will receive both some physical as well as mental health and social rehabilitation, with the result that many of these people don't need to go into a long-term-care home after all. They actually can be discharged home with the appropriate home care supports around them.

1040

Similarly, we are working with the people who have chronic mental health and addiction issues. With chronic mental health problems, there are a number of the same people who cycle in and out of emergency departments in hospitals. So we know that the answer is not simply investing in hospitals, but in community supports, so that people with those mental health challenges can actually get the care that they need in the community—

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier—but what we need is people to actually get the care that they need in their hospitals. That's what we need.

The Premier promised to end the hallway medicine crisis by the summer. Instead, in hospital after hospital, patients have seen things go from bad to worse. Freedom-of-information data from Hamilton's Juravinski Hospital shows the hospital was already over capacity a year ago. Now it's at 110% capacity. But the staff are worked off their feet trying to accommodate the need, and it's taking longer and longer for doctors to even see a patient for the first time.

Is the Premier ready to admit he has broken his promise and is content to let hallway medicine progress from bad to worse?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: As the member should know, we are taking steps across a number of areas, including in hospital investments. We have put, as I indicated earlier, \$384 million more into hospital funding this year over last year. We are going to invest \$27 billion over the next 10

years in hospital infrastructure to create another 3,000 new hospital beds to deal with this.

I certainly recognize that we also need short-term assistance. These are longer-term goals that we are working on, but we need to make sure that we can invest both in the hospitals and also in the community.

The member indicated that we need care in the hospitals. A lot of care can be provided before people need to get to hospitals, though, and I think we need to recognize that. We need to recognize the great work that home care services are providing right now, that are providing a great response and doing a triage, in many respects, to people who may appear at the hospital emergency departments but may not need to be admitted. In many cases, people can go back to their own homes, where—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the Minister of Health should know that she shorted the request of the Ontario Hospital Association by almost half of what they wanted to just keep the hospitals at the desperate situation that they were already in. So the amount that she mentioned was nowhere near what the OHA was asking for in the last budget cycle.

For patient safety, Ontario hospitals should be operating at no more than 85% capacity. The minister should know that, as well. That is the internationally recognized standard. Yet, today we see hospitals in Brampton, Markham, Hamilton, Sudbury that are all routinely operating well over 100% capacity, that are all routinely treating patients in hallways, leaving patients unable to access basics like showers for days at a time.

Is the Premier going to acknowledge that the hallway medicine crisis is real and start addressing it immediately? Or is he going to continue claiming that he's going to solve it by next summer?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the leader of the official opposition that I'm well aware of these figures. I hear about them every single day, and we are working very hard to bring those numbers down. The reality is that this is a situation that has been outstanding for 15 years. It's not something that you can just turn around on a dime. There are many steps that need to be taken, from increasing hospital funding, which we have done; from building new infrastructure for hospitals, to create 100,000 new beds; from building 15,000 new long-term-care beds, which my colleague the Minister of Long-Term Care is working on; from increasing the supports in our community for mental health and addictions.

I can tell you that in the consultations that we have done with respect to mental health and addictions, we've heard from hospitals who have said, "Don't provide more facilities for us. We don't think that people should need to be in hospitals. You need to be able to provide those services in communities." So we need to build up those community investments, which we are also doing. We are working on many fronts to deal with this. This is something that is—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I have to say, I find it odd that the Minister of Health is saying that hospitals didn't want extra funding when they in fact asked for almost twice what the government gave them in the last budget. It seems pretty ridiculous. Like Mike Harris before him, this Premier can deny his cuts to health care all he wants, but families can see those cuts: more crowded hospitals, more fired nurses and more hallway medicine.

Last week's report by the Financial Accountability Office confirms what we have known for some time: The Ford government budget won't address the crisis in long-term care and will make hallway medicine worse. Is the Premier ready to table the mystery plan that will solve this by the summer, or is he ready to admit that his policies are failing patients?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, through you, I think it really is important to stick to the facts. The facts here are that we are increasing our funding in health care. We are spending \$1.3 billion more this year than we did last year in health. We're investing in health care and education, because we know that those are the issues that are most important to people and families across the province.

We are investing across many areas in terms of infrastructure, in terms of programs. We know that it's important to deal with mental health and addictions. We've been speaking about that today in our debate, with respect to Bill 116. That is an area where we do need assistance.

In point of fact, I didn't indicate that the hospitals didn't want any more funding, of course. They were happy with the \$384 million that was provided, as well as the \$68 million in additional funding. But the point that they made was that we also need to invest in community funding for mental health and addictions, because people should not have to be in crisis and go to the hospital only because that's the only place that they know of when they're feeling—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. As the Premier knows, the growing wait for long-term-care beds is compounding the hallway medicine crisis. While the Premier has issued news release after news release after news release re-announcing the same long-term-care beds that the Liberals never built, we know that wait-lists will keep growing. Only 21 beds have actually been built, and it's clear that most of the new announcements of the beds promised by the Ford government MPPs had been announced before.

Can the Premier tell us how much time was spent re-packing Liberal announcements as PC announcements that could have been spent actually constructing long-term-care beds in our province?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. Our government is absolutely committed to creating a

21st-century long-term-care system. That includes building 15,000 new beds and redeveloping another 15,000. We've already allocated, this year alone, 1,814 new beds. We have created capacity within the long-term-care sector, and we're halfway to realizing the 15,000-bed allocations. We are well on our way to doing that.

We know and we acknowledge the aging population. We acknowledge the challenge that we are facing and that your government, under the Liberals, supported for 15 years. We acknowledge the neglect that has happened over that time. We are addressing that and an aging population. We know we need new capacity. We are looking to end hallway health care, addressing the issues within our hospitals. It is absolutely—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier said that he would do things differently, but his plan for long-term care doesn't just sound the same; it actually is the same. It literally is the same.

Over the last year, PC MPPs crossed the province, repeating Liberal announcements. The member for Durham announced the same 53 beds that her predecessor announced in Port Perry. The Minister of Long-Term Care announced the same 40 beds that her predecessor announced in Brampton—thousands of re-announcements, but only 21 new beds were actually built, while the wait-list grew by 2,800.

Will the Premier tell us how much time was lost and money was spent by Liberal and Conservative MPPs trying to take credit for long-term-care beds that still have not been built?

1050

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. Our government, contrary to what is being presented by the opposition today, is committed to protecting what matters most. That means including ending hallway health care, and we have allocated, as I said, over 1,800 new beds. We have reconfirmed the allocations that were previously done to provide certainty to our sector.

We consulted with our sector to understand what they needed to assist in creating the capacity, which is much more than has been done by the previous government, supported by you, while patients languished on wait-lists. We are absolutely dedicated to getting this done. We're halfway there with our allocations. We want to make sure that people get into the beds when they need them.

We're also working cross-ministry, ministry-wide, with the Ministry of Health to make sure that we have innovative programs in the community to assist as well. There is much work being done.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I am once again absolutely thrilled to be able to rise in the House and share with everyone more great news about economic activity and investments happening in my

city of Hamilton. For far too long, the city of Hamilton and other cities right across Ontario were neglected by the previous Liberal government, which instituted policies and regulations that stifled economic productivity.

For many people in my city, the pursuit of economic opportunity meant having to leave. Finally, however, Hamilton and other cities right across the province have a government that values the ingenuity and ability of our highly skilled workers and is willing to put in place policies that support them.

Can the Premier elaborate on the new investments happening in my city of Hamilton?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for doing a great job, for having a very loud voice in Hamilton, because guess what, Mr. Speaker? Hamilton has been ignored. It has been run by the NDP, the socialists, who destroyed the city for years. Now these companies are flowing into Hamilton, because of our great MPP. That's why they're flowing.

A new investment from Quebec: The Corbec steel company has announced that they're building their first plant in Ontario. It costs anywhere from a \$50-million to a \$100-million investment, a 100,000-square-foot building, 100 employees, because they love the policies of this government.

As we saw, the NDP and the Liberals destroyed the province, ran 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of this province. We're creating 272,000 new manufacturing jobs.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is back to the Premier. Premier, since our government has come to office, there is a flurry of economic activity in Hamilton, with close to \$900 million being pledged for projects, including \$100 million for DHL airport cargo expansion, the launch of Panattoni's \$30-million Aeropark warehouse, a \$40-million expansion of the Mondelēz candy plant, and a \$700-million pending deal for Hamilton city centre by IN8 Developments for reinvention of the downtown mall.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier speak to the larger economic impact our policies are having for the rest of the province since we formed government?

Hon. Doug Ford: I'd like to thank the member once again. The economic success we have achieved so far is absolutely incredible. Our province is absolutely booming right now. We haven't seen unemployment numbers like this—so low—in decades, because we've created the environment for companies to thrive and prosper and grow within this province.

They're coming in by hundreds. Companies now know that Ontario is open for business, and when that happens, Mr. Speaker, guess what? We get more revenues up to the provincial coffers. Personal income tax revenues grew by \$2.5 billion, because there are 272,000 more people working now than there were a year and four months ago. Sales tax revenues grew by \$1.7 billion, reflecting healthy and confident consumer spending. Corporate tax revenues are up a billion dollars. That's where we're getting more money to put into education—\$700 million more—and to health care, \$1.3 billion, because—

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

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, my question is about the integrity and the credibility of this Premier.

Yesterday, Canadians heard some shocking news from the Premier. According to an email that he sent supporters, the fabric of the nation itself is at risk, unless we send him a toonie. A cash grab this crass would be shocking from any other Premier, but when it's the Premier who posed for magazine covers claiming to be the "resistance" against the federal government, frankly, Speaker, it strains credulity.

If the Premier is remotely serious about this, he wouldn't be trying to fundraise off of it. Will he apologize today for this crass fundraising email and return any money that he raised from it?

Hon. Doug Ford: After the last federal election, we've never seen this country so divided, ever—ever. I had a great conversation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the Premier. The House will come to order.

The Premier will reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: I had a great conversation with Premier Scott Moe from Saskatchewan and Premier Higgs, along with Premier Legault and Premier Kenney. We thought it would be a really good idea—I invited them to Toronto, by the way, to hold the COF meeting here—to send the message around the world that, yes, within a family there may be a few bumps, but we want to give the world certainty. We want to give the business folks certainty to invest here, not only in Ontario but across Canada.

We have to unleash our energy file that's been stifled for years and years and years under the NDP and the Liberals here. They believe in charging people \$1.60 per litre for gas—

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, the Premier mentions the Premier of Alberta, but it was odd during the federal election to see the Premier of Alberta, dispatched by his party, campaigning here in the GTA while this Premier essentially was in the Andrew Scheer witness protection program. If the Premier wants to claim and pretend that he's Bill Davis, he should know that Bill Davis didn't hide during elections and shake people down for toonies.

Speaker, will the Premier apologize for his crass fundraising email and return any of the money that he's raised from it?

Hon. Doug Ford: House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It seems that the member opposite has been very nervous since the NDP member of Parliament for Essex lost to a Conservative. He almost seems to be auditioning for a job or an appointment on the floor of the Legislature.

I will say to the honourable gentleman—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I've been asking the House to come to order over the course of the morning. We're not even halfway through question period. I know your riding names. I will start singling you out if you don't come to order.

The government House leader has the floor.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I would say to the honourable gentleman: As I said, he seems to be auditioning on the floor of the Legislature. If he wants to talk about cutting red tape, if he wants to talk about the importance of free trade, if he wants to talk about the importance of balanced budgets, then I encourage him to visit the Public Appointments Secretariat. There will be an increased conflict stream. We'll send that off to the Integrity Commissioner. But if he wants to do all of those things, we'd be happy to have him selling Ontario to the world as well, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT FISCAL POLICIES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. When this government took office, they inherited a strong economy. The FAO calls it four years of robust—

Interjections.

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

I had to interrupt the member for Scarborough–Guildwood because I couldn't hear her because of the noise coming from the government benches. I have to be able to hear the person asking the question.

I apologize to the member for Scarborough–Guildwood and recognize her again. Start the clock.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. The FAO called it four years of robust growth, low unemployment—the lowest in decades—very strong revenue growth.

Despite the evidence, this government continues to create a manufactured deficit. It's an illusion, misleading Ontarians and justifying—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I ask the member for Scarborough–Guildwood to withdraw her unparliamentary remark.

1100

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Withdraw—and justifying deep cuts to vital social services that support low-income and vulnerable communities. People who receive social assistance as their main or only source of income often have to choose between paying rent and putting food on the table.

Why are you, Premier, persisting with your manufactured deficit and cutting \$1 billion from social services—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I'll remind all members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, it's staggering what I just heard—absolutely staggering. We came into office. We lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs—so much for the economy booming. Our health care was a disaster. We had the highest hydro rates in North America. People were

leaving. Companies didn't want anything to do with Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the Premier. I apologize. I'm going to ask this side of the House now to come to order so I can hear the Premier.

Premier, you have the floor. Please reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I heard over and over again, as I criss-crossed across the province, that these companies would leave in a heartbeat if we had never won this election, and thank God we won, because those 272,000 people—the MPP from Scarborough was saying it was booming? Those 272,400 people did not have jobs. They were worrying about how they were going to pay their rent, pay their mortgage, put food on the table. Those 272,400 people now can do things they might otherwise not be able to do.

We have this province booming like we've never seen, right across North America—

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

The supplementary question.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Again to the Premier: In tomorrow's fall economic statement, will you commit today to reversing the 1.5% cut made to the previous government's planned increase to social assistance and improving social assistance for people who need it?

Yesterday, the Daily Bread Food Bank released a report and detailed troubling trends in food bank reliance in Ontario. Not only is food bank use on the rise in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, but clients are mainly racialized, Indigenous or disabled, and they are overrepresented in food bank use. More than two thirds of food bank clients live in private rental units and are vulnerable to precarious housing and homelessness. Even in small towns, in rural Ontario, people have begun to see more visible signs of homelessness on the rise.

Premier, will you stop the reckless cuts to services that the most vulnerable in this province depend on and reinstate the planned increase in—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'm going to ask all members to direct their comments through the Chair.

The Premier to reply.

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

Hon. Todd Smith: There's a lot to unpack and a lot to correct in that question from the member opposite. I can tell you that our government has increased social assistance rates—

Hon. John Yakabuski: Increased.

Hon. Todd Smith: —increased social assistance rates by 1.5%.

We've also worked to reduce red tape for those involved in working in social assistance, and I can tell you, that's been met with great, great enthusiasm by those social workers who are at ODSP offices and at Ontario Works offices. They're now actually able to spend more

time working with their clients to get them into employment, Mr. Speaker.

I know the Premier was just mentioning the 273,000 jobs that have been created in Ontario under this government's watch in just over a year. Our goal is to link those people, those 900,000 people who are on social assistance, into full-time employment so they can stand on their own, they can become taxpayers in Ontario and continue to provide that safety net to those who are vulnerable—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The next question.

JOB CREATION

Mr. David Piccini: My question is for the minister responsible for small business and red tape reduction. Mr. Speaker, we know that excessive red tape and burdensome reporting requirements, when gone astray, stifle innovation and stifle job creation. In fact, we saw practical ramifications of that under the previous government, when over 380,000 regulations, double that of the next highest province, stifled job creation. The member opposite who brought up supposed job creation—maybe less just government jobs—can tell that to Craft Food House, which shut down in my riding; can tell that to General Electric employees who were laid off in my riding.

Thankfully, on June 18 last year, we saw a new government. Can the minister responsible for red tape reduction please share with the House some of the practical steps he and our government have taken to increase job creation and create jobs in this great province?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to thank the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South for being a strong advocate for businesses across this province.

Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of Premier Ford and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, our open-for-jobs, open-for-business policies have helped create over 272,000 new jobs in the province of Ontario. It's about competitiveness, making Ontario open for business—more competitive. A more competitive Ontario will lead to higher productivity levels, better jobs and higher standards of living, more income, higher incomes for families across this province. We are looking forward to building on our open-for-jobs, open-for-business policies and making Ontario the economic engine of Canada once again.

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

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I know that when constituents visit me in my office, they're not looking for handouts; they're looking for how to enrich their lives. They're looking for better jobs. They're looking to grow their family, and they're looking to contribute and give back to their community and to have the conditions and the required job in order to do so.

I'd like to ask the minister specifically what he's doing for truck drivers. I know I have a lot of truck drivers in our community who drive around the clock. We know that the only driving the previous government was doing was driving our economy into the waste bin. Can the minister please tell us what steps he has taken for truck drivers in our community and other small businesses so that we can continue to once again be the engine of the Canadian economy?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Our government is focused on making driving more efficient for Ontario's truck drivers. Each year, Ontario's truck drivers must complete multiple inspections in order to operate on our roadways. First, they must complete an annual inspection that can take up to three hours. Additionally, they must take another inspection which can take another hour. We're simply reducing this and putting it into one inspection that will help save time and costs for our professional truck drivers across the province.

