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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 November 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 novembre 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROVINCIAL ANIMAL WELFARE SERVICES ACT, 2019

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

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I look to the minister to lead off the debate. Again, recognizing the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It's a special day when, as a minister of the crown, you get to do a leadoff speech on a piece of legislation—and Bill 136 is such a legislation for me—affectionately known as PAWS within the ministry. I really want to do a shout-out to some of the many, many hard-working staff who have assisted in the drafting of Bill 136, the PAWS Act, of course, led by my ever-talented deputy minister on the public safety side, Mario Di Tommaso: Debbie Conrad, Adriana, Paula Milne, Steve Waldie, Connie, Ali—there are so many individuals who can claim ownership to Bill 136.

Speaker, we were put in a situation, end of January 2018, where there was a legislative court ruling that gave the Ontario Legislature a year to put together new animal welfare legislation. The court ruled that the current model of using the OSPCA, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, as the enforcement partner in protecting animals in Ontario didn't have the oversight that we needed. As a result, we have before us new legislation, being Bill 136. It is what I would call game-changing. We are moving from a model where OSPCA inspectors are out in our communities and doing enforcement pieces—and don't get me wrong, Speaker. The OSPCA will continue a very important role of doing adoptions and educating and prevention pieces, but, for the actual enforcement, the province of Ontario is going to take over that role.

This is not a decision that we took lightly. We consulted with a large number of organizations and individuals. We reached out to the public and asked for their assistance and feedback on what they wanted to see, and I'm sure it comes as no surprise to the individuals in this Legislature that the public spoke loudly and clearly that they wanted strong enforcement animal welfare legislation in the province of Ontario. I believe, with Bill 136, we have delivered that.

What we have now, moving forward, is an enforcement model that will be hiring Ontario public service employees. They will be trained consistently across the province, and they will be the face of animal welfare and animal enforcement in the province of Ontario.

We've done this for a number of reasons. I think that many of us have anecdotal stories within our communities and from across Ontario where there are egregious examples of animal abuse, and, for any number of reasons—perhaps because the investigation was not done in a proper and consistent manner, or either the crowns or the courts chose not to proceed with a court hearing, or, worse, it was just thrown out because the evidence wasn't collected appropriately. By training our animal enforcement individuals, our animal enforcement workers, in a consistent manner, you will see, I hope, an expansion on both the charges laid and, equally important, convictions acquired.

The other piece that is included in Bill 136 is—we have the animal welfare officers, but we're also going to do some additional training with the crown attorneys. To my previous point, we can lay all the charges we want, but if we're not getting convictions and if they are not proceeding through the court system, then we have a problem. What we are suggesting with Bill 136, if passed, is we will additionally train crown attorneys so that they understand and they can appreciate what they need to look for when they are bringing forward animal abuse cases or animal welfare charges through our court system.

The other piece that we consulted with a great deal is our existing humane societies. We have a large and diverse province, and not all of Ontario is covered by OSPCA individuals, officers and volunteers. In some cases, primarily in northern Ontario, but certainly in very rural communities, it's often the local police that are investigating and laying these charges.

So, inlaid in Bill 136 is that if the animal enforcement officers suspect or believe that there is a criminal overlay, they will call in those local officers, whether it's the OPP or the local police. This is very different and separate from assuming that the police have all of the powers. What we

are doing is saying, when it is specialized, when there is criminal activity suspected, we will call on, frankly, the individuals who have that expertise, and that's the local police officers.

We've worked with the OPP and the municipal police services. So far, my understanding is they are comfortable with this model. It means that the investigative piece, again, is consistent. If we want to see success on charges being laid and, ultimately, convictions occurring, we are going to have to be very careful on how we investigate the issues and how they proceed through the court system. We have done that with Bill 136.

9910

At the beginning of my leadoff, I spoke about what motivated this change: the court ruling that happened at the end of January. What happened very quickly after that was that the OSPCA made it very clear that they were no longer interested in the enforcement part of animal welfare in Ontario. So we made a change very quickly—frankly, with the assistance of a number of local humane societies that said, "During the interim model, we will continue to provide the animal enforcement piece because we know it's important for the protection of our animals in Ontario." So, a huge thank you and shout-out to those particular humane societies that stepped up. There were approximately 11 in total. It really made a difference, because we didn't have a very unfortunate situation where there were gaps where the legislation was still in place but we didn't have animal enforcement officers on the ground. That did not occur, largely because we had local humane societies and interim animal welfare officers who took on that role. So, to them, thank you, and a job well done.

The other piece that Bill 136 does, I believe very effectively, is that no matter where you are in Ontario, there is going to be a consistent number for you to call. That, of course, is 1-833-9-ANIMAL. We will keep that process in place. We will keep that number in place, because I think it's important. We're a transient society. We travel. We move from community to community. It's important that we ensure that consistency, no matter where you are in Ontario. So that 1-833-9-ANIMAL toll-free number will continue, and I'm pleased to see that happen.

I would be remiss not to thank some of my colleagues from all sides of the House for their assistance in the drafting of this legislation. My parliamentary assistant and other members have held round tables in their communities and brought together local humane societies, veterinarians—experts in their field in their community—to provide us feedback. I know my very talented parliamentary assistant, member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, is going to delve into a lot more of the details that we cover in Bill 136. But I really want to thank her and the member from Northumberland, in particular, for hosting the round tables and for bringing forward ideas directly to us in the ministry, because it drove a very good conversation with the stakeholders.

Speaker, I'm sure it's no surprise to you that there are a lot of stakeholders who are interested in this file. I think the current stat is that 60% of us own a pet of some kind.

Many of us love to talk about them, and it's important for the people of Ontario that we get this legislation right. I believe that we have struck an important balance of making a commitment, as a government, to putting in place the animal enforcement workers. We are clearly sharing with the public the process in which you can share your concerns if you see animal cruelty issues.

The other piece that is embedded in Bill 136, if passed, is an oversight piece. The courts in particular were very concerned that by having the OSPCA do the enforcement part of animal welfare in Ontario, the oversight piece was missing. So, the primary goal was to ensure that if you have a concern, or if you believe that the animal enforcement officers have not done their due diligence, then there is a pathway for complaints and there is a system where not only you can complain, but you actually get the feedback on what the results of your complaint were, and the process and the pathway of ensuring that that complaint is duly dealt with. Again, that's something that I'm very pleased that we were able to embed.

Another piece that we heard an awful lot about was what we call "hot dogs in cars." In the summer, and even on sunny days, when you have a situation where you leave a dog unattended, even if the window is cracked in a small way, the inside temperature of that car can go up very, very quickly and put that dog or animal in danger. So one of the opportunities that we've taken with Bill 136 is that first responders can react quickly and take that animal out of harm's way. In practical terms, that means that a firefighter or a police officer can break a window to make sure that animal doesn't perish while they're waiting for someone to come to the scene, something that I think is long overdue and, frankly, very appropriate—some small things that I think send a very clear message.

Dogfighting is a terrible thing that unfortunately still occurs in some parts of Ontario. They train the animals. The dogfights can last from one to two hours, and often, at least one, if not both, animals are having to be put down after the fight. Going forward, if you are caught training or participating in dogfighting, we not only will take your dogs, of course, but we're not going to return any of the equipment that you used to train those animals.

These are some of the pieces that were in the old animal welfare legislation that, for lack of a better term, we've cleaned up. We want to send a very clear message to individuals who choose to abuse their animals that if you are caught and when you are caught, you are going to be charged and you are going to face very steep fines.

As I said, my parliamentary assistant from Etobicoke—Lakeshore will get into more of the details. But those are some of the glaring omissions, if I may, that were not in the previous legislation, which I wanted to make sure we were able to bring forward with Bill 136.

To recap: We're talking about more inspectors province-wide. By the time the model is fully in place, we expect that there will be 100 animal enforcement officers across Ontario. When needed, when there is suspicion of criminal overlays, we will call in the local police, the local OPP or police services to assist on the criminal investigation side. It leads to better province-wide coverage, a one-

window complaint process and the toughest penalties for offenders across Canada.

It is not surprising to me—and I’m sure other members have seen it—that there is interest across Canada in what Ontario is doing with the proposed Bill 136, because I think there is an appreciation and understanding that we need to do a better job of ensuring that our animals are protected.

There will be specially trained officers who have unique training in certain areas—I would highlight aquariums, zoos and equine. We’ve leaned heavily on my friend and colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs because of the animal husbandry piece, and we will continue to call on their expertise to ensure that standardized animal husbandry practices will be allowed to continue in the province of Ontario, to ensure that we get that piece right.