Mr. Speaker, it's about common-sense regulation changes that will save time and money and help us make Ontario more competitive and build on the 270,000 new jobs that we have helped create under the leadership of Premier Ford. It's about making Ontario more competitive and driving more investment into this province and ensuring that hard-working families have access to more—

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

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Minister of the Environment assured us that the government was working with municipalities to upgrade their water systems to remove lead pipes. Will the Premier then please explain why the Ministry of Infrastructure has cut its contributions to the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund by 100% this year?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I thank the member for that question. I'll read something from Health Canada that they put out when they changed their guidelines or their limits this year. Health Canada has messaged that municipal drinking water is still safe and that nothing has changed overnight about the excellent quality of our municipal drinking water.

Canadian municipal utilities continue to provide their communities with the safest water yesterday and the safest water today, and they will continue to provide the safest water tomorrow.

Health Canada recognized that their aggressive targets cannot be achieved overnight and there are significant challenges to meet them, mostly outside municipal authorities to address.

Our government is willing to work with municipalities and work with the federal government to ensure that municipalities have access when they're doing upgrades to replace those pipes. There's a Green Infrastructure Fund that's out there right now. We hope the municipalities are putting in projects that will fix those systems within the municipality.

Mr. Speaker, the testing is undergoing in all municipalities. It's public; it's on record. We're the best in Canada at reporting and ensuring that those tests are online and active and are ready for the public to—

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

1110

Mr. Jeff Burch: Again to the Premier: According to this year's estimates for the Ministry of Infrastructure, provincial funding for the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund was cut from \$111 million last year down to just \$1,000 this year—only \$1,000 for a program that provides funding for municipal water infrastructure so cities and towns can have safe drinking water.

How can the Premier claim he's helping municipalities improve their infrastructure when he has completely cut provincial funding for the program that helps municipalities improve their water infrastructure?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Just last November, the Chief Drinking Water Inspector reported that Ontario's drinking water is one of the best protected in the entire world. Ninety-nine per cent of municipal residential drinking water systems meet Ontario's drinking water standards. Ninety-five per cent of schools and daycare centres in over 87,000 test results meet Ontario's standard for drinking water, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I ask the member opposite to reach out to his municipalities, as mine has done, and put together a project for the green infrastructure fund. That is the way to access funding at this point between federal and provincial governments to help alleviate the costs.

But, Mr. Speaker, the municipalities are continuing to do their necessary testing and reporting. The Ministry of the Environment is continuing to oversee the test results. If there is an adverse effect, they have remedies in place to ensure that action is taken to take the appropriate measures to ensure that people are kept safe with their drinking water. Anybody out in their residence can go to their municipal office and ask for testing of their own tap water to see if there is lead involved. But we have a strong, safe drinking water program in place and we're continuing to support that in this government.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Vincent Ke: My question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. Speaker, as you are aware, November 3 to 9 is skilled trades week. All across the province, we are celebrating our tradespeople and the incredible work they do to keep our province moving. In the near future, one in five jobs will be within the skilled trades. With such a high demand, we need to be sure we have the people to fill them.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us about how his ministry is preparing our students for the jobs of today and tomorrow, and how we will address the employment gap within the skilled trades to ensure more students enter these great professions?

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you very much to the member from Don Valley North for that very thoughtful

question and for his great advocacy on behalf of all his constituents. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the member joined myself and the Premier just earlier this year for a tour of Seneca College's Centre for Innovation, Technology and Entrepreneurship, where we got to see first-hand the great and incredible work that our colleges are doing to prepare our students for incredible careers in the trades.

I can't think of a more proud profession to be a part of than the trades. Just look at the roads we drive on, the buildings we work in, the hospitals we get our care in and the schools we get our education in. Who built them? The trades. With all the advancements in technology, there's no better time than now to be a part of the trades. So I would encourage everyone in this House and everyone in the media gallery to spread the word: Be proud. Be professional. Join the trades.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you to the minister for that answer. It is great to hear that our government is actively taking steps to ensure that our approach to the post-secondary education system is adaptive and responds to the needs of businesses. In 2019, a career in the skilled trades does not necessarily look like the careers of the past. More than ever, students need to be equipped with the most up-to-date education possible.

Speaker, can the minister tell us more about how our post-secondary institutions are creating the next generation of tradespeople, and highlight some of the exciting opportunities before them?

Hon. Ross Romano: I am so humbled and privileged to be a part of this ministry, where my job is to make sure that our post-secondary students find great-paying jobs. That is why I started out in this role meeting with the presidents of all of our post-secondary institutions, all 45 of them, and I learned something very, very unacceptable, which was that the program approval process took sometimes in excess of two years. So immediately, we made changes to that, and before the House even resumed last week, we had already brought that program approval process down to six months.

With 81% of all trade apprenticeship training happening within the college system, these changes to the program approval process will allow more students to gain better access to programming and to ensure that our schools can give them the tools they need to access programs and training in the trades, in these proud professional careers.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. We know from teachers and students and families just how bad this Premier's cuts are making things in our schools, and now a new report from People for Education shows that student mental health is suffering because of it. The report shows that not only are there fewer support staff available at fewer hours—thanks to this government's cuts—but to make things worse, these cuts are particularly hurting rural students across the province.

Students, teachers and our schools are suffering. Will this government do the right thing, reverse these cuts and stop making life worse for students and their families?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I certainly agree that there needs to be more done to support our most vulnerable kids in the class: in urban and rural schools, English and French, in every region of this province.

The report calls for a more proactive intervention approach to mental health: positive mental health intervention for our youngest. It's why this government announced a historic investment, more than doubling the mental health funding in the province of Ontario, from \$14 million to \$40 million, as well as hiring 180 full-time psychologists, psychotherapists and support workers to support high schools right across this province.

The report also calls for de-escalation training for our staff, for our administrators and for our principals. We're doing that through a new investment announced just two weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, I know there is more to do. I think if we can work together as parliamentarians to ensure young people have the support they need, we could all know that our young people have the support needed to get through the difficulty and adversity of mental health challenges.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: The minister can talk the talk about mental health, but his cuts are making things worse for the most vulnerable children in our schools.

Let's talk for a moment about facts and not fiction: In the Upper Canada District School Board, cuts have meant they've lost their psychological associate and all 24 mental health and behavioural support workers—that is shameful.

Simply put, investing in mental health in our schools saves lives. Cramming more kids into overcrowded classrooms makes it harder for students to get the vital attention and mental health support they deserve.

Again to the Premier: Will he listen to principals, teachers and the experts, and scrap the cuts and stop jeopardizing the well-being of Ontario's students?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The Premier and all members of this caucus are absolutely committed to supporting the most vulnerable in the class. It is why our government announced more than double the mental health funding for the most vulnerable children in schools, from \$14 million to \$40 million.

It's why, for children with autism, who are on the spectrum, we more than doubled the funding envelope for kids with ASD. It's why for kids with special education needs we're investing more than any government in the history of this province: a \$3.1-billion investment to help those children.

These are the facts: 180 new psychologists, psychotherapists and social workers supporting high schools across our province. I know there's more we can do, but this government is leading by example, investing in the front lines and supporting the most vulnerable kids in our classes.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. As the minister knows, the Auditor General released her value-for-money audit on Tarion last week. The report found that Tarion failed to properly provide the consumer protection required when builders do not honour their warranties to new home buyers. The auditor also found that Tarion dismissed thousands of requests for homeowners who missed Tarion's tight deadlines.

1120

To put it simply, Tarion is not doing nearly enough to protect Ontarians as they buy a new home. Can the minister explain what actions our government is taking to ensure that Ontarians are being properly protected when buying a new home?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: First of all, I'd like to thank the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook for that amazing question, because this is a very important issue across Ontario. I can tell you, the first thing we started doing was that we started to listen and we started to meet with stakeholders, because we understand the importance of making sure that there is a proper warranty in place for new home buyers.

I have to remark on the fact that just last week, the member opposite from Humber River—Black Creek actually noted that in the Auditor General's report, it said that there was a complete lack of oversight by the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government. I agree wholeheartedly on that, because we've heard time and again examples of homeowners who essentially had the carpet yanked out from them because of the failure of that past Liberal administration.

I can tell you what we're doing. We have taken steps to establish a separate regulator. We are reviewing the feasibility of a proper insurance program. I've used my minister's power to compel the disclosure of—

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Back to the minister: It's reassuring to hear that you and our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, are working to strengthen protections for home buyers.

In addition to having concerns with protecting new home buyers, the Auditor General found that Tarion lacked transparency and accountability. Our government must ensure that Ontarians can have confidence that Tarion is fulfilling its mandate to protect Ontario home buyers. Speaker, could the minister outline how the government is transforming Tarion to ensure their number one priority is always to protect Ontarians who are buying a new home?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I want to put it on record that we very much appreciate the report that the Auditor General tabled on October 30. She had some very viable suggestions and rationale as to why home insurance for new home buyers—or warranty, I should say; the home warranty for new home buyers—needs to be reviewed.

I'm pleased to share with you—I said we're meeting with stakeholders. Tarion is taking their responsibility in

the previous oversights very seriously. They, too, are being progressive. We're working very closely with the board of directors to make sure we get home warranties for new homeowners back on track.

Another thing I want to share with you is that we're also taking a look at what we need to be doing to protect condo owners in the province of Ontario as well. We're going to be reviewing and working very diligently to make sure that we get back on track for condo owners and new homeowners after the dismal performance of a failed Liberal government. I look forward to—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Long-term care in Ontario is in crisis. As the Financial Accountability Officer exposed, the number of seniors waiting to move into long-term-care facilities has reached a record high.

People like Monique Shoppoff of Hearst have to be taken care of by their family at home. Mrs. Shoppoff is 87 years old, has problems speaking, can no longer cook or bathe herself and cannot control her bowel movements. She needs to be in long-term care.

Speaker, why is this government cutting long-term-care funding when people like Mrs. Shoppoff are left on their own, fighting for human dignity?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member for the question. For the first time in Ontario's history, this government is prioritizing the needs of our most vulnerable people—15,000 new beds for long-term care, 15,000 to be redeveloped. We've been working with our sector. We heard very soon after becoming a dedicated ministry to long-term care that there were issues in some of the funding streams, and we've addressed those. There have been no cuts to long-term care. I repeat that: no cuts to long-term care.

It is absolutely clear to me that the previous government, supported by the NDP 90% of the time, ignored the issue. For 15 years, long-term-care people waited on wait-lists—15 years. We are working with our sector. We are making sure we get our most vulnerable into the beds that they need and deserve, to help caregivers—

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Speaker, there are hundreds and hundreds of cases like Mrs. Shoppoff's in northern Ontario. My mother is one of them.

For the facility we host in Kapuskasing, which has 88 beds, there are another 98 seniors on the wait-list. A large number of hospital beds are occupied by people on the wait-list. In Hearst, the Foyer des Pionniers's wait time is three years—three years, Speaker.

We are talking about the people who have built this province, people who have done their due part to live the rest of their lives surrounded by love and care. Why does

this minister believe that seniors like Mrs. Shoppoff can wait three years to obtain the services they need and deserve?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again for the question. We recognize the issues that have been many, many years in the making under the neglect of the previous government. We don't just add water and create a long-term-care bed.

These are real people, recognizing the families and the caregivers and all the impact that it has on families. I feel that very strongly. Our government is making sure that we are streamlining the processes to get shovels in the ground, people in the beds faster, caregivers supported. We are working cross-ministry to make sure that we have staffing addressed, that we have the funding envelopes that are needed.

This is so much more than the previous government ever did or ever thought of doing. My own family has been impacted by this. I take it personally. Our government is dedicated to getting 15,000 new beds open and supporting people in the community. We will continue to work every day to get that done.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. Over the next five years, one in five jobs in Ontario is expected to be in trades-related occupations. This week, people and organizations all over Canada are participating in National Skilled Trades and Technology Week, a sector close to my heart. But raising awareness is not enough. Urgent action is needed to break down barriers so people can enter these rewarding, exciting and well-paying jobs.

Building a skilled trades workforce is a priority. Can the minister please tell us what the government is doing to make it easier for people to join the trades?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you to the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills for that very important question. We do have a challenge on the horizon. Urgent action is needed to ensure we have highly skilled workers to build Ontario's future. Mr. Speaker, my friend and Canada's Building Trades Unions director, Arlene Dunn, says that the construction sector needs 260,000 new workers over the next 10 years.

Our government is going to deliver for this generation and the next generation. That's why we moved swiftly to end the College of Trades, reduce membership fees for those in the skilled trades and lower the apprenticeship ratio. We want to create an apprenticeship system that's free from red tape, easy to navigate, and unlocks the potential of our young people so they can have a lucrative and great-paying career.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you, Minister. I am glad our government is taking this important step.

Minister, giving someone a hand up sets them on the path to success. It's how we put people first. Those who enter

Ontario's skilled trades choose important careers that lead to secure jobs, rewarding work and a good quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how the government is helping young people and under-represented groups join the trades?

1130

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, great careers await our young people in the skilled trades.

Last week I was honoured to join the Minister of Education, the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues and the member from Niagara West to announce the expansion of the Specialist High Skills Major. We now have programs in over 700 high schools right across this province to encourage young people to enter the trades.

But our commitment to the trades doesn't stop there. Last year in Ontario, 1,600 young people were exposed to jobs in the skilled trades through Ontario's Pre-apprenticeship Training Program. This program gets groups like newcomers to Canada, women, francophones, youth at risk and others who are unemployed or underemployed on track to becoming a skilled tradesperson. Mr. Speaker, our government is building the workforce that Ontario needs today and into the future.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, this government's decision to fund hospitals well below the rate of inflation, just like the Liberals did, is forcing London Health Sciences Centre to reduce staff and close beds, putting London patients at risk. To deal with a \$53-million deficit created by both Liberal and Conservative governments, London Health Sciences Centre is cutting staff hours and implementing a hiring freeze—the equivalent of eliminating 165 full-time positions. In October, it also announced the closure of 49 hospital beds, leaving even more London patients to be cared for in hall-way stretchers.

Speaker, can the Premier explain how cutting the equivalent of 165 staff and closing 49 hospital beds will fix London's hallway medicine crisis?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question, but in fact, London Health Sciences Centre has received funding across the board as part of the \$384 million extra this year over what was paid for last year.

Now, the hospital does make their own decisions, as you know. They have their own board of directors. They have to meet their own funding requirements within their own budget. So the decisions that were made by London were made very carefully, but also made to make sure that patients were not going to be disrupted, that they are going to combine what's going on with these services that will no longer be provided by the hospital—they will be provided in the community.

The hospital has worked very hard to make sure that there is no patient disruption, but this was something that

they needed to do in order to meet their own budget requirements, and that was their decision. It has nothing to do with funding, with respect to funding by the province.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, 11 of the closed beds are in the burns and plastics unit, which means the unit is effectively shutting down. Nurses with specialized training in treating burns will be redeployed to other areas of the hospital. When burn patients come in, these nurses, if they are available, will have to leave the other patients they are caring for, compromising the care those patients receive. Vulnerable burn patients will have to be transported through the hospital for special treatment, increasing their risk of infection.

Speaker, does the minister believe that removing the burns unit from London Health Sciences Centre is good for patient care?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The hospital in this case is enacting a capacity plan to standardize their approach to patient access and flow while improving patient safety and service quality. They are making changes according to the level of demand that they are experiencing, which is what I would expect all of us would expect them to do. They are making these changes based on what's available in the community, based on the level of demand that they are experiencing and what is necessary in order to enhance capacity in other areas. They are making decisions based on what's happening within their own community and within their own hospital.

That is something that is up to them and something they discussed with the Ministry of Health. We're supportive of their efforts to make sure that they can live within their funding envelope while still delivering excellent, quality patient care, which, of course, they are going to continue to do.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My question is for the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. Speaker, the simple fact is that we need more women in the workforce. Unfortunately, we know that gender stereotypes and gender biases develop early in life and affect the choices made by girls and young women. Often, these biases follow women into the workforce. To combat these, we need investments into programs that encourage and assist women to get into the workforce and move into leadership roles.

It was a pleasure to host the minister this summer when we went to YWCA Toronto and spoke with staff and alumni of the Moving on to Success program.

Can the minister share what kind of investments and initiatives we are making to support women in the workforce?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Scarborough—Rouge Park for that question. It was great to visit your riding this summer.

Our government knows the value of women in the workforce.

I was honoured to visit the YWCA this summer with my wonderful colleagues from the Scarborough area. They work with women and girls to provide them with skills and help them find employment.

I also had the chance to meet with Paro Centre for Women's Enterprise in Thunder Bay about the great work they're doing to encourage female entrepreneurs. They are celebrating 25 years of excellent work this November 7, and I wish them all the best.

Speaker, our government supports 23 women's centres across Ontario that work to increase women's employability, social inclusion and safety, which can lead to their fuller participation in the economy.

It is through organizations and initiatives like these that we can raise women up, get more women in the workforce and build a better Ontario.

TERRY FALLIS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to draw members' attention to the fact that tomorrow we have a very special guest visiting the Legislature: award-winning author Terry Fallis. We put notices on your desk. I would cordially invite all of you to attend.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I rise on a point of order pursuant to standing order 99, which deals with written questions. As per 99(d), "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sessional days," and 99(e), which states, "The answers to such written questions shall be given to the member who asked the question"—that's me—"and to the Clerk of the House...."

Speaker, I rise on this point because my question number 126 to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, tabled on May 1, was due yesterday, and my question number 127 to the Minister of Infrastructure was also tabled on May 1 and was also due yesterday.

I'd like to know when I can expect answers from these ministers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to advise the House that the member for Oshawa does indeed have a valid point of order. I need to remind the ministers that they are required, under standing order 99(d), to file a response within 24 sessional days to a written question, and the responses are now overdue. I would ask both the ministers that they give the House some indication as to when the responses will be forthcoming.

I recognize the Minister of Heritage.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: With the name change to the ministry, we had a little bit of a delay. We have signed off, though, with the new letterhead. So thank you very much for raising it and bringing it to our attention. We are going to make sure you get the information as quickly as possible.

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

This House is in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have with us today, in the Speaker's gallery, the consul general of the United States at Toronto, Mr. Gregory Stanford. He is here today with a number of members of his staff from the US consulate.

Welcome to Queen's Park. We're delighted to have you here.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: It is with great pleasure that I introduce two amazing guests to this House. We have with us, from Ohio, Mr. Tarunjit Singh. He is an activist. He is an academic, a professor of engineering, as well as an advocate for peace and justice. He will be our keynote speaker at tonight's reception, around the anniversary of the Sikh genocide of November 1984. So it's with great, great pleasure that I get to introduce Mr. Tarunjit Singh to this House.

As well, we have members from a local seniors group from Brampton. We have members from the Gore seniors group.

It is our great, great honour to have both of these amazing guests in the House today.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to welcome Mr. Ziad Malawi, the president of the Jordanian Canadian organization; Mr. Abdel Rahman Fraishat, Mr. Abdel Kareem Farhat and Lara Richard, representing the guests from Jordan; as well as the newspaper AL-Mersal, in Arabic. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HAMILTON NATURALISTS' CLUB

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I rise today to acknowledge and to celebrate the incredible efforts of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club.

The Hamilton Naturalists' Club is celebrating their 100th anniversary. That's 100 years of dedication to the appreciation and to the conservation of our wild plants and animals in Hamilton and the surrounding region.

One of their earliest achievements was the designation of Cootes Paradise as a nature preserve in 1927. As a result, generations of Hamiltonians have and will continue to enjoy the beauty of Cootes Paradise.

The Hamilton Naturalists' Club Christmas bird count is a tradition that dates back to 1921.

They are true leaders in the protection and conservation of our environment and natural resources. At a time when the government is cutting environmental protections and has no credible plan to address our climate crisis, the importance of public education and environmental advocacy is needed now more than ever.

Congratulations to the Hamilton Naturalists' Club for doing that work for over 100 years.

CITY OF RICHMOND HILL

Mrs. Daisy Wai: In March, the town of Richmond Hill officially became the city of Richmond Hill. Our amazing

community is growing rapidly, and I could not be prouder of the business community, which has helped the community to grow into where it is now.

Other than the business achievement award, the Richmond Hill Innovators of the Year Awards are presented to recognize innovative Richmond Hill companies. They are transforming industries and positively contributing to the Canadian and world economies.

On October 30, four outstanding homegrown businesses were awarded this prestigious honour, including Edsby, Opus One Solutions, iSign Media Corp. and Amico.

I would like to specifically recognize Edsby, which I had the chance to tour and meet with, along with my colleague MPP Michael Parsa. They were recently granted a contract to provide educational software to the entire country of New Zealand.

Our beautiful city is thriving. With our government building the subway to Richmond Hill, our city will grow even more, making it an even better place to live, work and raise a family. The best is yet to come. I can't wait to see what is next for our city.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Marit Stiles: The Davenport Diamond grade separation project will see a new raised guideway built over an existing rail line through densely populated areas of my riding, namely the Junction Triangle. Our community fought hard to get the former Liberal government to listen and work with us on this project, so we could see the benefits of access to the GO line and see this project benefit the people who live there.

But while the Minister of Transportation and the Premier are holding yet another transit-related photo op, people in Davenport are left waiting. They're waiting for answers about why the major public art component commissioned by Metrolinx was quietly scrapped over the summer. They're waiting for a promised community meeting to answer some very basic questions about how the project will affect their neighbourhoods, even while construction is already under way. As we face the prospect of more dirty diesel trains running through our neighbourhoods, people in Davenport are waiting for the GO electrification that the Liberal government promised would be completed in 2017.

Our community is tired of waiting. Will this government continue the delays and broken promises of the Liberals, or are they going to do the right thing? I'm calling on the Premier, the minister and Metrolinx to follow through on the planned GO station, deliver the public realm components and electrify our regional rail system, for the health of our community and our climate.

MOVEMBER

Mr. Roman Baber: Movember is meant to raise awareness of men's health issues, such as prostate cancer, testicular cancer and men's mental health.

Being a clean-shaven guy, I previously hesitated to mark Movember, but this year is different. As some of my colleagues know, on September 27, my paternal grandfather, Vladimir Ze'ev Baber, passed away. Although he was relatively elderly, he led a long and healthy life until he was diagnosed with prostate cancer about a year ago.

My grandpa raised me, together with my grandma, for the first nine years of my life. I consider him like a father. He had a difficult year fighting prostate cancer, but I won't dwell on or remember that. Instead, I'll remember his kindness and generosity; his unwillingness to speak poorly of anyone; and his eternal optimism that no matter the challenge, love for others, and especially love for one's own family, will help anyone to overcome any obstacle.

We laid him to rest on the evening of Rosh Hashanah, our favourite Jewish holiday. He is me, and I am him, and he will live in me forever.

Since he would probably say "Enough" by now, and "Chin up, Roman," I'll try to articulate a positive message.

Some of us guys don't take health too seriously. Whatever it is, we typically try to walk it off for weeks. We don't have time to see a doctor. So this year, in memory of my grandfather and to call awareness to men's health, I'm going to try and not shave until December. Life is precious. All of us are precious, and we're precious to the ones who love us, so take care of yourselves.

May his memory be a blessing.

1510

VETERANS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Today, as the critic of veterans, Legions and military affairs, it is an honour to speak about the importance of remembrance. Every year on the 11th day at the 11th hour in the 11th month, we stand together and honour those who have fallen. The sacrifices of fallen men and women can never be matched, but in a single moment of silence we do our best to acknowledge the courage of those who have fallen and those who still serve our great country, Canada.

As a long-time Legion member and a mother of a son in the Canadian services, I understand the significance of the poppy and how it sends a special message. It unites Canadians for a single purpose, remembering those who have come before us. Tens of millions of Canadians wear a poppy as a pledge to honour our nation's veterans.

I want to give a big shout-out this afternoon to Royal Canadian Legion branches 24, 138, 350 and 418 in my riding of St. Catharines for continually pledging support of Canada's veterans on a daily basis. To all Legions—because of our Legions, millions of dollars are raised and disbursed to veterans and families for every single year.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I want to wish a long-time Merritton Legion member, a friend, a veteran and a local hero, Ernie Adams, a happy 93rd birthday. We greatly thank you for all of your service you've done, Ernie. Happy birthday.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Randy Hillier: Over the last two months, I've engaged residents of Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston in a broadband Internet survey. Multiple questions allowed them to identify what their upload and download speed is, what they pay for their Internet service, who they are getting their service from and their level of satisfaction.

Here's what we've heard back: Over 1,300 people have responded, and over 93% are not getting the minimum speeds mandated by the federal government. More than half are paying between \$150 and \$300 per month. Almost half no longer have a landline and rely solely on voice-over-Internet or cellphones. Over a quarter of those residents run their businesses or work from home, making broadband a necessity.

Speaker, the survey tells us that the more rural you are, the less you get and the more you're going to pay for it. Even at this high cost, over 98% of residents have Internet. It is clear that broadband is a necessity.

The government has made a commitment to improve broadband in rural Ontario, but for this to happen, Hydro One must be more efficient and permit fibre-optic cables on their poles, which will allow rural Ontario to be truly open for business.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I am proud to stand today and speak about our government leading measures to end hallway medicine. I am happy to say that to date, our government has allocated almost 8,000 new long-term-care beds, which has fulfilled more than 50% of our five-year plan commitment.

Mr. Speaker, our government is setting up a precedent. There were no conversations about how to improve our health care system and how we can tackle these long waiting hours before this government. In Mississauga, there has been an allocation of 457 new beds and a redevelopment of 275 upgraded beds in Mississauga–Erin Mills, Trillium Health and a new project by the Mississauga seniors' care partnership project.

Mr. Speaker, we are standing up for our public health care. We have invested \$1.2 billion more than the previous government. We are fast and swift in making these great and needed changes because it takes time to see the effects. We can't wait any longer after 15 years of Liberal mismanagement that was supported almost every time by the NDP. We need a solution that will work for the long term. We are creating an environment and a plan for the people of Ontario to grow and prosper while protecting what matters the most.

SIKH COMMUNITY

Ms. Sara Singh: As a proud Sikh, it is an honour to rise here today and to discuss that we were out celebrating in the riding of Brampton, along with our Sikh brothers and sisters, this weekend at a tree planting, where along with

city council, EcoSikh and Khalsa Aid, the community planted over 550 trees to celebrate the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and give back to Mother Earth.

November is also a time of deep reflection for Sikhs as we mark the start of the Sikh genocide in 1984, when the government initiated systematic and cruel human rights abuses against Sikhs in India.

As we mark this solemn occasion in our history when so many of us were killed for practising our faith, it was a powerful and inspiring sight to see the vibrant Sikh diaspora community thriving and contributing to our local community here in Brampton. It was a beautiful reminder that they may have tried to bury us, but in fact, we were seeds, so we'll continue to grow and be guided by our faith. We will continue to flourish and rise and lift others up so that we all can thrive.

Despite the trauma that our community has experienced, the Sikh community continues to demonstrate its resilience around the world. We have turned our injustices into a quest for social justice for all; our inherent understanding of selfless service, the principle of seva, for humanity; and our unwavering determination to ensure that all human beings are regarded as one has shaped who we are as a people but also, more importantly, how we engage with the world.

We see these values exemplified through the work of organizations such as the Ontario Gurdwaras Committee, the Ontario Sikhs and Gurdwara Council, the World Sikh Organization, the Sikh Sewa Society, Seva Food Bank and the United Sikhs, just to name a few.

While we celebrate and reflect, let's continue to share these values with the world while we work towards peace, oneness and equality for all.

FUR INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: Many of us met yesterday with members of Ontario's fur industry. Over 10,000 people work in this remarkable Ontario heritage industry. They work as trappers, on small family-run farms, as designers, skilled craftspeople and retail furriers.

Ontario is now the largest producer of wild and farm-raised furs in Canada, supporting livelihoods and cultures in rural and remote regions, including First Nations communities.

Licensed trappers play an important role in managing wildlife, promoting healthy and stable furbearer populations while protecting property, habitat and human health.

Ontario is now home to the only two international fur auction facilities in North America, attracting hundreds of buyers from around the world and generating more than \$300 million in exports.

Fur has deep roots in our history, and it makes more sense now than ever before. It's renewable, natural and is sustainably produced, long-lasting and recyclable, and after many decades of use, it's completely biodegradable.

I hope everyone who did take the opportunity to attend the Queen's Park meetings with these talented and hard-

working men and women in our Ontario fur industry left with an understanding of the role that they play, a very significant role, in this province.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I rise today to share with the House some great news in our province as our government continues to cut expensive and unnecessary red tape for businesses and taxpayers across Ontario.

As hard-working business owners can tell you, the regulatory knot that has been stifling businesses wasn't tied overnight. It morphed and evolved over many years. Untying it carefully and effectively will take time and persistence, and we are going to do the work needed to get the job done right.

1520

I congratulate Associate Minister Prabmeet Sarkaria, who officially launched a new website on October 18. The site will provide a simple, straightforward way for businesses to contact the government with their regulatory concerns. Businesses are invited to submit their ideas on modernizing regulations and reducing red tape. Through this new website, businesses can tell our government directly how we can make Ontario work smarter for them, to help make them more competitive, support greater investment and create new jobs.

Our Open for Business Action Plan has set a target of saving businesses \$400 million annually by 2020. Actions like these have helped our talented and dedicated business owners create 272,000 jobs since June 2018.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That conclude the time we have available for members' statements this afternoon.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: I beg leave to present a report on Public Health: Chronic Disease Prevention, section 3.10, 2017 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Fife presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Catherine Fife: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I am pleased to table the committee's report today, entitled Public Health: Chronic Disease Prevention, section 3.10 of the 2017 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the membership of the committee at the time of the drafting of the report: the Vice-Chair, then Peggy Sattler; Toby

Barrett; Goldie Ghamari; Michael Gravelle; Jim McDonnell; Norm Miller; Christina Mitas; Suze Morrison; Michael Parsa; Kinga Surma; with special assistance from our own France Gélinas.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Public Health Ontario, and the medical officers of health from the Chatham-Kent public health unit, the Durham region health department, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and Toronto Public Health.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee and the staff in the legislative research service.

I would encourage all members to please read this report. It is very informative about the value of public health.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Fife moves the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Now I'm confused.

The ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

2345260 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2019

Mr. Crawford moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr12, An Act to revive 2345260 Ontario Ltd.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

HAGGART BELTING CANADA LTD. ACT, 2019

Mr. Crawford moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr15, An Act to revive Haggart Belting Canada Ltd.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

FRANCO-ONTARIAN COMMUNITY
ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA COMMUNAUTÉ
FRANCO-ONTARIENNE

Mr. Bourgouin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 137, An Act to promote the preservation, growth and vitality of the Franco-Ontarian Community / Projet de loi 137, Loi visant à promouvoir la préservation et l'épanouissement de la communauté franco-ontarienne.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Does the member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay care to give a brief explanation of his bill?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je suis très heureux et très fier de pouvoir déposer mon projet de loi visant à moderniser l'ancienne Loi sur les services en français.

Tout d'abord, j'aimerais remercier tous ceux qui, d'une façon ou d'une autre, m'ont donné un coup de main avec ce projet de loi, y compris la Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario et M^e François Boileau.

La Loi de 2019 sur la communauté franco-ontarienne :

—met en avant une définition inclusive du terme « francophone »;

—demande que le gouvernement de l'Ontario consulte l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario et les chapitres régionaux de l'Association des communautés francophones de l'Ontario chaque fois qu'il développerait ou modifierait des politiques affectant les droits linguistiques de la communauté franco-ontarienne;

—oblige les agences de paiement de transfert à respecter la loi et garantit que les agences ayant été consolidées ou restructurées doivent offrir des services en français; et

—exige le rétablissement du Commissariat aux services en français comme une entité indépendante.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jessica Bell: This petition is called “Stop Ford’s Education Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition. I’ll sign my signature to it and give it to page Pearl.

AIR AND WATER QUALITY

Mr. Parm Gill: I have a petition signed by over 5,000 residents in my great riding of Milton. It’s a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled, “Action Milton Demands Clean Air and Water.

“Whereas everyone in Ontario deserves clean drinking water and clean air to breathe;

“Whereas the proposal by James Dick Construction Ltd., for a licence for the Reid Quarry puts at risk Campbellville and Milton’s water;

1530

“Whereas operations at the proposed Reid quarry will negatively impact the community’s air quality;

“Whereas pedestrians, schoolchildren, cyclists and local commuters will be endangered by the 60,000 gravel truck trips projected annually for each of the 20 years of the proposed licence;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deny James Dick Construction Ltd. a licence to extract aggregate at the Reid quarry in Campbellville, Ontario.”