When we consistently train all of our animal enforcement officers in the same methods, I think that you will see a huge improvement in what is charged and what is investigated, because there will be an appreciation and understanding of what the expectations are.

0920

Speaker, I could talk for a very long time about animal cruelty and Bill 136, because it is a file and a piece of legislation that we spent a lot of time on over the summer. If I may, I would really just like to thank again the individuals and the organizations that assisted in the drafting of the legislation. It is not limited to to but does include AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. There were many resolutions from municipalities across Ontario that participated in providing feedback on what they wanted to see. The veterinarians, the humane societies, the OSPCA, the animal welfare rights organizations and individual members of the public—over 1,800 people individually called, emailed and shared their desires and their suggestions for input into Bill 136.

The increase of animal welfare abuses continues to rise. There’s a 116% increase on the penalties that we’re suggesting with Bill 136. I think we need to send a message, and the message is that we’re going to be ensuring the laws of Ontario are respected. We’re going to ensure that if you choose to have an animal in Ontario, you treat it appropriately and without undue harm.

It is amazing to me, the interest in this legislation and the interest from different segments and parts of the community.

We don’t talk about it very often, but if you speak to your local OSPCA, they will talk about the causal link between domestic violence and abusing animals. So one of the pieces that we need to be aware of is, if an individual is inclined to abuse a pet or an animal, they have a higher likelihood of also being a perpetrator of domestic violence and involved in domestic violence situations. If we can shut down those animal abuses sooner and very aggressively, then it is my hope that the other overlying impacts that could occur by someone willing to abuse an animal and then going on to participate in domestic violence situations will decrease—anything that we can do.

Again, I will give a shout-out to the OSPCA, because while the enforcement piece is no longer going to be their responsibility, there is, and continues to be, a very strong role they will continue to play in Ontario with the prevention. I know that in my own community they’re very active with summer camps, and they’re in the schools educating young people on what is appropriate protection of animals and how to look after your kitten, your puppy or your lizard. That role will continue, and it’s an important piece.

I in no way would want to suggest that the OSPCA will not still be active in the province of Ontario, because I believe that they will continue to play an important role, moving forward. It’s an important volunteer-led organization that I believe many of us have supported and encouraged in our own communities. This is one small piece that the Ontario government will take over under the purview of the Solicitor General, and the rest of the work of the OSPCA will continue in our communities.

The consultation involved over 50 groups and organizations, including technical experts, academia, the agricultural community, veterinarian experts, shelter organizations and advocacy. As I said, we received input from 155 municipalities and 45 police services, and received feedback from more than 1,600 members of the public, who responded thoughtfully to our ongoing survey. To their participation and to your participation, thank you. It was, as I said, an impressive level of engagement for an issue that we had to deal with and react to very quickly over the summer, so I thank them for that.

As I said, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore held a round table—a number of them, as I recall—in her community.

Many of us have brought forward private members’ bills on specific individual pieces that covered animal welfare situations in Ontario, and all of those were considered and part of our consultation on how we could bring forward a stronger animal welfare act.

The big gap to fill was the fact that the OSPCA signalled to us very clearly that they were no longer interested in doing the enforcement piece. So that involved an interim model, under the leadership of Paula Milne, an experienced OPP investigator. She stepped in as Ontario’s interim chief animal welfare inspector. It has proven to be, in the interim, a very effective model, and I want to expand upon what I believe has been, for lack of a better word, a successful pilot project.

The enforcement and the participation of the local humane societies has been very valuable for that first interim six months. I know that those partners will continue to provide feedback as we move forward, if this legislation passes, to the regulation stage and ultimately implementation.

It is our goal and it is our hope that, with the will of the Legislature, we can move forward on a new animal enforcement model starting in January 2020. I am hopeful that, because of much of the initial engagement that we have already begun, the regulatory piece will fall naturally, because we already have those conversations happening with those many stakeholders who are involved.

Finally, before I turn it over to the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, I would like to remind people today in the province of Ontario that if you see or if you suspect any animal welfare abuses, the 1-833-9-ANIMAL toll-free number is operational, and we will investigate those concerns.

Moving forward, it is my hope that we can have fulsome but quick debate on Bill 136 because the animals of Ontario can't wait.

Now I will turn it over to the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I turn to the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore for continuance of debate.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It is a pleasure to speak in support of the government's proposed Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019.

Ontarians are passionate about the welfare of our animals, and you can count me as one of them. I know there are many people on both sides of the House who supported my private member's bill when we brought it forward. As we say, pets have no political stripe, and we're here to be the voice for them.

Over the past year, I have had the pleasure of meeting with numerous stakeholders in various ridings around this province. We've met with animal welfare experts, and we've talked to the public. I also had the opportunity to review the online survey. The data came in to the ministry, and I could not believe how many people got involved in that survey. It is absolutely fabulous—the people who spent their time and filled out that survey to talk about animal welfare, animal wellness. We've also met with municipalities. We spoke in detail with municipal councillors and mayors. We've had police at most of the round tables we had, just to get their point of view on what this model should look like, and of course the public.

Even now, more than ever, I am convinced that what Ontario needs is a single, direct-control animal welfare enforcement model. This was heard loud and clear through the police, through the people, through consultations: a single, direct-control animal welfare enforcement model.

0930

In April of this year, before I was appointed parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, I wrote to the minister to let her know that almost every person that I had spoken to had concerns about the enforcement of animal welfare laws, and everybody has a story to tell. If you talk to a constituent, they'll have a story to tell about an animal in distress, an animal of concern, a pet—who are really part of our family. They tug at our heartstrings, and we have to make sure that these pets are protected. I get calls from my constituents—and I'm sure you all do in this House. We needed to do something better. So I expressed my concerns to the minister about the safety and care of pets through a private member's bill that I introduced earlier this year. I was very pleased, and I thank all the members of the House for giving it unanimous support on second reading.

I'm extremely proud to be highlighting the details of the proposed Bill 136 and how it will better protect the

animals and build public trust in an animal welfare enforcement system. The previous animal welfare system, as we know, was broken. It was really broken. It was failing the very creatures—our pets—it was intended to protect. This government's proposed Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019, sets out to fix what was broken.

Let's be clear: It's not about putting the old pieces of the OSPCA Act back together, but proposing a new animal welfare enforcement model, introducing tough new penalties against offenders and repeat offenders, and building public trust with a streamlined complaints process and a new oversight mechanism—pieces that were missing from the previous OSPCA Act.

Speaker, I would first like to address the legal question. As the honourable members will recall, in January of this year, a Superior Court justice struck down key provisions in the OSPCA Act. The ministry believes the proposed new animal welfare system should address the concerns of the court in relation to animal welfare enforcement for the following reasons:

Enforcement would be the responsibility of the province and no longer be conducted by a third party.

Inspectors would have the specific powers they need to carry out their duties, instead of broad, police-like powers that were provided under the OSPCA Act. Use of these powers would be supported by appropriate new training. Training was key when we talked to our stakeholders.

Inspectors would be subject to a robust oversight system, including freedom-of-information and privacy legislation, and a public complaints system.

Speaker, it all begins with a provincially supported chief animal welfare inspector. This position was previously appointed by the OSPCA, and as the honourable members will recall, the Solicitor General did appoint a provincial interim chief animal welfare inspector in June. Under the proposed Bill 136, the chief animal welfare inspector's responsibilities will include:

- appointing animal welfare inspectors;
- ensuring the necessities of care of any animal that is in the chief animal welfare inspector's care;
- ensuring inspectors receive appropriate training regarding their powers and duties. Inspectors will not be permitted to enforce unless they have completed prescribed training;
- handling complaints about animal welfare inspectors; and
- being able to reprimand, suspend, impose conditions on or revoke the appointment of an inspector who is found to have violated the code of conduct, and notify the complainant about the results of the complaint against the inspector. I know animal lovers out there will be happy with that piece.

The chief animal welfare inspector will also be subject to the same code-of-conduct compliance training requirements as an animal welfare inspector. The minister will review and address any complaints regarding the chief animal welfare inspector.

The government is proposing to maintain the provincial hotline we launched in June, which is 1-833-9-ANIMAL,

the toll-free line for members of the public with a concern about the welfare of an animal to call at any time. The call centre will gather relevant information about alleged incidents where an animal may be in distress and then route the call to a provincially employed inspector or a local police service, who can enforce animal welfare laws across Ontario.

Under the new animal welfare enforcement model, the government will expand the number of provincial inspectors responsible for ensuring that animal welfare laws are enforced. This will result in better response times, better coverage across our province and less occupational stress and burnout.