I will present this petition to page Owen.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition here entitled “Don’t Take Away Social and Economic Rights for Women and Marginalized People,” and it reads:

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

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

“Whereas Bill 66 further erodes women’s and marginalized people’s social and economic rights; and

“Whereas the” Conservative “government continues to remove, cancel or freeze funding for other supports, programs and regulations that would increase women’s equality in the workforce and beyond;

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

“—reinstate paid sick days, the scheduled increase to a \$15 minimum wage, legislation to increase pay transparency, regulations that support equal pay for equal work,

and all other worker protections gained under the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act;

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

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

“—reinstate funding increases to sexual assault centres;

“—restore the round table on” ending “violence against women; and

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

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

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank World War II veteran Mrs. Doris Labelle. She lives in a long-term-care home in Val Caron in my riding, but she goes around and collects names on a petition to improve the care in long-term care for me to present.

I also want to thank Mary-Catherine Tremblay, who delivers those petitions to me. They read as follows:

“Time to Care Act...

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I proudly rise on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario and students from George Brown, Casa Loma campus.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

“—eliminate tuition fees for all students;

“—increase public funding for public education;

“—protect students’ independent voices; and

“—defend the right to organize.”

I proudly support and affix my signature, and hand it to page Alexander.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FOOD SAFETY

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I have 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 support this petition. I am going to give it to page Rian.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This petition is entitled “Don’t Take Away Social and Economic Rights for Women and Marginalized People.”

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

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

“Whereas Bill 66 further erodes women’s and marginalized people’s social and economic rights; and

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

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

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

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

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

“—reinstate funding increases to sexual assault centres;

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

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

I certainly support this petition, and will be affixing my name to it and giving it to page Owen.

FOOD SAFETY

Mrs. Daisy Wai: “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

1540

“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 definitely support this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to Christian.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

FOOD SAFETY

Mrs. Robin Martin: “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 support this petition, will sign my name hereto and give it to page Jack.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 4, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I believe the official opposition has a speaker to put up. I recognize the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's a pleasure to once again rise in this House and contribute to debate on this important bill. I will be sharing my time with the member from University–Rosedale.

Bill 132, the better good business act something—the titling of these bills is adding up. I can't keep them apart any more. But I want to start positively, Speaker. I want to recognize a few of the things in this bill that I do appreciate.

With a background in the food industry, letting dogs on patios I think is a good thing. It's certainly something our business would sometimes struggle with, and I appreciate that. And making things easier for food banks: No one is going to argue against that. I think that it's a step in the right direction there, although I do think that my colleague from Beaches–East York in question period the other day raised a very, very important point about needing to take a systems approach to poverty, and that the rise in food bank use is the canary in the coal mine in terms of massive underlying problems that this government is failing to address. So, yes, let's make sure people can access those food banks, but let's try to tackle the bigger issues of poverty that underlie them.

The rest of this bill gets into a lot of other things, and, really, I think we can view it as a stakeholder bill. It's one of these conglomerate bills where there's a whole bunch of seemingly unrelated things that are brought together under one roof, and I think it's a pretty clear reflection of

the stakeholders that this government is listening to right now, and the priorities that this government has.

I asked a question the other day in this Legislature to the Minister of the Environment about schedule 9, and in his response he suggested I had not read the bill or that I was wrong and I should have attended a technical briefing. Interestingly enough, this bill was introduced on Monday, and just over 24 hours later was the one and only technical briefing that has been had for this bill. So with a very busy legislative schedule that we have—everyone in this chamber knows how many different directions you're pulled in—attending that sort of thing is very, very difficult. It's an incredibly crammed-together schedule for trying to attend one of these briefings.

I wonder why there is such a need to rush this piece of legislation. This is the same as any other bill that this government has rammed through the Legislature. They use time allocation on almost everything. They push it through incredibly quickly. A skeptic might say that it's in order to limit debate, to limit the exposure this may have in the news, and to limit the ability of members of the public from across Ontario to push back against this legislation. There hasn't even been enough time to really understand what is in this bill and what it is trying to do.

The other part is that it's not a particularly clearly written bill. This government had five months when they weren't here to write this legislation, to check it, to provide some clarity for what's in it, but, again, there's huge, vague—the words are incredibly vague. There's not a lot of indication, in sections of this, what it's actually going to empower the government to do. I believe that to be intentional. I believe that is so we can't get to the bottom of what the real intent of this bill is, and to give them a huge amount of freedom to change what it's going to do when it comes time to write the regulations that correspond with this, regulations that—who knows when they're going to arrive? We've passed so much legislation in this House, and I haven't seen any corresponding regulations written. I know that falls onto cabinet to write those regs, and it would be really nice to start to see some of those roll out so we can see the repercussions of the legislation that this government is passing, what it's trying to do.

I'd like to spend some time on schedule 9. I am the environment critic for the official opposition. The language in schedule 9, in particular the language to do with fines—this, again, was a question that I posed to the Legislature a few short days ago. It's lowering the fines and changing how they are actually imposed. We're going from a daily fine that a company could have levelled against them to a fine per contravention. Whether that contravention could count as an ongoing toxic chemical dump into a lake or waterway is completely up for debate. It's not particularly clear on that. In response, Minister Yurek, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, said that I was wrong and that there was a clause for monetary penalties based on any benefit.

I'm going to actually read that section here, because it's pretty open to interpretation: “The total amount of the administrative penalty referred to in subsection (7) may be

increased by an amount equal to ... the monetary benefit acquired by or that accrued to the person as a result of the contravention.”

1550

Now, I do understand that—I read it before, and I’m reading it again to the Legislature—but there’s one key word in there, Speaker, and it’s “may”: “The administrative penalty referred to in subsection (7) may be increased by an amount equal to the amount of the monetary benefit...” If you switched that out and said “shall,” I would agree with the minister’s response to my question during question period. But unless you switch out that word—which I am certain that this government will not do, because they do not adjust legislation after they’ve presented it to the Legislature. We have come forward with grammatical corrections in committee, and they are voted down by this government. It’s incredibly disheartening, I would say, to study this legislation, to try and improve it, and then go to committee and have it simply ignored and voted down.

That “may” is a big “may.” That leaves it up to the government to provide an enforcement mechanism, to have some sort of criteria, whether they’re going to proceed with trying to limit the financial benefit a company might have from choosing it. They may choose to not proceed with that at all, in which case the premise that I put forward earlier in question period would be correct: It would be financially beneficial to simply factor the fines into the cost of doing business, and go ahead with dumping those toxic substances into the land, expelling it into the air or putting it into the water in Ontario.

It’s a huge step back environmentally, again, and it is just another one in a long list of bills that are dismantling and attacking every significant environmental protection we have in this province, and at a time when the environment desperately needs our support.

I’d like to also spend a brief minute here talking about the changes that they’re doing to the Aggregate Resources Act. They’re doing this in order to make it easier to have open-pit quarries and to expand existing open-pit quarries.

Dianne Saxe, the former Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, had this to say about this:

“The process of both siting and approving the operation of pits (sand and gravel) and quarries (solid bedrock material such as limestone and granite) is often highly controversial and divisive for many local communities. Few people want to live beside an aggregate operation or its haul roads as they typically generate dust and noise and increase truck traffic.

“Aggregate operations can also impact local water systems, wildlife, natural habitats, and farmland. In addition, as pits and quarries often cluster together in groups—where nature deposited the most desirable types of rock—cumulative environmental effects can arise.”

This is a report by the Canadian Environmental Law Association on this bill: “Contrary to industry or government claims, CELA submits these existing safeguards are not red tape, nor do they impose an undue burden to the aggregate industry by wholly preventing or unreasonably

constraining aggregate extraction. In fact, the record amply demonstrates that new or expanded aggregate operations are readily approvable in Ontario, particularly since they received preferential treatment in the provincial policy statement issued under the Planning Act.” It’s already possible to do this. The regulations that they are removing are not going to lead to a massive boom in business, and they could have potentially disastrous environmental outcomes.

In summation—I’m going to wrap up here shortly and hand it over to my colleague from University–Rosedale—this bill, as I said earlier, is a conglomerate of disparate issues that don’t particularly belong together. There’s a section of it where they’re going back and fixing a bill that they have already tabled. This Legislature, this government, tabled it and made mistakes in it, and now they have to go back and fix those mistakes.

Perhaps, Speaker, if they slowed it down, listened to the opposition in committee or in this Legislature, and spent a little more time and had a little more care in developing the policies they put forward, this province would be a better place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Kingston and the Islands did say at the beginning that he was going to share his time with the member from University–Rosedale. We turn now to the member from University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker. Like the member for Kingston and the Islands, I will also be speaking about Bill 132.

Like much of the government’s legislation, the title has a vague Orwellian feel about it that doesn’t tell you so much about the actual changes that are proposed in the bill.

What I can say is this: It’s an omnibus bill. It has over 100 pages and 80 amendments, and it impacts a whole bunch of different ministries, from finance to municipal affairs to housing and the Attorney General.

I did have a look, and there are some benign, potentially positive amendments to this bill. Allowing dogs on patios or at least clarifying that piece of legislation is certainly good for people who have pets. Permitting people who are permanent residents to sit on library boards is, in my opinion, a very good move. Undocumented people, people who are permanent residents, landed immigrants, certainly use the libraries, and they should have a say in how libraries are governed. That is a good move.

The move to potentially loosen regulations on food banks—to make it easier for them to do what they do best and provide food to people who are really struggling to get by—makes a lot of sense. Food banks are not in the business of making profit; they’re in the business of helping people, seniors, working parents who can’t afford to provide food for their kids. They’re in the service of helping them. So loosening regulations on those food banks makes a lot of sense.

It’s also important to remind this House that food bank usage is going way up. My hope is that that serves as a warning bell to this government that the changes you’re making to our economy are having an impact, especially

on those who are very vulnerable. You cannot live in Toronto and earn \$14 an hour. You cannot do it. It is too expensive to live in this city. It means that people are being forced to get donations so that they don't go hungry.

What is also concerning about Bill 132 is what is not in the bill. This bill doesn't do very much to help people, even though this bill is called Better for People. I don't see anything in this bill that looks at addressing the capital repair backlog for all our public schools. We can see the impact of not investing in our schools when we look at the Toronto Star and see that there are 2,400 schools in Ontario that exceed the federal limits for lead. That means that when we drop our kids off to school, we have to say to them, "Please, don't use the water from the drinking tap, because our governments aren't doing the basic repairs to make sure that water is safe for you." There is no safe limit for lead. It causes neurological damage.

There are no measures in this bill, Bill 132, that address the hallway health care crisis that we have. I had the honour of getting a tour of Toronto Western, one of the major downtown Toronto hospitals, to see the impact of these health care cuts on the emergency room in Toronto Western. It was hard to watch. Toronto Western is over 100% capacity on many days. There were lines of paramedics in the emergency room with unconscious patients, waiting to hand over patients to nurses in the emergency room, but there was no one there to actually take charge of those patients or a bed to put them in. So they were just waiting there. Then there were health care professionals working so hard to keep this emergency room functioning. There's nothing in this bill to help those people.

There's nothing in this bill to help the affordable housing crisis that I am facing, that Toronto is facing, that is forcing many people to really struggle to get by. My riding of University–Rosedale is one of the top five most expensive places to rent in the country. When I go canvassing, I meet people every day who tell me they're being renovicted, who tell me they're looking at moving, who tell me that they don't know how they're going to get by. There is nothing in this bill to help them.

There is nothing in this bill to address the opioid epidemic that is ravaging our communities and destroying families, including in University–Rosedale. I met a police officer just this weekend, a community outreach officer who does a lot of work on Yonge Street, and he was telling me that there are people using in restrooms, in alleyways—everywhere. He said, "I desperately want to find a place for them to go, a detox place, a supportive housing place. There's nowhere for them to go." There is nothing in this bill to help them.

This is what this bill does include: This bill makes it possible to serve alcohol 24 hours a day at airports, okay? That's what this bill does. Currently, you can drink alcohol until 2 a.m. at Pearson airport or Porter airport; now this bill allows you to drink from 2 a.m. to 7 a.m. That says a lot about what this government's priorities are. There are all these critical issues that are facing people's daily lives—where they live, where they send their kids to school—and we're focusing on alcohol.

1600

This bill also removes the current interprovincial limit on the import of alcohol from other provinces for personal use. I just drove to Quebec and back. I did not get stopped. I don't entirely understand why this was an issue in the first place. I find that very concerning.

This bill also increases the number of products that tobacco and vape stores can sell. I do want to commend the government for tightening restrictions on vaping products recently, because it is a concern. But it does feel like this bill is rolling that back a little bit, because it is allowing for more products to be sold—it's allowing for more products that tobacco and vape stores can sell, and that is concerning because we don't know the long-term impacts of vaping yet. We are seeing very concerning instances of the impacts of vaping, and we don't know what the long-term impacts are, so I do think we need to take a very cautious and careful approach.

I do want to spend the rest of my time talking about two very concerning aspects of the bill. The first one is schedule 9, which makes a number of very worrying changes to penalties for environmental violations. It reduces the fines that industrial polluters face when they release damaging contaminants into rivers and streams. That is very concerning. Right now, big polluters are charged fines on a daily basis for their infractions. That makes a lot of sense, because you want an industry, when there is a case of pollution entering a waterway, to work as quickly as they can to rectify that problem. Having a daily fine means that they are financially incentivized to move as quickly as they can to tackle the problem. Well, now that's capped. So now what businesses will do is, they'll just factor the cost of polluting into their cost of business. It does mean that our waterways, our drinking water, our Great Lakes are more likely to be polluted. I think that will have a long-term impact on us, our kids and future generations. I think that's a great concern, and I urge you to review that.

The second piece that is of particular concern to my riding of University–Rosedale is the closure of the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre. This is part of this government's overall plan to make it much easier for developers to build wherever they want, whenever they want—70-storey condos, 80-storey condos—without doing the additional work of providing for the community as well. You can't just build and not provide the daycare centres, funding for local schools, so that kids who live in those condos have somewhere to go; necessary infrastructure supports, like capital investments into transit; parks, so that people have a place to go in the summer that's not in their apartment. All those necessary things that turn a riding into a community are something that developers should be responsible for. This government has taken many steps to make it much easier for developers to build without contributing to the community, and they've made it much easier for developers to build whatever they want without democratically elected governments having a say and without local communities having a say. I don't think that's right. It should be a balance, and this takes it too far in the wrong direction.

What I'd like to say is that this bill says a lot about what this government is for, which is loosening alcohol restrictions and distraction. It's not for the things that will really make things better for people: improving our schools, investing in education, making health care more accessible to everyone so that this province can be truly better.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Mr. Speaker, it's an absolute pleasure to be able to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 132, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act.

I want to take the time to acknowledge the hard work that the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction has undertaken, over the course of the past four or five months, to identify just some of the thousands of pieces of burdensome, unnecessary, duplicative pieces of regulation that are actually standing in the way of Ontario businesses doing what they do best, and that is growing our economy, growing their business and growing the number of good-paying jobs right across Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, after 15 years of a Liberal government, we inherited a mess. We inherited a massive debt. We inherited 380,000 regulations. What does that mean? It means there were pieces of regulation, obstacles in place, that actually hurt our economy and prevented businesses from doing what they wanted to do, and that is basically growing their business.

So what we did is, we came in in June 2018 and decided that we would tackle that. We actually appointed an associate minister who would take on the responsibility of identifying some of these obstacles that are in the way of doing business. What has happened? Since June 2018, we have an unprecedented number of new jobs in Ontario: 272,000-plus new jobs in the province of Ontario. Why? It's because we are going after this. We are dedicated to ensuring that we will create an environment for businesses to do what they do best.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Before I begin, I just want to acknowledge all the amazing members from Brampton who are here in this assembly today. We're here to fight for you, and thank you so much for your presence.

This bill shows how bad this government's priorities are in respect to Ontario. They are focused right now on one thing and one thing only: beer. They're focused on making beer available 24 hours at airports and making buck-a-beer a big thing, making beer available at parks.

Speaker, what Ontario needs, what we need, what Brampton needs is investment in services. That means investing in our health care. In Brampton right now, we just heard that we have health care institutions operating at over 587% capacity. This is wrong. Brampton deserves three hospitals, and we in the NDP are going to fight for these three hospitals.

Right now in Brampton, what we need is investment in education. Instead of cancelling universities like this Conservative government did in Brampton, we need to be

building universities. Brampton is a city of over 600,000 people, and we deserve and need a university.