These inspectors will be directly employed by the provincial government and will have appropriate, specific powers to immediately relieve animals' distress, and inspect and follow up on owner compliance.

For inspection of certain businesses, including where animals are kept for exhibition or entertainment, an inspector will be able to enter the premises, other than a dwelling, without a warrant.

I would like to note that inspectors will only be able to enter a dwelling without a warrant under specific circumstances. For example, if the inspector has reasonable grounds to believe an animal requires immediate intervention in order to prevent serious injury or to preserve life, and where there is no time to secure a warrant to ensure those things, we want to make sure that those things don't happen, so we want to make sure that they are able to go in if there is a distressful situation.

All inspectors will be able to free animals in critical distress from hot or cold vehicles. This is a long time coming, and we heard this over and over again. We talk about people who still leave their animals in a hot vehicle. We don't know how to get the message across, but please, don't leave your animals in a hot vehicle. But now inspectors will be able to free those animals and get them out of the car when they are not attended.

Just as a message out there: Please, don't leave your animals in a hot car.

All inspectors will be trained on the use of all of the warrants that were described above.

In cases where an inspector is responding to a complaint or investigating a situation, the inspector is allowed to enter a premises without a warrant or without the owner's consent.

They are allowed to make orders regarding the care of an animal for an owner to follow, such as supplying food and water and ensuring medical treatment—these are the basic necessities for an animal's life—or to seize an animal that is in distress or trained to fight. It does still happen out there.

They are allowed to have an animal euthanized with the owner's consent, or a veterinarian's professional opinion, if it is determined that it is the most humane course of action to take. This is hard for anyone to have to face, but sometimes it is a necessity.

With respect to agriculture, zoos, aquariums and equine concerns, inspectors will have the expertise required to

perform this work. In other cases, they can consult with a veterinarian if and when required.

Zoos and aquariums will continue to be subject to inspections to ensure compliance with animal welfare laws.

Finally, inspectors will have limited powers of arrest that can be used when they believe that somebody is committing a specific animal welfare offence, refuses to identify themselves and police aren't available to conduct an arrest.

The proposed Bill 136 maintains prohibitions similar to the OSPCA Act, such as causing or permitting an animal to be in distress. This can take on many forms, including simple neglect—such as owners not giving pets adequate food or water, or leaving them outside for long periods of time during hot or freezing conditions—or training an animal to fight, or engaging in animal fighting. But it now includes encouraging, promoting, arranging, conducting, assisting in, receiving a financial or material benefit, or taking part in the training or any meeting.

We have to make sure that these animals are protected. One of the other things that we see a lot is animals on display. We have to make sure that when they are on display, they are looked after, they are cared for. We still go to zoos, we still go to aquariums, but we have to make sure that those animals are in good shape and they're looked after. That's what one of the required duties of these inspectors will be.

Bill 136 also proposes new prohibitions. A person may not knowingly or recklessly cause an animal to be exposed to undue risk of distress.

There will be strengthened provisions related to harming an animal that works with peace officers, or service animals.

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There are also proposed new prohibitions which are enabled in the legislation for future development, such as prohibiting the possession or breeding of specific animals. Members of this House are all concerned about exotic animals, and, Speaker, I share that concern. This proposed legislation will enable the development of future regulations that can prohibit certain animals or require a licence to possess or breed certain animals. Such future regulations would be developed after consultation with our partners.

If anybody has concerns about the mistreatment of an exotic animal, they should call 1-833-9-ANIMAL. Anybody across Ontario can call that number if they see an animal in distress.

When we talk about oversight, Mr. Speaker, it is essential that we build public trust in the animal welfare enforcement in Ontario. The government's proposed legislation provides a foundation that we need to build that trust. If a public complaints process is too complicated or too difficult to navigate, the complainant will get frustrated and most likely they will give up. Nothing is served when complaints go unheard—least of all, confidence in any system. To protect the animals, there must be public confidence in the protectors, and I think that's what is missing today.

The oversight framework proposed by this government is straightforward. The Solicitor General has already detailed the complaints process, and I would just like to reiterate: For the first time, the public will have access to a one-window complaints process to review an animal welfare inspector's conduct, so there will be no more confusion about where to register a complaint. It will be a one-window approach. This is something that we heard over and over again, of where to go: "Who do I talk to?" It's a open-window approach. So this is great news for our stakeholders.

For each complaint, a review will be conducted to determine if there is cause for investigation. Where a complaint is found to be valid, the chief animal welfare inspector or the Solicitor General may reprimand, suspend, impose conditions or revoke the appointment of an inspector who is found to have violated the code of conduct. We firmly believe that a clear oversight and one-window public complaints process is the best way to build public trust in the animal welfare system.

I would like to add, Mr. Speaker, that as Ontario public servants, the chief animal welfare inspector and provincial inspectors will also be subject to oversight by the Auditor General, the Ombudsman and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. This was not the case before, and this was not the case under the OSPCA. It goes quite a distance in making the government's proposed animal welfare enforcement model even more transparent and accountable. That is what people want. They want to see transparency and accountability when they call, when they deal with the inspectors, and this is exactly what they've asked for.

I want to talk a little bit about the Animal Care Review Board. This proposed legislation also maintains the Animal Care Review Board, to continue its important oversight role as the body to appeal orders and seizures. The ACRB—everything needs an acronym in government—will continue to adjudicate an inspector's order requiring an individual to take specific actions relating to an animal, such as a veterinarian's visit; an inspector's seizure of an animal; an individual's request to revoke an order if the animal ceases to be in distress; or an individual's request for an animal's return if conditions that caused the animal to be in the inspector's care cease to exist.

I really would like to talk about penalties. I am very proud that this legislation sets out the strongest penalties in Canada for offences. This includes higher penalties for subsequent offenders, and it distinguishes between individuals and corporations and includes new mandatory minimum fines for specific offences. I want to be very clear: This government is going to impose the strongest penalties in Canada for animal cruelty. These penalties are intended to deter future offences and take into account when highly erroneous offences are committed, such as causing distress or animal fighting. We need to stop these from happening, we really do. And how do you get to that? How do you stop this from happening? Well, you give them a big fine. You give them a fine and make them stop. You know, we need to protect these animals and we need more enforcement, and I just want to applaud the Solicitor General for bringing forward this legislation.

These fines could actually be significant, and it also could be jail time of up to two years for individuals, and high fines for corporations. For minor offences, an individual can face a fine of up to \$75,000 or six months in jail for the first offence. Repeat offenders would see a rise of up to \$100,000 and up to a year in jail. For more serious infractions, a first offence can carry a fine of up to \$130,000 and/or two years in jail, with the fines doubling for repeat offenders. In the future, we may be exploring, where appropriate, ticketing as an option to also address certain offences.

I want to assure the honourable members in this House that although the legislation proposes new maximums and mandatory minimum fines, they remain subject to a court's discretion, including their discretion not to impose a mandatory fine in accordance with the Provincial Offences Act. This gives the judge or justice flexibility to consider mitigating factors. Ultimately, imposing higher penalties demonstrates that animal abuse will not be tolerated in Ontario and that the tougher penalties are supported by a stronger animal welfare enforcement model to bring abusers to justice.

Mr. Speaker, we need to look forward because the clock is ticking. The court set out January 1, 2020, as the date a new, more accountable animal welfare enforcement system must be in place. Our government—this government—is confident that with the support of everyone in this House, we can meet the January 1 deadline. But passing the proposed Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019, is just the first essential step. There is a lot of heavy lifting ahead.

Indeed, the made-in-Ontario model that has been proposed today includes built-in flexibility to respond to future challenges to protect the welfare of animals in Ontario. To inform the development of future long-term regulations, the government is proposing to set up a multi-disciplinary advisory table made up of a wide range of experts including veterinarians, agriculture representatives, academics, animal advocates and others to provide ongoing advice to the ministry. And this is something that I talked about in my private member's bill—putting together a table, a conversation, so we can continue to advocate on animals' behalf—so I'm pleased to see it recognized in this bill.

Future regulations that can be developed under the new act will include updating standards of care, prohibited and restricted animals, and a licensing and registry regime to better manage known issues such as puppy mills or inappropriate ownership of exotic animals.

And of course, Mr. Speaker we want the public to participate, and we want to make sure that the voice of the public is heard. As Ontarians, we all care deeply about the welfare of animals. Emails and letters to the ministry concerning the care and well-being of animals constantly outpace the mail on other ministerial issues, and I am personally overwhelmed by the public's response to the government's online survey for Ontarians to share their thoughts on how we can improve animal protection in Ontario. It's my understanding that just over a third of the

calls received by the call centre were requests for information on just how the province will handle this service in the future, so we're here today to share that with them.

Mr. Speaker, I am really encouraged by this level of public engagement and I think the people of Ontario will be happy as well. I want to thank all those who participated in the consultations, in the survey, who wrote letters, sent emails and called our offices to make sure that we got this right. It means that they're watching what we do in this House on this issue with great interest.

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Mr. Speaker, it is clear from the months of consultation with the public and stakeholders that they want a single, clear, accountable animal welfare regime with the appropriate oversight and transparency, and they want professional and standardized training. They don't only want improved coverage across this province; they want consistent enforcement wherever they live—if they live in Toronto, if they live in Timmins, if they live in Sarnia or Thunder Bay. The government-proposed Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019, checks all of those boxes.

More provincial animal inspectors will result in increased coverage, a decrease in response time and an expected decrease in repeat non-compliant offenders. It will deliver a reliable service with the flexibility to deploy additional resources where and when they're needed, while maintaining coverage across the entire province. Tougher penalties, especially those for repeat offenders, will send a strong signal that cruelty to animals will no longer be tolerated.

The proposed legislation builds on the public trust with a clear oversight framework that includes a one-window public complaints process and public access to information.

Speaker, this proposed legislation is all about ensuring that Ontario animals are protected. Since the province took over the animal welfare enforcement regime in June, it has never been easier for the public to report an act of cruelty to an animal than through the 1-833-9-ANIMAL hotline. This House has the opportunity to build on this with better response over a wider coverage area, with better training and greater accountability. It is what animal welfare stakeholders and the public have asked for, and it is what the members of this House must deliver.

When we started talking about animal welfare over a year ago—actually, even before I was elected—this was one thing that we wanted to look at, because animals are so important in our lives. Regardless of what type of animal it is—if it's your dog or your cat—we have an obligation to look after those animals. We might personally consider them part of our family. I know that my two pets are part of my family. They're rescue pets. We have to make sure that they are looked after.

My sister has three rescue dogs. One was a dog that was supposed to be sold for dogfighting. His name is Frankie.

I have to do a shout-out to all of the thousands and thousands of volunteers across our province who give of their time to protect these animals and find them homes when they are in these precarious situations.

Little Frankie is a bulldog, so he was trained—he was actually supposed to be shipped off to the US to be a fighting dog. I guess because someone got wind that this was happening, the owner decided to sell the dog to a rescue agency just so that he wouldn't get in trouble. He's the nicest dog in the world and terrified of everything. This dog now has a wonderful home. This is one good-news story, but there are so many animals out there that don't end up in good homes after.

I have a hard time believing that animal fighting still happens, but it does, and we need to put a stop to that. I do believe that these higher fines will make a difference, and I do believe that this legislation looks at all of the things people have been asking for over the years: the one-window approach and more transparency and more accountability of, "When I call, will somebody come?"

These animals deserve us. They deserve our support, and I am so pleased to be part of this ministry that is bringing this legislation forward. I'm so proud that this government is making the strongest fines in Ontario.

I think this a lesson for other provinces. I hope they will watch what Ontario does and make their animal enforcement agencies have even more, higher fines, because how do you get back to these people? How do you stop somebody from having a puppy mill or having a fighting dog—which still boggles my mind that these things happen these days. It's fines. You have to hit them in the pocketbook. We need to make sure that these people are fined, or get jail time if that's what the courts decide. That's in the courts' hands.

This morning I was walking my dog. I'm lucky because I live close by, so I get to see my animals every day. My cat still hasn't realized it's daylight savings time, so she gets me up an hour earlier in the morning. You brush them off, and then you realize there are so many animals that are in distress out there. My two, Bruce and Edward, are lucky they have a warm home to live in, but there are lots of people out there that don't care for their animals with the basic necessities of water, food, a warm home, and then, when it is hot, bring them inside.

We have to educate people. There is a role for our humane societies to continue to educate, and I think they do a wonderful job with educating the public. We have to continue that. If we can use our voices here as people in our communities, as leaders in our communities, to continue to educate the public on cruelty to animals, I think that's an important step that we can all take.

I do believe that everybody here in the House does believe that animals deserve better than a lot of them get. I know there are a lot of dog owners here. I know in Humber Bay Shores, everybody seems to have a dog in that area. We want to make sure those animals are protected and safe. I hope that with this discussion today, we can get a good debate going and hopefully get unanimous support on this legislation, because it is time. It's 2019. It is time that we protect these animals. They're part of our families. They're part of our homes. Animal cruelty still happens. There are still puppy mills out there. We need to stop those. There is dogfighting out there. We need to stop that.

People still sell animals online. When I did my private member's bill, it was a lot about educating the public. As I said to those watching on TV, if you are buying a pet online, you should check what kind of breeder it comes from. There are many reputable breeders out there, and if you want to buy their dog, they will interview you. You should be interviewed. When I got my rescue dog, my husband was interviewed and I was interviewed. My husband was even interviewed. They called around and checked our references, and we were so lucky to actually have our little puppy. Well, he wasn't a puppy; he was four. He was a rescue dog. He was about four years old when we got him. That's a reputable rescue place that checks you out to make sure that you are the right home for those animals.

I think that we need to educate everybody to make sure that when they do buy their pets, it is from a reputable breeder out there. There are lots of them. Or go to a humane society. Our humane societies do great work out there. I always support my humane society. We have a great event every year, Leashes by the Lake. We have great people and they just give of their time. As we all learn in these jobs, we have so many people that volunteer. A lot of people love their animals and love to volunteer to help out the animals.

I want to thank all the volunteers out there who help out our animals. I want to thank all of our rescue people out there who help rescue animals. And just a message to everybody to just look after your dogs and cats, and make sure that our animals are safe.

I just want to congratulate the Solicitor General for putting out a wonderful piece of legislation, and I hope we get support all across this House to ensure that we have the strongest penalties for animal cruelty in Ontario. Let's get this done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'm very happy to add to the debate on Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act. When reviewing this act, I was happy to see an increase in inspectors. But as always, I want to bring forward the concerns of northwestern and northern Ontario. We are a vast geographic area. I was lobbied, under the old regime, by the humane society and the OSPCA about the lack of resources.

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In northern Ontario, it's many hours between communities. One inspector for the vast geographic area of northwestern Ontario is insufficient. In this legislation, "increased resources" means finance, and we want to ensure that there is actually the money to pay for the proper resources. We are happy to see that the regime is going to be in place and strengthened, but without the regulation and without the proper financing, that's not going to happen.

I have to echo my colleague's comments about the army of people in northern Ontario who do volunteer work in assisting animals, but that's not enough. They are con-

stantly strained for resources as well. Often, we're frustrated because they were unable to get enforcement in situations where animals were in dire straits.

As a dog lover and a cat lover—I also have two rescue dogs—I am happy to see this legislation but really hope that we have the proper financing and resources to make it happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Jane McKenna: First, it's a bit ironic today because the police association leaders are here, and I'm meeting—I'm just going to shout this out—Barry, Sarah, Peter and Jodi. The reason I'm saying that is I want to thank them for their hard work and their service. With Bill 136, obviously, you have a part in that as well.

I want to, first of all, reach out to the MPP from Etobicoke—Lakeshore and the Solicitor General and thank them for their passion and compassion on this file. Thank you very, very much. It was wonderful listening to you both speak here today.

It is, sadly, shocking that in the 21st century, Speaker, these things still go on. Sadly, animals don't have a voice, and sometimes, sadly enough, animals get into the hands of people that they shouldn't be in.

I was thrilled when the Solicitor General brought this forward. My twin sister has been an advocate for rescuing many dogs. She had one called Dolores. It was on the street for many, many years, and when she got it from the humane society, I don't think the dog—it was a big dog; it was a Lab, but I don't think it weighed more than 40 pounds. It was a big journey to turn that dog around because it was surviving on the streets and defending its own life for a very, very long time. I'm always grateful to people like the MPP for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, for her sister and herself, for rescuing dogs and animals that need the help that they can get.

I was a bit overwhelmed when I was listening to the Solicitor General speak about dogfighting, and I'll bring that up again. I just can't believe that that goes on today. The fact that these enforcements are going to stop the cruelty to these animals—my gosh, a pet is a pet, and they all want to be loved and taken care of.