Of course, life is getting increasingly unaffordable in Brampton, especially when it comes to auto insurance rates. We pay some of the highest car insurance in this country in Brampton, just by virtue of living in Brampton. If you have a clean record and your car is the same but you live in Brampton, you can be paying sometimes double other parts of this province. This is unjust and this is wrong.

This Conservative government needs to stop focusing on beer and needs to start focusing on issues like health care, like education, like affordability, because that's what our communities need to succeed. That's what Brampton needs to succeed, instead of these cuts to super-rich corporations and making it easier to drink beer in parks.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I'm just interested, listening to some of the comments we've had from the opposition, and specifically one from the member from Kingston and the Islands. There's nothing vague in this act. Since taking office, our government has met with stakeholders across this province, and we listened. We heard about ways to support our local small businesses, who only ask to be able to provide their products and do what they do best: sell.

During the winter I visited northern Ontario, and there, off-road vehicles are unallowed to cross some roads. If passed, this act will allow municipalities the authority to determine how they can be used on their local roads. We're giving them that authority.

Another example in this act is to repeal the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act from 2014, which is outdated and has never been used. We're removing that, Mr. Speaker.

We are committed to making sure our drug prices are affordable.

But I also fail to understand why members of the opposition always believe that our businesses should not succeed. They believe they should be punished for being successful. They put so much on the line. They take mortgages and loans just to start up a business. And they often vilify our job creators. Almost 98% of people are employed by small and medium-sized businesses.

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It's our job as a government to ensure safety first, to put in regulations that are necessary but also get out of the way of our businesses. That's why we have built confidence in our businesses and why we have helped create over 272,000 new jobs in this province.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: I want to respond to several comments that have been made today. I want to thank my colleagues from Kingston and the Islands and from University-Rosedale for their thoughtful debate and remarks.

I think that they pointed out a few things that I want to comment on, specifically around this government's priorities and where their priorities are and where their

priorities are not. We see in this bill that they certainly have a lot of priorities around alcohol and making it easier and easier to drink alcohol.

Speaker, I'm a fan of craft beer. My husband has been a home brewer for a long time. He makes me some delicious beer. We're big fans of dog-friendly breweries. Black Lab Brewing, in the east end, is just a little outside of my riding. It's in my colleague from Toronto–Danforth's riding. We go there all the time. I've seen the petition. They have it in the brewery. I've signed it. No one is against puppies on patios.

What we're against is a government that spends more time trying to make alcohol freely available in this province and listens to a handful of select industry stakeholders while completely ignoring parents of families with autism and while completely ignoring young people, who are watching their government sell their future down the river.

With regard to the environment and the climate crisis that we're in, where are your priorities when it comes to the climate crisis? Where are your priorities when it comes to families with children with autism? Where are your priorities for the hundreds of thousands of people on wait-lists for affordable housing in this province?

Fine, puppies on patios—but get your heads straight, guys. The people of Ontario expect you to be focusing on what matters most to them, and that's services for autism, it's health care and it's education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We will turn now to the member from Kingston and the Islands to conclude this portion of the debate.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you, Speaker. This shall forever be known as the puppies-on-patios debate.

Thank you very much to the members from University–Rosedale, Flamborough–Glanbrook, Brampton East, Mississauga–Streetsville and Toronto Centre for their comments during this debate.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville brought up a couple of items I'd like to address briefly here—one, the claim of meeting with stakeholders across the board. I've met with a number of environmental stakeholders. In fact, I've been reaching out to every environmental stakeholder and organization that I can find to see if there was one of them that the government contacted before deciding to write a piece of environmental legislation. And no, none of them have heard from the government. They were caught completely off guard by these massive environmental changes. They're just trying to catch up now. So I believe that they consulted stakeholders; I would just question which stakeholders they chose to spend time with and listen to.

No one on this side is arguing that we shouldn't allow businesses to do what they do best. I have a small-business background, and I know how burdensome regulation can be. But the regulations we're talking about—in particular, the fines—are there to protect against the worst offenders. If you need to level a fine at a company that is dumping toxic substances into the environment and shouldn't be doing what they're doing—if you get to the point where a

fine is necessary, that's a worst offender. That is not the vast majority of businesses in Ontario, who understand that that is not how you conduct business responsibly.

By taking away the teeth of those fines, you are making it easier for the worst offenders in those sectors to take advantage of this loosening of environmental rules. It's shameful, Speaker.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise to speak on Bill 132 today. Speaker, I have to admit that there are actually a few good things in this bill. I support making it easier for food banks and soup kitchens to serve people who are in need. This is an example of reducing red tape that's good. I support reducing red tape on businesses.

But I will have to tell you, Speaker, buried in this 92-page bill are some real concerns, and since my time is limited, I'm going to focus on two of them: Schedule 9 eliminates daily fines and caps total fines, which will inevitably make it easier and cheaper for industry to pollute in Ontario; and schedule 16 allows cabinet to define below-the-water-table aggregate extraction in the Aggregate Resources Act, which will inevitably make it easier for aggregate operations to threaten Ontario's drinking water.

I get worried every time I hear this government talk about reducing red tape, because inevitably, buried in that legislation—what they call “red tape” is really about providing protections for our environment, for our public health, for water, for the people and places we love. We saw it when they scrapped the Toxics Reduction Act. We saw it when they tried to open the greenbelt for development and poke holes in the Clean Water Act. We saw it when they gutted the Endangered Species Act.

Speaker, I feel like a broken record here, but I need to make something clear: Environmental protections are not red tape. Protections for public health are not red tape. Protecting drinking water is not red tape. Keeping our air clean, our land clean and holding polluters responsible for their pollution is not red tape. Why is this government making it easier to pollute by changing the fine structure for environmental violators, eliminating the daily fines and capping the total fines for violators? We need these daily fees to incentivize businesses to clean up the contamination as fast as possible, because we know that if we're going to protect our water, if we're going to protect people's lives, we have to clean it up as soon as possible.

Why is this government making the Aggregate Resources Act weaker? When I fought the mega-quarry, the Boston hedge fund that invested here did it because we have the weakest aggregate regulations anywhere in North America. Why are they weakening them even further?

Speaker, I urge the government to work with the public, to work with the opposition parties to fix the real concerns in this bill that threaten our water and threaten the people and places we love in Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I want to thank my honourable colleague for his speech. When I was elected in 2018, I

was honoured to be put as the parliamentary assistant in the ministry that was in charge of red tape reduction and small business.

One of my colleagues across referred to some of our businesses as the super rich and elite that we're servicing. Let me just put things in perspective for you, Speaker: 98% of employers in Canada are small business owners. Those are the ones that we'll continue to fight for. We will do it every day and we will not apologize for it.

My colleague mentioned this: When we got elected, when we looked at Ontario, we were absolutely flooded with overregulation and red tape, to the sum of 380,000, in comparison to every other province and jurisdiction, which is why we were losing jobs, which is why we lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Ontario was no longer attractive to investors. As a result, we lost all those good-paying jobs.

I'm proud of the minister who is now responsible for small business and red tape reduction for having gone through the process, meeting with stakeholders to hear directly from them on what we can do to improve the way they do business. This bill—just to address my colleagues—maintains health and safety and all environmental protections. We will never, never go away from that. But what we will do is make sure that anyone who's looking at Ontario to create good-paying jobs for Ontarians will once again look at us, because we want that title back. We want Ontario to once again be the engine of Canada's economy. We will earn it again.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege and an honour to stand on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitowish.

There are a quite a few members who stood up today and said, "Let's talk about the good things that are in the bill." It allows alcohol to be sold on a 24-hour basis in the airports; the removal of personal limits on cross-border alcohol imports; it allows barbershops to provide services without collecting names and contact information; and also it allows dogs to be with their owners enjoying a good glassful of good suds on the deck.

There are quite a few members who have brought this up, but I just want to bring you through an exercise, okay, Speaker? Be patient with me:

—Schedule 1: Foreign Cultural Objects Immunity from Seizure Act;

—Schedule 2: Line Fences Repeal Act;

—Schedule 3: Local Planning Appeal Support Centre Repeal Act;

—Schedule 4: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs;

—Schedule 5: Ministry of the Attorney General;

—Schedule 6: Ministry of Colleges and Universities;

—Schedule 7: Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade;

—Schedule 8: Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines;

—Schedule 9: Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks;

—Schedule 10—and there are quite a few under there: the Environmental Protection Act, the Nutrient Management Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act, the Pesticides Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act. I think you're getting my point, right?

I'm looking at the order paper today, Speaker. These are all important issues and we need to have that opportunity to have a debate. But according to the order paper today, by the end of today we're probably going to get close to maybe an hour remaining. How much do you want to bet—and I just went through half of the list that is in this bill—that the priority is going to be to ram this thing through this House and not give the public the opportunity to discuss it?

I'm not superstitious, but I can guarantee you I can smell the time allocation coming up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments? The Minister of Government Services and—

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Consumer Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That's the one. Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I have to tell you that I'm very proud to stand in this House today and support our Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction in what is a very important bill.

It's not lost on me that today the Chicken Farmers of Ontario are hosting their advocacy day, and I heard from them very loud and clear first thing this morning that they are saying thank you to Premier Ford and our Progressive Conservative government for listening to them and getting government out of the way of doing business in Ontario. Do you know, that theme and that appreciation is being heard time and time again, and I'm very proud to be part of a government that finally is getting it right.

I say that, Speaker, because I remember, back in the day, when I was general manager of a dairy co-operative, that I attended a meeting that the then Minister of Agriculture was at. She said in 2009 that for every new regulation that her government was introducing, they would take nine off the books. I know I have spoken about this in this House before, and it just didn't happen.

Fast-forward to today, 2019, 10 years later, and Ontario finally has a government that is getting this province back on track, creating an environment that is positive for increasing and growing businesses from one end of this province, in Windsor, right through to Vankleek Hill and north to Thunder Bay and beyond.

I have to tell you that this is something that we are all dedicated to in our caucus. I can't wait to continue to push the envelope in terms of making sure that we continue to hit the mark. Because we're not satisfied with 272,000 new jobs. We want to keep growing the jobs right across this province.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I have a suggestion for the Conservative government. In the galleries we have a huge delegation of seniors from Brampton. I want you to take time out and ask them what their priorities for Brampton are. I guarantee they will tell you that the ability to drink alcohol at an airport 24 hours a day is not one of their priorities. Instead, they will tell you that they want a university and they need a university in Brampton.

I want to take a minute to give you some context. In Brampton, some of our most fearsome proponents, some of our most fearsome advocates, for a university are our senior groups. Our seniors at every single event will have petitions; they'll have memorandums. They will make the need for a university in Brampton central to their program.

Think about it: It's a university that they themselves are not attending. They're not doing it for themselves. They're doing it because they are fighting for a city where young people can live and learn. They're fighting for the next generation. They're fighting to make Brampton better.

That's why I want to thank the seniors for their courageous work. I want to thank them for fighting for Brampton, because they understand that our city needs investment in things like universities. Another thing that they'll be advocating for at every single seniors event will be a university.

Hand in hand, they're fighting for a better Brampton, because they know that these are real issues that we're dealing with in our community.

We are dealing with a hallway medicine crisis, where thousands of people are being treated in hallways. We are dealing with an issue around investment, where Brampton is not getting its fair share. You can see that with the cancellation of the university.

Well, the NDP gets it. We are going to stand with these seniors, we're going to fight for a better Brampton, and we're not going to stop until we get a university and until we get the hospital that we deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll turn now to the member from Guelph to conclude this portion of the debate.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I just want to thank all the members for participating in today's debate, and the members in the gallery for observing the debate.

The member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill talked about the importance of small business, and I can tell you, as a small business owner, I couldn't agree more. We need to reduce red tape for small business. There's no doubt about it.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin talked about some of the good things in this bill, which I agree with. Opening alcohol sales in airports: Fine. Allowing dogs on patios: I'm good with that. I'm a dog owner myself. Making things easier for barbershops: Good.

The Minister of Government and Consumer Services talked about making things easier for chicken farmers. I agree with that as well. As a matter of fact, I talked to them today. Let's remove the red tape for virtual net metering, so they can put solar panels on their roofs and make some good money doing it.

The member from Brampton East talked about the importance of public services, and I agree that we should be investing more in public services.

What worries me is that, oftentimes, when this government talks about reducing red tape, there are some good things in the bill, but then there always seem to be these elements of the bill that threaten public health and environmental protections.

I mentioned that one of the first things I did when I became leader of the Green Party was to work with farmers and members of the community in Melancthon township to fight the Melancthon mega quarry. The reason a Boston hedge fund chose Ontario, to put the largest open-pit mine—or what would have been the largest open-pit mine—in North America here was because we had the weakest aggregate regulations in North America.

To support a bill that weakens those regulations even more, I think, is wrong. To put forward a bill that weakens regulations to protect our water is wrong.

Let's fix this bill and take out the things that threaten public health and the environment.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the bill that was brought forward by the Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to speak just a little bit about some of the processes that a previous government undertook when it came to red tape reduction. It was the Mike Harris government, between 1995 and 2003. There are some similarities between when that government came to office and when we came to office.

Of course, one of the big similarities was that there was a large deficit that had to be tackled in the province of Ontario, and the Mike Harris government went right to work tackling that.

It was also a time when regulation had increased dramatically, and it was largely regarded that because of that increase in regulation, business was starting to leave the province of Ontario.

There was, I think, at that time a million people, when we took office, who were relying on social assistance. Businesses were leaving. It was really just a very bad time for the province of Ontario.

So, the government at that time sought to do something about it. What they thought they could do, in addition to balancing the budget and reducing taxes for our small, medium and large job creators, was that they could tackle red tape.

At that time, red tape reduction and regulatory reform really wasn't something that was on the table anywhere in Canada, and they created what was called the Red Tape Reduction Commission. They became a North American leader in terms of reducing red tape, reducing regulatory reform and putting the focus back on good regulation and those things that actually protected the economy, protected individuals and helped foster safer communities across the province of Ontario. That was what the focus was.

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Fast-forward a little bit now to our government. When we took office, we faced a similar financial situation. Some 350,000 jobs had been lost in the manufacturing sector because of the policies of the previous Liberal government. Red tape had skyrocketed to the largest amount of red tape and regulation in Canada. Some 360,000 regulations were on the books.

What this meant for our small businesses is that it really stifled their ability to grow. It stifled the ability for jobs and economic growth. What we heard from a lot of communities—I know in some of the communities that I represent, both Markham and Stouffville talked about how many different things they had to do in order to do small things within the municipality. Whether it was environmental protection—they would talk about that there being more paperwork involved in it than actually getting the inspectors out and doing the job that we want them to do.

So we brought forward, with the minister, of course—and really, it's something that all members on this side of the House were seized with: How do we unleash the economy? How do we protect what matters most to the people of the province of Ontario, in the context of a multi-billion dollar deficit, at a time when there was global uncertainty both with our friends down south and with issues with respect to the European Union and Brexit? How do we regain those jobs that we lost?

We set about doing a number of things. Obviously, balancing the budget—we're on track to doing that—but also looking at regulatory reform. We knew that it was unacceptable that Ontario should have twice as much regulation as our nearest competitor—if you want to call it a competitor—British Columbia, Mr. Speaker. So we knew that we couldn't allow that to happen and that we had to bring something forward for our small, medium and large job creators that would unleash their potential.

But at the same time we also heard from our partners, in particular municipally, who said, "Look, we want you to do this as well. This is very important to us that you do this and that you focus on this, but we want to make sure that we preserve what really helps us, what protects our communities, what protects the environment, what makes us better at doing our jobs." And I think the minister really was able to do that in this bill, so I want to commend the minister and I want to commend the parliamentary assistants for doing that. I think they struck a very good balance on this.

I hope that all members, as they reflect on the totality of what is in this bill, will recognize that it's good for our small, medium and large job creators, and ultimately it's good for the people of the province of Ontario. I hope all members will join with me in supporting this bill.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: It's my pleasure to rise and say a few words on Bill 132, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. I think I'm going to focus on housing, and I'm going to also focus on education.

What we really need in Ontario is more affordable housing, and I don't quite see that this bill does that for Ontarians and certainly not for people in Toronto–St. Paul's. If we look at schedule 15, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, it's interesting, because this bill repeals section 34.1 of the building code, essentially dissolving the Building Code Conservation Advisory Council. I'm wondering why the government would want to dissolve a board that provides free advice on housing and the housing needs of Ontarians, in exchange for an ad hoc consultation process. That's concerning. We have a consistent pattern with this government shying away from consultation with key stakeholders. In my opinion, the key stakeholders are the people who put our butts in these seats: our constituents. Those should be constituents at every economic level, not just those who are in the 1%.