All my kids have animals. When I had all my kids at home, we had dogs—many, many dogs. My kids all have their dogs, and they love them like it's their own child. They're up on the beds. I babysit these dogs once in a while, and I kind of chuckle—but anyway, thanks, Speaker. I've gone over my time. I could go on forever about animals.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise today on Bill 136. I commend the government for actually taking this on. There were obvious gaps in the legislation around the protection of animal welfare.

However, there are some concerns that we have as members of the opposition. With any type of legislation that requires enforcement, our questions remain around the resources that are put behind that enforcement. We

have seen in this House, time and time again, with successive governments where they are strong in their wording; however, when it comes time to put the resources behind those measures of enforcement, they're not there, essentially making the bills and the measures of law ineffective. So we would urge the government to be clear about the resources, meaning money, that they are going to provide our communities and those who are providing the oversight and enforcement mechanisms of this bill, because ultimately, the welfare of our animals requires it.

We'll continue to see gaps and incidents of people circumventing and hiding from what should be something that is the norm in society, where we take care of our animals and we understand the responsibility of being an animal owner and the penalties that come with it.

Speaker, the other thing is that it has been claimed by the government that this is the most stringent piece of legislation to ever come forward in terms of protection of animals. That also comes with the responsibility to protect those who deal with animals on a day-to-day basis. I'm talking about our farmers and those in rural areas who could be susceptible to some of these strong penalties if it's not very clear in terms of what their needs are. So I would hope that the government strikes a clear balance on the enforcement but also on the protection side, and safeguarding people from possibly frivolous charges.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour to be able to stand, as well as my colleagues, and provide some remarks and response to the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore's and also the Solicitor General's speeches this morning to Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act.

As someone who was born and raised on a farm—I spent the first 20 years of my life on a 100-acre farm in the Niagara region where my father and most of my family members, including my aunts and uncles, run farms. My father was a pork producer for 25 years, a farrow-to-finish. He had a large operation with almost 1,000 pigs—100 sows—and of course animal husbandry is very near and dear to my heart. He transitioned out of that industry into another agricultural industry, poultry, but still of course takes great care of all the animals that are under his care.

I see this type of legislation as very important in that we reached out to the agricultural community as well in these conversations. Of course, when we think about protecting animals, it's easy to think about cats and dogs and the standard ideas, but this also provides a lot of certainty and clarity around what the rules are for the agricultural community. I know the Ontario Federation of Agriculture was engaged in consultations around this, as well as the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. I've heard from farmers in my riding, as well as pet owners. Many of them are the same; I know we always had dogs growing up. They are pleased to see that now there will be certainty around protection for animals.

Of course, every farmer wants to see that the bad actors in this space are being removed—those who, frankly, bring discredit and harm to the honourable profession of

agriculture—and so I'm glad to see that we're taking steps to be one of the strongest enforcers of animal welfare in the country of Canada, and the province of Ontario is taking the lead on that.

I want to thank the Solicitor General, as well as the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, for their leadership and for their contributions this morning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore for her final comments.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's never just final, right? Animals will always be a topic of conversation for me, absolutely. I just want to thank the members from Thunder Bay—Superior North, Burlington, Essex and Niagara West for sharing your thoughts on today's discussion. We will continue this discussion.

We talked about the inspector piece, and I'm also thrilled that we are going to make sure we have the inspectors across this province, to make sure that those inspectors are trained properly to do their jobs. That's something that we heard loud and clear in our consultations when we went across this province—that these inspectors must be trained—and there is a training component as part of this legislation.

We talked about the penalties being the strongest in Canada, and the enforcement of those penalties. These are all key items that are important to us as well.

I thank the member from Niagara West for mentioning about agriculture. We did engage the agricultural community. They were engaged in all of our round tables. When we sent out invitations for our round tables, we opened it up to anybody who wanted to have a conversation about the future welfare of our animals.

I'll tell you that our farmers and our agriculture people—their animals are important to them, so we wanted to make sure that they fit into this bill as well. It is my understanding that they are happy with what we are proposing moving forward.

I once again want to just thank all those people out there that give of their time to help the animals in our communities. It doesn't matter where you live—in a small town, a big town, a big city, in a rural community, in the north—people give of their time every day to help out these animals. If we can say anything, we need to continue to educate people against animal cruelty. As I said, let's make sure we have the highest penalties in Canada and get this legislation passed. Thank you so very much for your time.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I'd like to thank the speakers so far: the Solicitor General, and the MPPs from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, from Burlington, from Essex as well as from Thunder Bay. I do have a one-hour lead, but I think I've probably got five minutes—

Interjection.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—to talk about this bill.

First what I want to do—not to delve into it too much, because as I mentioned, I don't have a lot of time this morning, but I want to talk about how we actually got here, why this bill has been brought forth.

The bill itself enacts the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019, and what it does is repeal the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. Now, this bill, along with the OSPCA Amendment Act, are a response to a Superior Court ruling that found the OSPCA's enforcement powers in animal cruelty investigations in Ontario to be unconstitutional. That's why we're here today. In early 2019, a Superior Court judge found that the previous animal welfare legislation violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it effectively deputized the OSPCA, which is a private not-for-profit organization, and deputized them into a policing role.

In the meanwhile, the Ontario government passed the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act. This was the interim period which came in early 2019. This temporary measure was instituted to keep animals protected until a new framework could be established.

While the decision was being appealed, the OSPCA announced this year that it would no longer enforce the act, citing concerns over lack of support and the safety of its officers attending properties alone as part of its investigations. This is the main reason why we're here today.

Then on June 28, the OSPCA stepped back after 100 years of animal welfare enforcement and the humane society took over a temporary role. Now we have what's known as the PAWS Act. It aims to provide a new, updated and permanent framework for animal welfare enforcement in Ontario.

This interim animal protection model, which was launched in June, included the creation of a toll-free number available 24/7 to report animal welfare concerns. The number is available 24/7 for police as well, for advice and support from a provincial inspector. While the interim act simply allowed the appointment of a chief inspector for animal enforcement, its framework is more robust than it was before, and that's something I commend the government on.

So the PAWS Act is a first step in seeking to implement a new provincial enforcement model, a more detailed oversight framework, a modernized legislative framework and a multidisciplinary advisory table. So it's more open; there is more oversight than we had in the past.

I'm not sure how much more time I have—probably a couple of more minutes.

For too long, Mr. Speaker, animal advocates and stakeholders have demanded the need for change and for a revamped cruelty enforcement regime here in Ontario. For decades, animal welfare charities and their donors had been subsidizing this province. They have been the ones providing law enforcement—a public service—to investigate animal cruelty in a severely underfunded system. We talked about that as well, with the member from Essex saying that one of the main concerns is to make sure that

this new model is funded. Now, not once did I hear from the Solicitor General or from her colleague any dollar amount as to how much this is going to cost, how much they are going to put into this system. So that is one concern that we have in the NDP have.

Another concern is regulations. We have heard nothing about regulations. That seems to be the norm in terms of every bill they put forward: There are no regulations.

So these are some of the concerns that we have, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I will talk further and in greater detail tomorrow.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. When this bill comes back up for debate, you will be encouraged to continue with your debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 10:15 and this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask members to introduce their guests, I'm going to introduce a few of my guests. We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today the award-winning Canadian author of seven national best sellers, and two-time winner of the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour, Mr. Terry Fallis. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I should say welcome back to Queen's Park, and I should add that I'm inviting members and staff to join us at a reception in Mr. Fallis's honour today in room 340 at noon. I hope you can all attend.

We also have in the House today a group of grade 9 students who are participating in the Legislative Assembly's Take Our Kids to Work Day. Please join me in welcoming them as well.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure daily to welcome back the autism parents: Stacy Kennedy, Kowthar Dore, Angela Brandt, Faith Munoz, Amy Moledzki and her son, Amanda Mooyer, Laura MacIntosh, Karen Bojti, Kaitlen Carrie McKenny and Micau van Speyk. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome two great members of my team at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. It's his first time at question period; Aaron Seres is here, along with Maailah Blackwood.

And three members of the Belleville Police Service are here as well today: Paul Fyke, Pat Comeau and Lindsay Elliot. Welcome to question period.