If I move on to education as well, this government has said, "We're investing \$1 billion in education." Well, here's the thing: We're \$16 billion in debt in regard to our school disrepair. We need to fix our schools to ensure that they are healthy schools.

I've got six schools on the list, courtesy of the Toronto Star's advisory piece, that are failing lead tests. What are we doing for those schools in Toronto–St. Paul's and those schools across Ontario?

There are a lot of things that the bill needs to do right if it's really going to be a bill that's better for people, better for business and, of course, better for Ontario.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: First of all, I want to thank my colleague and our House leader for his passionate speech highlighting some of the important changes that we're introducing in this piece of legislation, Bill 132, Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019.

I also want to thank my colleague from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, who has also done a tremendous, tremendous job in his previous role as a PA in this particular portfolio, which has led to this piece of legislation brought forward by Minister Sarkaria, who has, of course, spent a fair bit of his time, since taking on the role, meeting with stakeholders, talking to businesses, travelling around the provinces and really talking to Ontarians in terms of how we can make their life better and how we can support businesses.

Mr. Speaker, some of these stats are staggering. It's incredible if you look at it: \$52 million in reduced costs to help businesses; \$126 million in net savings to businesses by cutting red tape; \$160 million in reduced fees, charges and levies to businesses. To date, \$338 million in reduced costs to businesses.

It's no secret—obviously it's been mentioned over and over in this Legislature. Since our government has taken office in June of last year, we've created 272,000 jobs, and that's what Ontarians expected from us. We're delivering on the promises that we campaigned on, and we will continue to do that until we return Ontario back to being the economic engine—

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the speakers earlier, including the House leader. To summarize, there are two key pieces in this bill, Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, that affect my riding of University–Rosedale that I'm very concerned about. One is the closing of the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre, which provides practical support to communities that want to go up against big developers and navigate the extremely difficult planning process and the OMB process. The reason why that centre is important is because, in my riding, we are ground zero for development.

You go to 1 Bloor—you've got an 80-storey condo there. I've actually canvassed the people living there. That's not affordable housing; that's a site where people are parking their money for investment purposes. There are very few voters in there. These developments that are being built are not necessarily helping everyday Torontonians. So I'm very concerned about getting rid of this Local Planning Appeal Support Centre. Everyday people need to have a say about what kind of development is happening in their neighbourhood.

The second piece in this bill which I'm very, very concerned about is the decision to make it much cheaper for companies to pollute. A company now has a cap on how much money it can pay in order to emit pesticides or toxins into our waterways, which end up in the Great Lakes. That's very concerning because we've seen what happens when you don't properly regulate water. You've got situations like Walkerton where people died, and that's the legacy of Mike Harris. You've got situations like what happened in Grassy Narrows where even now, 40 years later, children are still bearing the impact of what the Reed Paper mill did by dumping tons of mercury into the river ways. We don't want that here. We need cleaner water, and we need—

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

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Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm happy to rise to make some comments about some of the presentations we have heard today on this bill. I think it's a really important bill. I think what we're really talking about is creating jobs in Ontario. Everybody knows that's important—not just any jobs, but better jobs, and how are we going to make this an attractive place for businesses to create those jobs? It's working so far, as we've said many times. Our government now has a record of making conditions better for businesses, and businesses have created 272,000 jobs in Ontario, which we're very proud of. It's really important for everyday people. That's why we're here—to have those good opportunities and better jobs. That's what this is all about.

One of the things that I'm really excited about in this legislation is the Ontario College of Art and Algoma degree expansion part of it. That is streamlining the process to review and approve new post-secondary programs and degrees, and to make it easier for universities and colleges to train students for jobs in high demand and in emerging fields. I think that this is really important. As I said before, we're trying to make things easier so that we have more jobs and better jobs for people, and this is part

of the way we can do it. So we're speeding up the approvals process, reducing red tape by eliminating duplicative processes so that post-secondary institutions will be able to offer new programs faster, in order to meet labour market demands. That's great. That's the way it should be happening. It's a no-brainer. It's something we should do, for sure. These changes will significantly reduce the approval time for these new programs to three to six months, which will help young people to train for high-demand and emerging jobs. I think this is really important.

We did consult quite broadly on this. My friend from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill did 52 consultations, so we do think—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We'll wrap up this portion of the debate by turning to the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, thank you to all of my colleagues who spoke to my presentation. I do appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker, honestly, it's an important bill. I can appreciate that there are elements of the bill that the opposition just simply don't agree with, and that's fine. They might have differences of opinion with respect to what the penalties should be on certain items. But to then move to the point where members across are saying that we don't care about people, or trying to suggest that we don't care about the environment, that we don't care about people's health—it really distracts from what should be the emphasis of the debate.

What are the elements in the bill that you don't agree with? Is it the size of the penalties? Is it the fact that there are more people who will now be subject to environmental penalties? Have we not gone far enough? Have some things moved too fast? That should be what this is about.

Since we've gotten back here, I think on both sides we've been trying to take the personal out of the debate in this place. It's such a frustration for people when they watch debate in this place. As opposed to focusing on what is in bills, they focus on the personal. They focus on, "Oh, Mike Harris did that." Well, if you don't like things that Mike Harris did, fine; talk about it based on fact, and we will debate you based on fact. But when you hurl insults across the way, as we keep hearing on this—"You don't care about this sector. You don't care about that sector"—that's where you start to lose the people of the province of Ontario. It should not make its way to the floor of the House, and that's what we've constantly been hearing. If you want to have a fulsome debate, we'll give you a fulsome debate. We're not afraid to debate what's in the bill, but if you want to have a personal debate on it, take it outside of the chamber, because the people of the province of Ontario have no time or patience for that level of debate anymore. So I hope, going forward, that members opposite will live up to the spirit of that.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It's always an honour to rise in the House and speak on behalf of my lifelong home community of Humber River–Black Creek.

Just having listened to the previous speaker, I would like to talk about something. I'm a first-term MPP, so one of the first things that I asked about some of the longer-serving members was a question on what it was like under the previous government, and in particular, what it was like when the Conservatives were the opposition, and if I want to get a little more specific, how did the Conservative opposition feel about the government of the time?

One of the things that came up—I was just a regular person watching on TV what was happening here at Queen's Park and partaking in it through the newspapers and in other ways—was they spoke of the arrogance of the previous Liberal government and how frustrated the Conservative opposition at the time was. They talked about how the government at the time seemed to be, apparently, using the structures of power in government to stifle debate, to make it harder for the opposition to be effective. This is what irked them. This is what frustrated them. They spoke of omnibus bills: legislation where lots and lots of different, unrelated things were patched together, put forth, rushed through and voted on, and how much it irritated the Conservative opposition at the time.

I find it interesting now, being a part of the official opposition facing a Conservative government, how much things have changed, how much they must have forgotten. I know that there are a lot of new members just like me on the other side, but the ones who have been here for many terms prior—I don't know how they justify it to themselves. I ask myself, when they put forth legislation: Who are they listening to?

When I look at this bill, Bill 132—which is about 100 pages long, almost, proposing 80 different changes across 15 different ministries—it's not like this stuff that's here is going to be a massive change for businesses whatsoever. There might be something that I'll get into a little later, but I find it a little worrisome. These are small-potato things, but they allow the government to come and say to people much later, "Look what we're doing to stop red tape." It's convenient, right? It will be a bullet point: "This is a number of things that we did."

For most of the stuff here, it is small potatoes, but I would like to talk about something—and I know my colleagues have addressed it, but it is this distraction item that keeps appearing here in the Legislature. It's the item of booze: beer, alcohol. I don't understand what the obsession with this government around that is. I guess that if you're sitting at home feeling very frustrated with this government and you imbibe alcohol, probably if you imbibe a certain amount of it, it won't be as irritating. Maybe that's it: We make it easier for people. I don't know; I really don't understand it.

What have we seen? We've seen legislation that allows the 24-hour-a-day serving of alcohol in an airport. Where did this come from? What stakeholder approached members of this government and said, "You know what really bugs me? At 5 a.m., I really want to be able to get a few shots of beer or alcohol in an airport"? But okay, here it is. That's fine.

We're talking about getting alcohol across provincial lines. We saw the buck-a-beer that this government talked

about—there still is no buck-a-beer out there; I don't know—but it was something that was a really, really major facet that they talked about over and over again. It's really a distraction.

I also have to say that when I go out there and I talk to constituents at events or at their doors, when the issue of beer and alcohol comes up, it's usually brought forward by them to ridicule the priorities of this government. It's not something I bring up. But it's certainly not something I've heard from people in my constituency, saying, "You know what? This is what really needs to change. Beer needs to be a buck," or, "I really want to be able to attend a sporting event and drink in a parking lot." I'm sure that there are some people who care about that, but I haven't heard it in my constituency.

This concept of ripping up the Beer Store contract, which could lead to millions and millions of dollars of litigation—again, I haven't heard a demand for that by constituents in my area.

But I have heard about other things. I've heard about auto insurance. It was mentioned by another colleague. In my community, just like Brampton, where we pay some of the highest rates in the country, where people are paying double the rates of other places, for people with clean driving records who have a job outside of Toronto and need a vehicle, the value of their vehicle is actually less than their insurance premium.

If they want to talk about red tape and saving money—they're interested in some sort of movement on that—I hear about residents waiting in lines in hospitals or being treated in hallways. I just heard from a friend whose cousin, actually, broke his foot and sat for two hours in a hospital in Toronto before he could see a triage nurse.

1650

Yesterday, on opposition day, we talked about bringing a much-needed hospital to Brampton. That was voted against by this government. I know there were residents from Brampton sitting earlier in the gallery who are hearing about other priorities; however, the big issues in Brampton—a university, a hospital—are ignored.

In my community, we have parents with new children that are being forced to make a decision between daycare or work—again, ignored by this government.

Precarious temporary work: There have been deaths of temporary workers in my constituency, and yet any moves or conversations about labour or workers' rights—this government seems to want to rip up those rights rather than help or empower workers. It's a shame.

I have to state again: What is the need for these large omnibuses? A lack of obvious consultation with stakeholders. One of the things that is really surprising—actually, I retract that; it's not surprising. It is a theme that has happened with this government: It's an obsession to want to develop in green and environmentally protected lands. It's something that came up during their election. It came up again and again and again. It came up with Bill 108, which I'll get into a little bit later. But here, in schedule 9, this bill will significantly lower fines under the Environmental Protection Act for those who pollute our environment and water supply.

Keith Brooks of Environmental Defence released a statement on this, stating:

“Despite the claim by ... the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks that proposed changes to administrative monetary penalties will hold polluters accountable, the changes will have the opposite effect and make it less expensive to pollute in Ontario.

“The proposal in schedule 9 of Bill 132 to eliminate daily fines and cap total fines will make it easier and cheaper for industry in Ontario to illegally dump sewage in our water, use toxic pesticides and pollute the air. Under the Water Resources Act ... the maximum fine used to be \$100,000 per day. In Bill 132, the proposal is for it to be a maximum of \$200,000 per contravention.

“Reducing the fines for polluters will lead to severe consequences for the environment and Ontarians’ health.

“It is ... deceptive of the Ontario government to claim that it is doing more to hold polluters accountable, when they are actually cutting the penalties polluters face. Ontario must cancel schedule 9 of Bill 132 and actually increase the fines for polluters” if you want to discourage them.

I echo Keith’s statement and I also call on the government to cancel this particular schedule in Bill 132. Under the current regulations under the water protection act, people who pollute our water supply are to be charged not less than \$5,000 and not more than \$4 million on a first conviction. On a second conviction, the penalty increases to not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$6 million per day—once again, per day. Schedule 9 eliminates that and caps fines for those who pollute our water supply and poison our drinking water with a maximum, one-time fine of \$200,000. This is simply unacceptable and shameful.

Consider the difference; consider the urgency. If you have a leak, a spill, you would just be fined: “Okay, here it is. Here’s your fine. It’s one-time. Take your time in cleaning it up.” As the poison and the toxins are just permeating through our water, our air or wherever it is, there’s no incentive to hurry up, and ultimately the high end of those fines are brought down considerably. Obviously, we know what this is going to do: It’s going to make it easier. It could make pollution just simply the cost of doing business for these companies.

This legislation was in place to protect against the poisoning of water. Consider—this has been brought up here and in the Parliament of Canada—Grassy Narrows First Nation, whose drinking water is still poisoned five decades after an old pulp mill dumped mercury into nearby rivers. That is a terrible shame. To make it easier for companies to get away with this is reprehensible. Now they want to set maximum, one-time penalties of \$200,000 on people who poison our water supply system, for whom the consequences of their action could poison people for generations?

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, Bill 132 places a maximum one-time penalty of \$100,000 on people who poison our drinking water, a resource so vital that without it no life on the planet could be sustained. Right now, the law states that individuals who are first-time offenders will

be charged a penalty of \$20,000 a day, and a maximum of \$50,000 and possible jail time for subsequent convictions. Corporations who poison our drinking water are charged a maximum of \$100,000 a day and then \$200,000 for subsequent offences.

The government is now proposing to cap the maximum penalty for corporations who are multiple offenders at half of what they would have been charged a day under the current legislation.

Again, what incentive does it provide to a corporation being charged with a raw sewage spill to take immediate action to stop it from further contaminating this water supply if it will be charged the same amount regardless? It is just so obvious that it’s not going to discourage them. The company could let the sewage spill into our water supply indefinitely, and they’d still be charged the same amount as if they’d stopped the leak immediately. It’s terrible.

What’s worse is that this would eliminate the possibility of jail time for those who pollute our drinking water.

I’d like to remind the Legislature of how the Safe Drinking Water Act came into place. It was passed by another Conservative government in 2002, following Justice Dennis O’Connor’s recommendations following the Walkerton inquiry, after seven people were killed and thousands became seriously ill in the town of Walkerton in 2000, when municipal drinking water was contaminated by E. coli. This tragedy came about through negligence, and there were attempts at cover-ups to hide this.

One of the lessons we learned was that environmental regulations and standards that exist to promote public health should not be cut or removed or be considered wasteful red tape. I think that if these Conservative members asked their constituents if protecting their water supply and protecting the air and protecting the environment from poisoning is considered red tape—and to make it easier for people to pollute, and to reduce overall fines and reduce the incentives for these people to act in a timely manner to clean up—I really want to know who on their side will speak in support of this. It’s wrong.

In his report, Justice O’Connor criticized the government of the time, and discouraged any new environmental regulations that would be implemented that would stop public health from being protected.

Next year, we’ll be approaching the 20th anniversary of the Walkerton disaster. It makes me wonder: Has this government, the Conservatives, really learned anything at all, since they seem to be doomed to repeat prior mistakes? Will it take another Walkerton—heaven forbid—for this government to realize what level of mistake they’re about to commit?

There are changes to the Pesticides Act. It’s interesting, because I sit here listening to this government criticize the federal government on the way they want to handle the environment. But then, with regard to the schedule talking about the Pesticides Act, they seem to be fully willing to rely on federal inspectors and federal regulations to take care of that.

They go further. The maximum penalty for individuals who contravene the Pesticides Act is a maximum of

\$20,000 a day for a first-time offence, and a maximum of \$50,000 a day for subsequent offences, with the possibility of jail time. For corporations, the maximum is \$100,000 a day, and \$200,000 a day for offences after that.

What's happening here is that corporations who are multiple offenders under the legislation will only be fined a maximum one-time fine of half of what they would have been charged per day under the current legislation for poisoning our environment—once again, per day.

What kind of incentive is that? It shows what the priority of this government is. It is for them to take direction from their donors and big corporations. That's all it is. They're trying to serve spaghetti dinners indefinitely, as I've discussed before. But, hey, that's the priority of this government. That's what matters most: padding the pockets of the richest Ontarians and corporations, who are doing just fine, thank you.

Without the threat of daily fines, there's no real incentive for people or corporations to make cleanups.

The other thing that schedule 9 changes is that, if a spill were to happen, penalty fees would be collected by the Ministry of the Environment, and those funds would be sent to local conservation authorities, where they would be spent on cleanup activities. That's how it is now. But under this new bill, it would be up to the government to spend—we don't know, actually. We really don't know where the money would be collected, in terms of these fines. They would be much reduced, and the incentives would be reduced. They would take these fines and, rather than help clean up and do remediation, they would go somewhere to a priority of their choice.

I'd like to bring attention to schedule 16, another regulation that has potential to put our drinking water at risk. It amends the Aggregate Resources Act, allowing mining companies who operate quarry pits above the water table to sidestep municipalities when making applications to extract aggregate from below the water table. This means that if a municipality has a zoning requirement in place which prevents digging for aggregate below the water table, companies can now apply to a separate board that has the ability to override municipal decisions to prevent the digging of aggregate in certain areas.