Mr. Chris Glover: It's my pleasure to welcome to the House the members of OCUFA representing the following universities: Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Lakehead, Carleton, Trent, Queen's, UOIT, University of Toronto, Ryerson, OCAD, York, McMaster, Brock, Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier, Western and King's. Welcome to the House. I encourage all my colleagues to meet with OCUFA members today while they're in the Legislature.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm a proud dad today, welcoming my daughter for take-your-child-to-work day. Beata Schreiner is in the gallery here and she joined me at committee this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park, sweetie.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to be back here. I'd like to introduce some guests of mine from Sarnia-Lambton on take-your-child-to-work day: Annabelle Rayson, one of our former pages up in the east members' gallery, joined by her parents, Eric Rayson and Stephanie Lobsinger, in the other gallery. Thank you. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, it's my pleasure today to welcome Jeanette Whitelaw, commanding officer of the Navy League Cadet Corps 17 Cougar from Hamilton and Stoney Creek, here with 25 navy cadets, along with their parents and officer chaperones. Welcome.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to welcome my daughter, Victoria Varner, here today. Victoria, as you know, learned to walk on the steps here at Queen's Park and she had an opportunity to be a page here. Today I'm really excited that she's joining many other children on take-your-child-to-work day.

I'd also like to welcome the Niagara Parks Commission police force here, who are a part of our ministry.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome John Ciriello, Tracy Smith-Carrier and Rahul Sapra from OCUFA. I look forward to meeting with you later today. Welcome to the people's House.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I would like to introduce Sheena Switzer from 4-H Canada. Every November 4, members, leaders, alumni and supporters alike don 4-H colours to come together to spread awareness of the positive impact the 4-H program is making in Canada and abroad.

I invite members to join us on the staircase after question period for a photo commemorating today.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to welcome Geoffrey Hudson, my friend from the Northern School of Medicine, here with OCUFA; and, also from Thunder Bay, Todd Pritoula, Sean Shorrock, Jason Rybak and Colin Woods from the Thunder Bay police association, representing the Police Association of Ontario.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's an honour today to once again welcome members from the Ottawa Police Association—president Matthew Skof and board members Pam Twinning, Dale Hayes and Barmak Anvari—and, from the great riding of Carleton, a constituent of mine, Jamie McGarry. Welcome to Queen's Park. I'm looking forward to meeting with you.

I would also like to introduce my OLIP intern, Eric Osborne. Today is his first day and I'm really excited to have him as part of my team.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce my granddaughter, Danica, her mother, Karen, and my significant other, Jane.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome two constituents from London West who are here today. Keaton Landry is a second-year political science student at the University of Toronto who is volunteering in my office, and Tristan Joseph is here from London West for Eczema Action Day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joel Harden: Like my colleague from Carleton, I also want to welcome Matt Skof from the Ottawa Police Association, who is here today. It was a pleasure to meet with you this morning, Matt.

I also want to welcome Larry Cauliffe, Tristan Joseph and Felix Tang, who, as my colleague just mentioned, are here from the Eczema Society of Canada. It's an important disability for us to understand.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to welcome the executive of the Durham Regional Police Association to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mr. Gurrratan Singh: It is my pleasure to introduce members of the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, who are here in the galleries, and of course our good friend Howard Brown.

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: I would like to welcome my niece, Aleeza, as part of Take Our Kids to Work Day. Welcome to Queen's Park, Aleeza.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I'd like to introduce and welcome to Queen's Park Bruce Chapman, the president of the Police Association of Ontario, as well as Stephen Reid, also of the Police Association of Ontario. And I would like to welcome all the officers who have joined us from across Ontario to meet with MPPs on their advocacy day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I would also like to welcome my daughter, Suvidhi Anand, as part of Take Our Kids to Work Day. It's good to have an extra staffer today.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to welcome, from the Durham Regional Police Association, president Colin Goodwin, Brad Durst, Jamie Bramma, Tim Morrison and Andrew Tummonds. Welcome to Queen's Park for your advocacy day.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd just like to welcome, from the Brantford Police Association, Mark Baxter, the president.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to welcome two new staff members in my office who have joined me this week. I'm proud to welcome Vanshika Dhawan as my legislative assistant, and Angela Butron Gutierrez, my new OLIP intern, who we're very excited to have as well. Thank you and welcome.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'd like to welcome Mr. Mike Chopowick from the Ontario Waste Management Association, as well as his lovely daughter, Ceilidh, who is in the ninth grade and is joining her dad for Take Our Kids to Work Day. Mike and Ceilidh are from my constituency of Pickering-Uxbridge. I'm very pleased to have both of them here for question period. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1040

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm really proud to welcome Geoff Hudson, a friend of mine from the great community of Thunder Bay Lakehead University, here with OCUFA today.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I have three guests to announce today. I have my daughters, Monica and Michelle Crawford, former pages, for take-your-children-to-work day, and my new EA, Jad Haffer, as well. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome, from the Cornwall Police Association, the president, Dave MacLean, VP Jeff Lalonde and the treasurer, Mylene Lacroix.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I would like to welcome Stephanie Landon from the Eczema Society of Canada.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: I'd like to welcome all those visiting from the Eczema Society of Canada, 17 people in total: Jennifer Aves; Jim and Kyle Bruner; Lawrence Cunliffe; Aaron Drucker; Jennifer Gerdts; Reema Gill; Jennifer Johnson; Tristan Joseph; Stephanie Landon; Michael Lanigan; Amanda Melville and her son, Nathan; Rick Roth; Alexandra Spence; Felix Tang; and Elizabeth Wagdin. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to welcome the members of the Hamilton regional police who are here to join with us today. Thank you for coming.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, you may have heard that today is the Police Association of Ontario's lobby day. I want to join members to welcome Bruce Chapman, the president; Stephen Reid, Mike Duffy, Sarah Coulter, Mark Baxter, Dave MacLean, Colin Woods, Pam Twining, Trevor Arnold and Tim Reparon, who are all board members; and of course all members of our police associations who have joined us today.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I want to welcome, for her first day, Marion Davies. She's an OLIP intern with my office. It's great to have her on the team.

I also wanted to welcome the members from Barrie Police and South Simcoe Police Service who are here today.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I'd like to thank and welcome Eesha Gupta, who's joining me for take-your-kid-to-work day. She eagerly wanted to come and join me today. Thank you for coming.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I'm very pleased to welcome Lawrence Cunliffe to the Legislature. He is a great patient advocate in Kanata–Carleton. Welcome.

Mr. Jamie West: I want to welcome Geoffrey Hudson, as part of OCUFA, from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

Hon. Doug Downey: I'd like to welcome, from the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, Jane Welsh, Aina Budrevics, Doris Chee, Tim Dobson and Shannon Baker.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd also like to welcome Paulo and Ozzie from the Police Association of Ontario from London. Thank you very much for the great meeting.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It is my pleasure to introduce Gabriel Czyski, who is from my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. Welcome to our House. He's here for take-your-kid-to-work day. I hope you learn a lot and enjoy your time today in question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to acknowledge the patience of the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't think you could maybe see down here this far.

Interjections.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I know you can hear this far.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I can assure you he can. Shots fired.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: But he can hear this far.

I'd like to introduce a grade 9 student from Jean Vanier Catholic Secondary School in Milton, Sienna Scullion, and her father, Dion; also Jamie McMillan, who's a co-founder of KickAss Careers; and Darryl Spector, president of Promotion Nuclear and vice-chair of the board of directors of Skills Ontario. Thanks for being here today—and for your patience.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I may need new glasses. I'll look into that next week.

The Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, two of our caucus members are celebrating their 30th birthdays: Stephen Crawford and Randy Pettapiece.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the indulgence of all the members, which has allowed us to introduce all the guests here today.

Also in the Speaker's gallery are Peter Atkins and Amira Berberovic, who are here to see page Neil Atkins in action. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier.

Yesterday, Global News, the Toronto Star, Ryerson School of Journalism and others revealed the results of their investigation into contaminated water in our schools and daycares. The results are beyond disturbing. They reveal that over a two-year testing period, there were 646 instances of lead exceeding federal safety regulations in daycares across Ontario.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians exactly what he plans to do to bring that number down to zero?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much for that question from the member opposite.

I want to again thank the journalists who did that study across the entire country, which showed that Ontario is a leader with regard to reporting and publicly displaying the results across the entire country.

Back in 2017, my ministry passed Ontario regulation 243/07, which requires all fountains and taps within our schools and daycares to be tested by 2020. We're pretty close to coming up to completion of that task, in which we have an understanding of the test results within our schools.

If there is a non-compliance going on within our school system, the public school system must contact the board of education, they must contact the board of health, and they must contact the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and come up with a plan in order to make those taps safe, whether it be shutting down those

taps, bringing in bottled water or doing flushing. We follow the guidance of the medical officers of health within our regions to come up with those plans.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In that long list that the minister railed off, I didn't hear him say the word "parents" one single time.

The report reveals that parents of students in schools where dangerous levels of lead have been found have been kept in the dark. Information is not relayed directly to parents whose children are being exposed to toxic levels of lead every day.

Will the Premier commit today, then, to being proactive and transparent with parents in Ontario about lead in their children's schools and daycares?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks again for that question. Although the data is available publicly, the member opposite is correct that parents aren't directly notified of results.

Back in 2017, again, the Ministry of Education sent a letter to all school boards throughout the province that they should look at implementing ways to send those results to parents across the school systems, if there are bad test results. Some have complied; some have not.

I'm currently speaking with the Minister of Education, who is sitting beside me here, to look to how we can remedy that situation going forward. We know we can do much better.

Ontario is a leader, Mr. Speaker, with regard to reporting and testing of the water systems within our province. We will maintain to be a leader. We will do better. We will do more. I look forward to our conversation with the Ministry of Education to rectify that situation across the province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, yesterday's report on water quality in Ontario schools highlights the multi-billion-dollar backlog in school repairs. Yesterday, in government estimates hearings, the Minister of Education was forced to admit that the backlog has gone from bad to worse under the Ford government. The repair backlog was \$15.9 billion under the Liberals, and now it stands at \$16.3 billion. That's hardly surprising since one of the first things this Premier did in office was cut \$100 million from school repair budgets.

Will the Premier reverse his cuts and immediately fund the necessary school repairs to get the lead out of our children's water?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, what we affirmed at the committee yesterday, and for all families to hear in the province today, is that this government is allocating \$13 billion over the next decade to improve schools in every region of the province of Ontario.

What I also made clear is that we're maintaining a \$1.4-billion allocation to maintain our schools. After 15 years of dereliction of duty, where we had a multi-billion-dollar

backlog that we inherited, we must do more to improve our schools. We are putting money on the front lines, more than ever before, to ensure that our schools have the maintenance they need to ensure that they have the facilities that are conducive to positive learning for all students in the province of Ontario.

1050

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Sara Singh: Yesterday's report highlights schools in the Peel District School Board as having the highest rate of lead in Ontario, at a shocking 773 instances. How long will this government continue to expose children in Peel to dangerous levels of lead in our school system?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Who is the question addressed to, may I ask the member for Brampton Centre?

Ms. Sara Singh: Addressed to the Premier. My apologies.

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you for that question. We do take our lead results across this province very seriously. I do want to tell Ontarians—I know the members opposite are speaking heavily with regard to their areas of concern—99% of our municipal drinking water systems are passing with regard to lead content, and 95% of our children's daycare centres and schools are passing with regard to lead content.

With regard to issues that arise in schools where they go beyond the legal limit, that standard that we've set as a government, there are precautions put in place, like I mentioned earlier: contacting the board of education, contacting the local board of health, contacting the ministry of conservation and parks and, through the medical officers of health, a remediation plan is in place to ensure that children are not susceptible to that water. Whether it be closing down the tap system, flushing the system, bringing in bottled water, plans are put in place to ensure that those schools are safe if they go beyond the lead levels that are currently part of our standard.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question, the member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My supplementary is to the Premier. This is a major problem across Ontario. It's not just isolated schools.

In Timmins, Timmins High and Vocational School, which is owned by DSB One, district school board number 1, had tests done where 56% of all the tests came back with results showing levels of lead that exceed the regulations. In one case, one test came back at 100 times over the regulation.

So the schools want to know and the school boards want to know, first of all, what are you going to do to help defer the costs that they have to pay in order to flush these lines on a daily basis, and when are you going to provide them with the dollars to fix the water so our children and others in schools are not at risk?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The question has been referred to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you to the member for Timmins for that question. As I said, we take water safety seriously.

This is not an issue that was just created overnight. This is decades and decades, due to the fact that the province used to build schools with lead pipes. They haven't been replaced yet. The member opposite even sat in this House. When he was in government, what did he do to replace the lead pipes in the school systems in order to make that fix?

We want to work together, Mr. Speaker. We are putting over half a billion dollars into our school systems in order to fix the situation. We look forward to working with the school systems in order to fix those lead pipes.

We are going to continue to be the best in the province at monitoring the lead levels and ensuring our children are safe in our schools and in our daycares, and ensuring that municipalities are below the standards, so that people across this province can continue to enjoy the water that we hold dear in this province.

Some 99% of municipal tests are below the lead standards, and 95% of the schools and daycares are as well. We stand beside our people working day in and day out in our cities to keep our water safe and we'll continue to support—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Again to the Premier: In my riding of Toronto Centre, Inglenook Community School has a 25% failure rate for lead in the water. Inglenook Community School is a very special school in my riding. It's a place where many 2SLGBTQ youth find a safe and supportive learning environment. But you cannot thrive in a school where you cannot drink the water.

The World Health Organization confirms that there is no safe level of lead. With one in four tests done at Inglenook exceeding the recommended levels, the students and staff at the school are in real danger every single day.

What is the Premier going to do to make sure that no more lead tests at Inglenook come back over the federally mandated limits?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We obviously have a shared commitment to improving the state of facilities in schools in this province. It's why, as noted by the Minister of the Environment, 95% of schools are meeting that standard—child care and schools. However, we acknowledge that there is more to do. It's why we have allocated a historic \$13-billion, 10-year, long-term commitment to provide predictable funding to our school boards to improve capital.

The Auditor General of this province in 2015 asked the province to have a 2.5% allocation when it comes to renewal. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to confirm we are meeting that request. In fact, at the Toronto District School Board, we have a 4% commitment being delivered for that school board, to ensure that they meet their maintenance

needs, so that every student in the city of Toronto is able to work and live and be educated in a community that is safe, that is positive and that is conducive to learning in Ontario.

TREATIES RECOGNITION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: My question is to the Premier. This week is Treaties Recognition Week in Ontario. Across Ontario, people have gathered for treaty awareness events in schools, universities and public libraries. These events help the public have a better understanding of treaties, as we are all treaty people.

First Nations continue to honour our treaties and to share our land and our natural resources. Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear: We never ceded our land to the government entirely, nor did we ever give up our sovereignty as nations. Does Ontario believe that it is truly living up to the spirit and intent of the treaties? Meegwetch.

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I appreciate the question, and I believe all Ontarians, all Canadians, accept that we have more to do when it comes to meeting our commitments to the First Nations, Inuit and Métis people of this country, who have made immeasurable contributions.

An important part of that is ensuring that the next generation of young people know the shared history, the culture and the diversity of language that exist within the First Nations communities of this province. It's why our government has expanded and enhanced education and learning of First Nations history from grades 1 to 8. It's why we've added 10 additional courses for secondary students, so that they know more about the incredible contributions of First Nations.

We take our responsibilities seriously. We believe that there is tremendous economic opportunity and potential within our First Nations community, a fast-growing community in this province. We're going to continue to work with them in good faith, to ensure that they are able to reach their full potential, get economic opportunity and realize their dreams that this country should be able to provide for the First Peoples of this country.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Treaties are more than contracts and real estate transactions. Actually, they are sacred agreements that set out for us how to maintain our relationship with newcomers, then and now. The crown has a role to play in this relationship too. First Nations cannot be the only ones holding up their side of the treaty.

We come to you and ask for help in getting clean drinking water, safe housing and proper infrastructure. If Ontario honoured the treaties as they were intended, we wouldn't be asking these questions.

Is the government, is Ontario, prepared to share the resources as part of Treaty 9 and the Robinson Treaties? Yes or no?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I'm pleased to rise and address the member's issues. We all agree, and those who know

the history of the Williams Treaties in central Ontario understand how in the past, things have not always worked the way that they should, and that there should be a level of respect, and that we should come to an agreement on some of the fundamental important pieces.

But it's not just a piece of paper; it's not just a discussion, Mr. Speaker. It's about action coming out of that. That is why the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and myself were in Kenora recently, talking about the justice centres, standing with Treaty 3 and Chief Fiddler and NAN, talking about the important work that we need to do with First Nations to actualize the agreements that we have, to make sure that they're having an impact in the communities where they need to.

I'm pleased to work with the member on issues as they arise, to make sure that we're taking action where action is needed in ways that we can, and to work with our federal counterparts as well, to make sure that this is a holistic approach to the issues and not just singular motion with no action. We are committed to action, and the Minister of Indigenous Affairs talks consistently about levels of respect and engagement.

1100

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier.

Premier, as you know, we have an amazing country, in particular our own province. We are truly blessed with abundant natural resources and world-class citizens who are the envy of the world itself.

Thanks to our government's leadership, we are finally turning this country's economy around, putting in place policies that will help all Ontarians thrive. Unfortunately, we can only do so much. Interprovincial trade barriers act as hurdles that divide this country and make us less competitive.