1700

This could lead to weakened groundwater protections, which are critical to our ecosystem. Because many municipalities in this province use groundwater as a source of their drinking water, municipalities should be able to set limits on how deep miners are able to dig, especially when it comes to drinking water.

I'd like to go back to Bill 108. This is something that was really, really disappointing for me. The NDP at the time pushed—because the OMB would always rule on the side of developers and against the will of communities, something called the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal was set up, which has been significantly weakened under this government. And there is something called the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre, which is going to be torn up.

I'd like to relay something, as time is running out: I was a tenant for most of the years of my life, growing up in my own community. Year after year, landlords would raise the actual rent. They had a guideline and they would often go beyond that. They would say that they've done this renovation or that renovation, and most tenants did not have the ability to really defend themselves at tribunal. So whatever the landlord asked for, they would generally get. That's how it was.

But in Toronto, there was something called the Tenant Defence Fund, which was created by progressive councillors in the city of Toronto—according to this government, their enemies—and it protected tenants. It said that if tenants could sign up enough people, they could contract a paralegal at a reasonable fee—the city of Toronto would help them—who could actually go through the paperwork and protect tenants in these large buildings. This has been a very successful program in the city of Toronto in helping tenants.

That is what the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre could have been: a small measure to help communities when they are against development in their own backyard or in their own neighbourhoods. Rather than strengthening the ability of communities, they just want to help their developer friends. We see it over and over again. This is one of the priorities of this community.

I held a town hall meeting on Bill 108. There were about 100 people in the room who were absolutely furious about the fact that this government would allow developers to invest less in their own communities. Now, to tear up any attempt to provide people with support when facing developers is shameful, and I hope that their own constituents know this.

Schedule 10: This seems to be one that I don't think many people will have noticed. Like all of us, I have many seniors in my community. I want to commend libraries that are helping seniors get on their tablets and learn how to use email and get on computers. But for many seniors, they do prefer paper when it comes to information. So to essentially force seniors to have to opt in on paper around pension plans—I don't think, at least in this time and age, that we're there yet. I don't think that will be welcomed by many seniors.

As time runs out, I'd like to mention one thing, and that's the 407. If you ask people about the 407 in my constituency and probably in yours, I don't think you'd get a lot of support and happiness about the 407. Who are they listening to? They kind of alluded to it in earlier speakers: It's these big corporations. The fact that the 407 is actually in here, an amendment favouring them—when you were at the table, through you, Speaker, why didn't you ask them to stop ripping people off? If they're calling you up, if they're calling this government up and saying, "Make it easier for us to collect money from people," this was a great opportunity for this government to say, "Why don't you set fair rates?" Of course, they're not going to do that. These are their donors; these are their friends. So while they distract people with easier access to alcohol to allow people to be inebriated, hopefully they won't notice the

things that this government is doing. They are making their super-rich friends and donors richer and richer, and the people in my community and communities across Ontario are suffering and only getting poorer. It's shameful. This government should do better.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): A point of order, the member from Carleton.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to recognize, from the city of Ottawa, Councillor Scott Moffatt from Rideau-Goulbourn, which is in my riding of Carleton; as well as Pieter Leenhouts, chair of the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority; and Sommer Casgrain-Robertson, general manager of the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, from the great riding of Carleton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Not exactly a point of order, but we're always pleased to welcome visitors, especially in the afternoon during these debates.

Questions and comments?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: It is a pleasure to stand and speak to Bill 132. I am so very excited that our government is prioritizing getting rid of prohibitive red tape, so that Ontarians from all sectors and walks of life can have better lives.

Less fees and regulations is something that is sorely needed in this province. That, to me and to all of us, I think, is a no-brainer.

Revoking the current provincial training requirements for dry cleaners will help small business owners, such as Sketchley Cleaners, a constituent of mine in Scarborough Centre, save time and resources that can be used to bolster their businesses and work on reducing their environmental emissions.

Removing the requirement for the drug notification form to be included in drug submissions, when it is already duplicated elsewhere, is again a common-sense decision.

Allowing the funding of alternative drug products, on a temporary basis, for drugs for which there is an inadequate supply is—you guessed it; there's a theme here—common sense, and it keeps us healthy.

Allowing barbers and hairdressers to do their jobs and conduct their business without having to collect the names and contact numbers of customers, which is not necessary to their businesses, is again common sense.

Ontario is completely bogged down in unnecessary regulations that have piled up during the Liberal government's tenure, and this is costing all Ontarians time and money. All of us deserve better.

This should be easy for all of us, on all sides of the House, to get behind. We are making life less complicated, and we are becoming more user-friendly across all sectors and all ministries—and 272,000 new jobs have already been created. Just imagine how many more we are clearing the way for, by giving Ontarians more time and by putting more money back in their pockets.

This is a great-news bill. It is for the people, and it shows that we are serious when we do say that Ontario is indeed open for business.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, it's always a privilege to stand on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin and speak to some of their concerns.

It's refreshing sometimes, during these afternoon debates, when you hear from certain members that remind you as to why you decided to run, and why you took your place, and why it's always an honour to be here in the House. I want to thank the member from Humber River-Black Creek, because he reminded me of a lot of the reasons why I ran for office.

When I talk to constituents back home, I talk to them about our priorities, as far as us as a party, and the opposition, and all three parties. You look at where our priorities are, and I choose to believe that is we're all trying to make Ontario better. I choose to believe that we all want to see better health care. We want to see the funding that is needed in our hospitals. We want to see the funding that is needed in our schools. We want to see the investment into our hospitals.

I always tell my constituents that what makes us different, what makes us click, what makes us serve in the seats that we hold here, is our list of priorities, and where those issues stand for us on our list of priorities, and what's up at the top and what's lower at the bottom.

The member from Humber River-Black Creek talked about some of our priorities that are there, and which he hears from his constituents, and which I've heard from mine as well, which are auto insurance, the wait-lists, making proper decisions when it comes to hospital funding, daycare and precarious workers. I've spoken personally with the individual in regard to the incidents that have happened in his riding.

Clean drinking water—these are some of our priorities. Reducing fines for big polluters, beer, puppies on patios, and capping fines for industrial big polluters—those are the priorities of the government. They're certainly not ours.

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

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: C'est un honneur de me lever aujourd'hui et de parler au sujet du projet de loi 132 pour mieux servir la population et faciliter les affaires.

La loi de 2019 est la troisième d'une série de projets de loi dans le cadre du Plan d'action pour un Ontario ouvert aux affaires. Le projet de loi introduit de nouvelles mesures pour alléger davantage le fardeau réglementaire afin d'aider les entreprises, les particuliers, les écoles, les hôpitaux et les municipalités.

1710

L'Ontario élimine les obstacles inutiles pour les banques alimentaires, les organisations à but non lucratif et les oeuvres de bienfaisance impliquées dans les dons d'aliments et l'alimentation communautaire, afin de faciliter l'aide aux personnes dans le besoin. Le gouvernement ontarien propose de permettre aux organisations qui servent des aliments à faible risque, comme les pommes et les produits préemballés, de

fonctionner sans équipement de nettoyage industrialisé destiné aux restaurants et à un manutentionnaire certifié sur place.

L'exemption proposée fait partie de l'approche réfléchie et ciblée de l'Ontario visant à réduire le fardeau réglementaire dans plusieurs secteurs, notamment l'agriculture, le camionnage, la construction, les soins de santé et les restaurants. Il apportera des avantages directs aux personnes dans leur vie quotidienne, tout en facilitant les affaires, la création d'emplois et la croissance des salaires.

Alors, monsieur le Président, vous voyez que ce projet de loi est pour le peuple de l'Ontario et pour sauvegarder ce qui est le plus important pour nous tous. Aujourd'hui, j'ai parlé ce matin à propos du fait qu'on a beaucoup de sans-abris dans notre ville de Toronto. Ce projet de loi va aider les organismes dans notre province à aider ces gens.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm rising once again to speak on Bill 132. I'd like to start by saying thank you to our member and colleague and friend from Humber River–Black Creek for that passionate debate that you offered us. I just want to take an opportunity to highlight again some of the pieces that are problematic.

Actually, I'll start with a positive one; why not? At the end of the day, I think permanent residents being able to sit on library boards is an excellent amendment. That is something that really speaks to equity and inclusivity. We should all have a voice at the public libraries.

But I also want to mention that Bill 132, in the repealing of women's garment regulations, specifically targets women workers. We have to ensure that every bill that the government is putting forward has an equity lens, so I do ask you to consider the impact of Bill 132 on women workers within the garment industry.

I also want to say, as well, thinking of my mother, who is a senior citizen, that the thought of her having to opt out of electronic communications around her pension—that would be very, very scary for her. I don't even know how she'd opt out, because she wouldn't even know she's in if it's all through electronic communication. While we all want to move to a digital era where we are preserving our environment the best way we can, we need to ensure that our most marginalized and vulnerable populations are moving in a way that's also realistic and allows them to feel like they belong and that they're still represented in the legislation that this government is putting forth.

Lastly, this bill really does read like an early holiday gift for polluters. If people are not being charged the full maximum for polluting our water, our drinking water, what does that say—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We'll return now to the member from Humber River–Black Creek to summarize what he has heard in the last 10 minutes.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the members from Scarborough Centre, Algoma–Manitoulin, Mississauga Centre and Toronto–St. Paul's. To the member from

Algoma–Manitoulin: It does mean a lot; I have a lot of respect for you, and to hear such positive words means a lot to me, so thank you.

Just a word of caution to the government that I want to offer: During my own election, I met a lifelong Conservative voter, and he voted for me. He voted NDP in the last election, because he said that the Conservatives have completely lost their way on environmental issues, and that was it. It was all about, "Why are they building on the greenbelt?" This past federal election, someone astounded me, a person who was very, very Conservative when it came to fiscal policy and everything else. He had voted Conservative his entire life, and for the first time in this federal election, he didn't vote Conservative. Again, he cited the environment. He said that he could not in good conscience vote for a government that was so offside when it came to such a critical issue. These were lifelong Conservative voters.

I want to tell this government that whatever small, innocuous gains, whatever small amount of "red-tape reduction," as they say, exists in this bill, it's completely offset by schedule 9. It is completely offset by reducing penalties and actually creating disincentives to want to stop companies from polluting. The overall reduction in what polluters will pay if they poison our drinking water, if, heaven forbid—and we are now facing the 20-year anniversary of Walkerton. If such a thing happens again, where a catastrophic pollution event happens, this government and all of its members who vote for this will be held to account.

Consider removing the schedule, consider your constituents and consider the province of Ontario.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise—

Interjections.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I'm not sure where to go on questions and comments. Further debate?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): One second.

Further debate? Third and final time. I recognize the member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My goodness, what an exciting afternoon this is, Speaker.

I am so excited to stand up and speak on this bill, because we want to make sure that debate doesn't collapse. Because when debate collapses, that means that the bill is shut down and then it gets to another stage in this whole process. So here on our side of the House, in the official opposition, in the NDP, we want to make sure we continue debate on the bills as long as members want to speak.

I actually was looking through the bill, and one thing that stuck out to me was the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre. That has been removed. It's no longer in

place. But what happened originally, if I can give some context around it: The Ontario Municipal Board was very hard for the public to navigate around. The Liberal government finally listened to one of our NDP members, Rosario Marchese from Rosedale, I believe it was—Rosedale-High Park, I think it was?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Spadina.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Spadina. Thank you. It's been a long time.

They finally listened and made those changes. What the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre was about—it was about a friendly way to make sure that the public could engage in the zoning process locally. Because what had happened was that developers had the upper hand when it came to development in communities, and the public felt that their voices weren't being heard. People felt it was tilted and it was very much pro-developer. The developers got what they want because, of course, they had all the resources to do that. They are a very big entity when it comes to politics. We know that this is the case because before the Premier, Doug Ford, was elected, we heard that there was a bit of a clip, a recording, where he was talking about opening up the gates for people to build on the greenbelt. Once that was discovered, then of course the backpedalling happened and the explanations that, no, they would never do that.

Now having the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre in place was actually a very good thing, because it allowed the public to have a voice and challenge development that happens locally every day in every city, small, large or mid-sized. The interesting part about this particular section of the schedule of this bill is that there was no official announcement by the government. They didn't put it out there like they normally do when they're doing all kinds of good things they think are going to help people. They put out announcements like long-term-care beds that they're going to build, that were technically reannouncements. But again, they're reannouncing those things thinking that's going to make people understand that they're helping them.

1720

In this particular case, there was no official government announcement, and the government didn't let people know they were deciding to close it. Of course, as a result, professional services for the public—the website was put on, and there was a little message about how the government has decided to close down the centre, and that their services to the public weren't available any further, and they were going to shut down on June 30, 2019, and wind down the business.

If you've ever dealt with a legal issue, it can be very, very complicated and daunting to the average person. The OMB—it was a very complicated process. What the planning centre did was try to help citizens navigate their way through that at a very low cost, if not free.

For instance, they would take neighbourhood agencies or groups, and they would guide them through meetings when they had to appeal these things. They would help them through the zoning process, which is, again, very complicated.

At that time, the OMB was the complicated piece. Everyone felt that it was biased towards developers. So we came into the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. We had the centre as a way for the public to engage.

When you have a development in your neighbourhood or in your city, I think it's really important that we have local voices contribute to the healthy development of the community. When you have developers coming to the table, maybe not all of them, but many of them are about squeezing out as much money as they can, maybe building a bigger development on a piece of land because they're going to get an optimized amount of money out of it. But that might not serve the community or local neighbourhood well. That was why it was really important to have public representation—being able to be represented, and understanding what their rights were and how to navigate those appeals. But that is no longer. That has been taken away.

We are in a situation, especially in London, where housing is a huge issue. We have an affordable housing crisis. When I talk about affordable housing, I think it should encompass not just the market rates but also geared-to-income, and also co-operative housing and the affordable housing market. When we talk about affordable housing, that should be a compilation of how we see that forward.

I'll speak for my city of London. Affordable housing, whether it be social housing or co-operative housing or market-value housing—and we know there's some inclusionary zoning that's happening—should also be spread out, and properly planned. When you start pushing housing markets or housing styles or housing models specifically into one part of a city to the other, that also creates further problems.

Taking away the centre, I think, tips the scales into developer-biased planning, and people feel like they're not being heard at the table.

I encourage this government to look at a different avenue, perhaps, where the public can engage, and the public can get some legal opinions and advice on how to navigate appeals. Otherwise, we're going to have this bulldozing over municipalities, over cities and neighbourhoods, where people are not going to be happy.

When you talk about things working for people in legislation, making it part of people's decisions—this is what we do here.

The House leader earlier talked about this legislation and what we can contribute to it, and not taking things personally. But legislation is personal to our constituents. It affects their lives every day. Some of these things drastically change how they live.

We're talking about ODSP and OW changes. Those things drastically change people's lives. Maybe it needs to be looked at and reviewed. But the way it has been done—the way you do things, you push them onto people rather than having a conversation first and listening to stakeholders to see what their challenges are, what barriers they've got. The people who receive a service, how are they receiving that service? What can work better for

them? What are some obstacles? And then even talking to the ministries—what their obstacles are, what their challenges are in managing that ministry.

I think doing things like that will create a better society and a better Ontario, and it will make your legislation more accepted by people rather than feeling like, “Oh, my gosh. We are getting all this stuff handed to us, and now we’re in crisis and chaos. We’re going to start our organizing”—and that’s one thing this government has done. They’ve really woken a lot of people up to wanting to organize and pay attention, so that’s something that’s good, but paying attention in a hopeful way, a way that was going to improve their lives, I think, would have been a much better way of bringing people on side.

I can tell you, even with the conservation authorities—they’re worried, because that was imposed on them. They’re going to change their mandate. I was talking to a councillor about this, and they said—they’re on the Upper Thames conservation board, and one of their mandates, of course, is to make sure that they look at flooding. They manage flooding. Yes, tree planting isn’t a mandate, but that’s part of how you help flooding: You plant trees. So there’s a conflict there, and for whatever reasons this government has, they haven’t acknowledged that those things are there. Now they have delayed some of these things, but it’s cold comfort to the groups that have to say, “What’s happening to our whole system that we have? What’s their intent? Do they really understand what our mandate is? Why don’t they pick up the phone and talk to us before imposing these ideas?”

We know that this government had to roll back many legislative pieces. Again, maybe they’re thinking it through, but they’re not getting the right pieces of the puzzle to get the whole picture of how to do that. I hope they’re going to change their mindset. I hope that, going forward, they’re going to understand that is not a way a government—a leader—should roll out legislation. It shouldn’t be that way. But their pattern of behaviour so far, even up until Bill 124—putting time allocation on it, squeezing in the presenters; there aren’t very many presenters. Are you really listening to what people are saying so that you can actually thoughtfully do it? I’ve heard from people across London saying, “If changes are going to happen, we just want to understand what those things are. We don’t want to have them rammed through. We want to be part of the conversation so we can contribute to those changes.”

Some of the changes I don’t agree with at all, and then there are some that we might have to look at and massage and get things done in a different way. But doing it this way—announcing something; then six and a half hours of debate; then time allocation; then a day for presenters; then saying no to all amendments that we bring forward in committee; then bringing the bill back and ramming it through, saying, “Yes, we’ve done our job. Everybody is happy, and we can’t be criticized for it.” Absolutely you can be criticized for it. It’s not a way to operate.

I do want to bring out the alcohol piece, and many of my colleagues have discussed it. It’s of particular interest

to me, because if we’re going to promote alcohol—and that’s the way the government wants to set that path—we also need to educate around alcohol. I can tell you, I read an article recently where it talked about emergency room visits by age group. There was alcohol poisoning, and the health care costs that happened because of alcohol poisoning really could be avoided. But when you open up alcohol, even in airports—I mean, I know someone across the way talked about starting their vacation early. For me, my vacation doesn’t mean that I can start drinking early and now my vacation has started. For me, spending time with my family, the moment that happens, yes, that’s when my vacation starts.

1730

Going on a plane, taking a plane and having people around me who hopefully haven’t drunk too much but who don’t have a good measure of what their alcohol level is, and then having to sit beside people on a plane who drank a little too much because they “started their vacation” and it’s party time for them—how does that impact the passengers’ experience, ones who really aren’t worried about or concerned about alcohol being available before they start their flight? How does that help the airline staff if they have to manage that?

I don’t know if that’s really an important thing. You’ve got it now in grocery stores. You’ve got it now in convenience stores. You’ve cancelled the contracts for the Beer Store. I’ll tell you, I was at a charity event recently. It was for a women’s shelter, and we were collecting empties. I have to tell you that the people in London—Fanshawe are very generous when it comes to donations. They are hard-working people, and they recognize that they’re so fortunate. If someone else is in need, they’re willing to give. So we were collecting the empties, and amazingly, they were donating left, right and centre, walking in, and we didn’t even have to ask. They came up to us and said, “What are you guys raising money for? How can we help?” It was so refreshing to see that, and that’s why I think I’m really, really proud of being the representative for London—Fanshawe. When people are in need, that’s a riding that steps up to help those people in need.

But the piece I wanted to bring to attention is that I was talking to the two people I was working with for the charity drive, and they were very concerned. They were very concerned about this government’s step about the Beer Store contract cancellations. They were worried for their jobs. One woman said she had a full-time job now, and she’s a single mother, and she said, “I don’t know what I’m going to do. I’m mid-forties, and if my job gets phased out, I don’t have a university education. I interrupted that because I had to go and work and pay off my debt and had a family. So where am I going to be? Am I going to go back to school?” All unanswered questions. Really, really, you could feel the tension and the anxiety around those conversations. It’s because we’re talking about accessibility of alcohol. The Beer Stores do a great job, and they provide really good, permanent jobs with benefits. There are Beer Stores all over my riding. You don’t have to go far to get spirits and beverages.

Then what you're also doing—and there was a radio ad recently on CBC about how the spirits industry want to now open up the avenues for them to sell spirits. It's not just about beer and wine. I don't know if the government thought about that future upcoming situation when they decided, "Well, we're going to do this." Now you've opened up the gates to have a discussion around spirits. But what you should have thought—and I'll be honest with you—is, "If we do this, how will the spirits industry sector be affected? Is that going to be something we have to consider?"

I don't think your future planning entered your legislation. I think it's almost like a knee-jerk reaction that you're doing things for the moment. When you don't plan for the future, that's when we can end up in problems and situations you didn't anticipate. And who pays for it, pays for it economically? Money, of course, pays for it, but also, who pays for it in other ways, in services? That would be the public, people who depend on public services.

I was talking to a mother who came into my office about addictions. She was explaining, and she wanted to know why there is a gap if someone goes and gets help from Thames Valley's addiction services. They get in there, and they're there for 30 days, and then they have to wait another 30 days for a bed. She was saying that what happens is her son relapses every time. So when we talk about making alcohol accessible—again, long-term planning: Where is your long-term planning when someone is looking for help, when they get that help when they need it? Because it is an illness, and when they're ready for that help, the help should be there, otherwise time stops and people—you know, you can't catch them again, right? They're back on that cycle.

Some of my colleagues talked about how there are some good things in this bill, but there are very concerning things. We talked about making less penalties for the environment. That isn't incentivizing people to make sure they meet all the regulations and do good. What they're doing is that they're outweighing the risk for the penalty: "Well, if I do something for the environment and I don't get caught, and even if I do, can I still afford that? Can I still afford to do that and still be okay?" That isn't a good thing, lowering penalties, especially when it comes to our environment.

I know the Conservatives across the way want to make sure that their grandkids are going to be able to have a good life on this planet, but part of that is looking after the environment, and I don't think they've been very good stewards so far of the environment. They could have made some changes, yes, to some of the climate pieces, but again, they did it so quickly and so fast. I think some of them might have some remorse when it comes to how quickly they acted. Why not think that out before you just say, on a whim—the Premier, Mr. Ford, at the time said, "We're going to scrap it." Based on what? Based on what discussions?

Those are some of the things that I think this government still has to internalize and get right when it comes to legislation, when we're sitting here talking about pieces

that are supposed to be helping people. The government's slogan is "for the people." Well, a lot of this legislation is for developers, as I talked about. A lot of this legislation is for alcohol sales. That isn't a good way to drive our economy. Let's think of more productive ways to help people.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: It is my honour to rise in the House today in support of the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. I have been very active in the business community, and they always have been expressing to me their concerns on how the various red tape has been a hindrance to their business development. In fact, I know that this bill will have all kinds of things for different industries to support so that we can cut back a lot of red tape.

Allow me to just focus on one of them to demonstrate how this can help businesses. This one is on the laws around the sales of homes and businesses. We found that there is a lot of red tape, and it's unnecessarily complex. It creates a barrier for people to easily understand the protections that apply to them.

The laws around the sale of homes and businesses are unnecessarily complex. By repealing the Residential Complex Sales Representation Act, we will be able to simplify a lot of things and let the people who are in the business, who understand and know things better, to direct the path, and then not let the government come into play. It saves businesses and Ontarians time and money, allowing them to focus on what matters most.

Our government and the Real Estate Council of Ontario have both agreed that this will be better. It will let the consumer have the protections that they still have, but then let them make the real decisions for their real estate. Cutting back the red tape will make businesses enhanced even further.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I would like to first thank our colleague and friend the MPP for London–Fanshawe for a wonderful debate on Bill 132.

1740

I would like to spend some time reflecting on the piece around allowing alcohol to be sold at airports 24 hours a day. I, like many adults, enjoy an adult beverage; however, my concern is that when we have alcohol at airports 24 hours a day, or in any establishment 24 hours a day, or we have buck-a-beer or all the other "genius" inventions that this government across the aisle has put forth, we cannot do that when we are callously cutting, by hundreds of millions of dollars, mental health supports.

I just had a meeting in my office this afternoon, speaking to a local organization who are distraught by the opioid crisis that we are dealing with across this province. In my opinion, when we have a situation where alcohol is available 24 hours a day in an establishment anywhere in Ontario, and we don't have mental health supports readily available 24 hours at every institution across Ontario for every Ontarian, we have an issue.

When we have a housing crisis that has made many, many residents in Ontario—residents in every single one of our ridings—oftentimes precariously housed, unable to pay their rent, unable to ever fulfill the dream of buying a home in Ontario; when we have children who are bullied in our schools because there aren't enough mental health workers in our schools—I just think there are better priorities. Again, nothing against an adult beverage, but there are better priorities if we really want to be the best province we can for people and—

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I only have two minutes, so I'm going to focus on one point, which is reducing the red tape on the approval process for colleges and universities for offering new degrees and courses.

When a new area in technology opens, all the students and all the IT and technology specialists all over the world look into finding a way to get into this new leading-edge technology. The only way to get through that is to get to a course or training or a diploma to be specialized and to be the first to the market, to the employers, where the jobs are hot and good-paying.

The process currently for any institute to get approval takes around two years. Technology keeps advancing every day—I would say, even every minute. So in two years, by the time the colleges and institutions get the approval, the course is already outdated and needs a new process of approval to get the updated version of the course. As I mentioned, new technology areas open, and new technologies, and people who are specialized in them rush to get into this job market within, I would say, a six-month period, because that's when the jobs are hot and there's a shortage, and they become a handful of experts where they can be offered good salaries, good-paying jobs with good salaries.

That's not only inside Canada, but those institutions are attracting students from all over the world. By removing this red tape, we are actually getting talented students from all over the world to prosper in Ontario and benefit our job market here as well.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: I want to touch on an issue that's very important to my riding that the member from London—Fanshawe spoke about in her remarks, and that's the issue of housing and how this bill is going to negatively impact housing in my riding of Toronto Centre.

Speaker, I'll tell you a little bit about my riding. It's the smallest, most densely populated riding in the country. I have more than 100,000 people in fewer than seven square kilometres. In those seven square kilometres, we have the highest concentration of social housing and we have the highest concentration of co-operative housing anywhere in the country.

With all of that housing, you'd think that we wouldn't be in a housing crisis, but nonetheless here we are. We have more people on a wait-list for affordable housing than we have housed in affordable housing. Not a single

co-op in my riding has an open wait-list. The wait-list is more than 10 years long at every single one of them, and those co-ops have shut those wait-lists.

Here we have a government that doesn't seem to care that our communities are in a housing crisis. Instead of putting my community members first, instead of putting their needs for more housing first, they're putting the needs of the wealthiest and the richest among us ahead of what we really need, which is purpose-built, affordable rental housing; it is more investments in community housing; it is more co-ops. What we don't need is a government that's cutting the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre—which is enabling developers to railroad, to steamroll over my riding so that they can put up multi-million-dollar McMansion shoeboxes in the sky. I don't need more multi-million-dollar condos on every single corner, Speaker. I need community housing that is safe. I need co-ops that are affordable. I need purpose-built rental housing and I need rent control. That is what the people in my riding need. They don't need this. They do not need this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Now we'll turn to the member from London—Fanshawe to wrap up this portion of the debate.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. You know—

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you.

I have to say, there is a lot in this bill, and it touches on so many points. When you open up the act, the legislation, they're talking about the Payday Loans Act, the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, the Funeral, Burial And Cremation Services Act—it just goes on and on. The Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, the Public Libraries Act—again, that's a good thing. They're allowing our permanent residents to participate in their community; that's a good idea.

But all these little pieces—it's like a housekeeping bill, but we do need to examine these things. We need to examine them because a lot of them are, of course, left up to regulation. Once this legislation leaves this House, those regulations are compiled and they don't come back to be debated. So the intent of some of these schedules and these items within these schedules, we really don't know until regulations are formulated—and then how does that translate out again to the people that we serve?

I hear the passion from everyone in this House, this side opposite and our side here, about red tape from that side. No one disagrees with regulations, but there are good regulations and there are not-so-good regulations. Again, we need to understand what that looks like before we ram these things through. It's not a good idea to paint all regulations like, "We've got to cut them. They're red tape." There are good regulations that do good things for people, and those ones we have to acknowledge.

One of the ones I have to stress is the environment. Cutting those penalties isn't a good move, in my point of view, Speaker, so I hope the government will rethink some of those things.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good afternoon, Speaker. It's always good to see you in the chair. I am pleased to continue the debate on Bill 132, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act.

What's clear to many residents, whether they're in the town of Whitby or other parts of the region of Durham, is that the changes in Bill 132 and what it does to provincial red tape—and what should have been done a long time ago, as you know. After listening to Ontario residents, the government is taking scissors to that red tape, cutting through the chokehold that constricts their economic growth and opportunities.

What's clear is that we have an obligation to better the lives of Ontarians and improve the investment climate so that families—families like yours, families throughout the province—and businesses in communities like Whitby and the region of Durham can thrive. The government has taken significant steps to remove regulatory barriers to business success. As we should, we are getting out of the way of our job creators, lowering business costs, making Ontario more competitive and spurring more investment to build our economy.

But Speaker, more work needs to be done. That's very clear. Over the last 15 years, the regulatory burdens in Ontario have stifled business growth. We have listened, and what we have heard so frequently, whether it was in my constituency office, your constituency or elsewhere at round tables across the province, was that business growth was and is being crushed by overregulation.

Earlier last month, the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction and I held a round table in Whitby at the Royal Ashburn golf and country club. We listened very carefully to people from a cross-section of the retail, industrial and agricultural sectors and we heard repeatedly the same message, and I'm sure you've heard it, too: "Please help us improve competitiveness by freeing us from the handcuffs of overregulation." That is a repeated message—a cry for help; a cry for hope. As the government moves to ease the overregulation, high standards will be maintained, standards that keep Ontario workers and families safe and healthy.

1750

I want to talk now about something I know concerns some people when they hear the government is reducing regulatory burdens on businesses. They're worried that cutting red tape could weaken the regulations that help maintain the great quality of life we enjoy here in Ontario. I want to address that concern because I've heard it expressed in some of the narrative today, and I want to address that concern head-on. What's clear is that we're not against regulation; we're against unnecessary regulation. Ontario families expect and deserve clean air and clean water. That's unequivocal. They expect and deserve safe products and safe working conditions. Regulations are there to ensure these things. They're essential to protecting public health and safety and to protecting the environment.

But all too often, businesses are required to spend time and money complying with rules that go well beyond what's needed to achieve the goals of the regulations. We're making regulations effective, targeted and focused, as you would expect, Speaker, while maintaining standards to keep people safe and healthy and protect the environment.

Leave no doubt that we understand the intense time pressure that business owners and managers are under. Their real job is to improve their products and services and create new ones so they can grow and prosper, which will spur the type of investments that create good-paying jobs for the people of Ontario. I hear also, as I travel my riding of Whitby and across the region, that people want good-paying jobs.

Simply put, Speaker, modernizing our government is the goal. It's a goal driven by the overarching desire to ensure that Ontarians are served better and more efficiently by local and provincial governments. There are many examples of needed change, and I'd like to focus on a few.

Every month, the Rotary Club of Whitby Sunrise, of which I'm a proud member, serves meals to many less fortunate people at St. Vincent's Kitchen. It's located in Oshawa. Yet with current regulations, organizations like St. Vincent's are forced to navigate through rules written with restaurants in mind, often finding themselves in the process facing obstacles that increase the cost of operations at the expense of those they're intending to serve. Of course, it's important that standards are maintained for public health and safety, but let's find, in that process, a better way to balance the need, tailoring a solution to enable St. Vincent's and other similar organizations to continue to help those men, women and families for whom it was created, continuing to give those people a hand up.

There are other examples I'd like to highlight that talk about fixing regulations that make things harder than they should be for people who are trying to get ahead. One of Ontario's greatest strengths is our highly skilled and educated people. We have one of the highest rates of post-secondary education anywhere. That gives people of our province a leg up in pursuing opportunities to build a great career. But there are processes that are getting in the way, and we're going to in turn make sure that those processes are dramatically altered and help our young people quickly emerge to new programs that they deserve and to fulfill their aspirations.

Speaker, at this point, I'm going to move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Coe has moved adjournment of the debate. I just have to double-check with the table officers to see that the criteria for debate has been met. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1756 to 1826.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order. All members take their seats, please.

Mr. Coe has moved adjournment of the debate. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 0; the nays are 11.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): This being well past 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1827.

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Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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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	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Vacant	Orléans	
Vacant	Ottawa—Vanier	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Wayne Gates
Randy Hillier, Andrea Khanjin
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Peter Tabuns
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
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David Piccini, Kaleed Rasheed
Jeremy Roberts, Amarjot Sandhu
Sandy Shaw, Donna Skelly
Dave Smith
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Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Daryl Kramp
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

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Rudy Cuzzetto, Parm Gill
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Marit Stiles, Vijay Thanigasalam
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

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Lorne Coe, Parm Gill
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Gurratan Singh, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
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Vijay Thanigasalam
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
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Catherine Fife, John Fraser
Goldie Ghamari, France Gélinas
Norman Miller, Michael Parsa
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