Can you speak, Premier, to the impact that interprovincial trade barriers have had on our potential economic output, and what our government is doing to address these burdensome regulations?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our great MPP from Sarnia–Lambton for the question; he's an absolute champion.

The impact of interprovincial trade regulations is staggering, a major roadblock to economic growth right across this region. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce previously called the interprovincial trade regulations "a tyranny of small variances." The Senate committee on banking and commerce stated that regulatory overlap negatively impacts and costs the Canadian economy up to \$130 billion.

At the COF meeting, we're working to tear down those barriers to make sure that we can trade freely across this country. What it comes down to, Mr. Speaker, is just regulation over regulation. That's putting a burden on trade.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the Premier: Thank you for that answer. Premier, those are some astonishing numbers and they speak to how action is needed and needed right away. We are seeing increased episodes of division and uncertainty in this country.

Addressing economic trade barriers should be top of mind for all of our leaders. Our country is strengthened by ensuring goods and services are able to move through this federation with minimal disruption. At a time of increased protectionism in this world, we should be doing all we can to help ensure that our companies and entrepreneurs have all the support they require.

Premier, can you speak to Ontario's role in helping to bridge the divide on this issue?

Hon. Doug Ford: I would like to thank our great MPP. As we saw in the last election and after the election, this country is divided. It is Ontario's spot to stand up, unite the country right across all provinces—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you for the cheers—unite the country right across this great country, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we've offered Toronto to host the COF meeting. If the chair accepts, we will come here, because what is good for Canada is good for Ontario, and what's good for Ontario is good for Canada. We will unite this country. United we stand; divided we fall.

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier made comments about my hometown, the city of Hamilton. Question period gets pretty partisan sometimes and it can get pretty heated, but yesterday the Premier insulted an entire community.

It's bad enough for the Premier of Ontario to call any part of the province "destroyed," but when he attacks my hometown, the great city of Hamilton, we take it personally. Is the Premier ready to apologize?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: As the member from Hamilton heard, it wasn't about the great people of Hamilton, because they're incredible. They're starving for jobs, and we have a great MPP who is actually, for the first time, bringing jobs to Hamilton.

We have an investment of \$100 million from DHL. We have three or four companies going there and investing. Do you know why they're investing, Mr. Speaker? Because they love our policies. They love that we're tearing down the regulations and red tape. They love the idea of us giving \$5 billion in tax credits to encourage businesses, to create the environment for Hamilton to thrive and prosper and grow.

For the first time, I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, Hamilton has a voice with our great MPP sitting up there attracting businesses right in the leader's backyard. The leader didn't even know about the expansion of DHL.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Hamilton is filled with some of the hardest-working people you will ever meet. They

didn't inherit million-dollar companies from their parents. Instead, they work hard to pay their bills and take care of their families, which, by the way, is getting harder and harder every day under this government.

Hamiltonians deserve better than a Premier insulting their town and trying to take credit for the good things that they've built before this Premier was in that seat. If the Premier is really interested in helping Hamilton, he could stop firing our teachers in our schools and nurses in our hospitals. Is he ready to do that?

Hon. Doug Ford: Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The NDP actually have no policies whatsoever. Their policies would decimate job creation in the city of Hamilton. That's the legacy of NDP governments, Mr. Speaker. Mind you, there has only been one NDP government in the province of Ontario, because the people of Ontario have never wanted to go back to that misery. What they do, though, is because they don't have any policies to talk about, they go personal. So if you've worked hard, you've earned it and made a good living, they talk you down.

The people of Hamilton are like all of the people of the province of Ontario, like my parents who came here, who worked very hard. They came with nothing, like a number of members of our caucus. They made something of themselves. Instead of talking down to those people who have worked so very hard to make something of themselves, how about you do what we do and celebrate them, and celebrate the fact that there are a lot of jobs for the people of Ontario and across the province?

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. It disappoints me to have to ask, but it's far too important not to, and it deserves a considered response.

There are thousands of honest, reputable builders in Ontario, but there are some bad players. The Tarion audit revealed that nearly 10,000 people were ripped off by Tarion on defects in their homes. Builders refused to fix another 4,000 homes, staff are often unqualified and provide false information, and executives line their very deep pockets while protecting bad builders. Three audits by the Auditor General and the report by Justice Cunningham have all revealed the same thing. We all know what the problem is: Money is more important than the little guy.

Speaker, will the minister answer this? Is Tarion a warranty regulator or a protection racket?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the question very much, because it allows us the opportunity to stand up and talk about what our government is doing for the little people that the member alluded to just moments ago. People in Ontario, whether they're buying a home or buying a condo—it doesn't matter what size of home—it's the most important investment that they make in their lives. We want to make sure that there are rules in place to protect them.

I think the biggest thing we need to do in Ontario is, after 15 years of an absolutely dismal record on this issue,

we want to make sure that we can educate Ontarians, because first and foremost, Tarion does not provide warranty. The builders provide insurance, and so we recognize straight away that we need to ensure that consumers are educated with what is needed in terms of priority decisions when they're entertaining buying a condo or a home.

I'm pleased to share with you that we accepted readily the Auditor General's report on October 30, and we're moving forward. In fact, in terms of compensation, I used my own minister powers to make sure that executive compensation was disclosed.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the minister: While tens of thousands of people have been ripped off by Tarion under the Liberal administration, it continues today. Despite the minister's tinkering, yesterday in this House, she stated that homeowners have had the rug pulled out from underneath them.

Tarion remains an accountable rogue agency that is engaged in corrupt business practices. It's also controlled by an association that has contributed vast amounts of money to all political parties.

People need answers. Has the ministry been cautioned or directed by current or former political operatives to turn a blind eye and keep their hands off Tarion? And will the minister make public her mandate letter to dispel these concerns of political interference? Let's put an end to this protection racket.

1110

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I can tell you with absolute certainty that our government is standing by homeowners. I can tell you with absolute certainty that stepping back to the very thoughtful watch of Minister Smith and Minister Walker, we have been taking progressive steps to make sure that we're protecting homeowners and we're making sure that the executives that have been spoken about by the member opposite are actually stepping up and doing the right thing.

I'm pleased to share with you that, just yesterday, my ministry received a letter from the board chair. He is absolutely confirming that they are moving forward on the requests that we have made to make Tarion more accountable, to absolutely make Tarion a body that is taking care of our homeowners, be it first-time new buyers for homes or condos, because both of those opportunities have to be protected when it comes to that very important decision and investing in a home.

So, again, we've acted on Justice Cunningham's recommendations, 27 to be specific—

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

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. Minister, between our mining sector, forestry industry and

energy policy, we know that northern Ontario is responsible for billions of dollars of economic activity and tens of thousands of jobs related to our rich supply of natural resources. Hard-working northern Ontarians are doing more than their fair share helping to build Ontario. Could the minister tell this House what is in the package concerning northern Ontario's critical mining industry?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you to the member from Perth–Wellington for all of his advocacy for job creators across the province. The member is 100% right that northern Ontario's growth and economic development are key to Ontario's success, and our plan is working.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, we have helped create an environment for over 272,000 new jobs in the province of Ontario in the past 16 months.

Mining is a key part of Ontario's economy. The mining industry accounted for nearly \$10 billion worth of minerals in 2017, and creates more than 26,000 direct jobs and 50,000 indirect jobs in Ontario. That's why we are making common-sense changes to make mining more competitive in Ontario.

Uncertainty and open-ended timelines have been making it harder for mining operations in Ontario. We are proposing 45-day guarantees to make sure mining can be more competitive and continue driving more investment in northern Ontario.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the minister for that answer. Mining is not only a major part of the north's economic development, but it's also critical for Ontario's bottom line. Could the minister tell us what other ways this package proposes to support job creation and economic growth in northern Ontario?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: In addition to providing certainty for our mining sector, we are proposing measures to help our forestry sector. Ontario's forestry industry generates over \$16 billion in revenue and supports approximately 155,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Today, forestry companies are caught up in duplicative approval processes that cost time and money to industry. These delays have caused many of these forestry operations to close. Our package proposes to streamline approvals for our forest operations by ending unnecessary duplication in the process. It's about making common-sense regulatory changes and getting out of the way of job creators so they can do what they do best: create good opportunities for hard-working families across the province.

Mr. Speaker, we are making Ontario more competitive, and we look forward to building up Ontario and making it the economic engine of Canada once again and building on the 272,000 jobs that we have been able to create since being elected.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. This week Ontario is celebrating National

Skilled Trades and Technology Week. While the government is busy patting themselves on the back, their cuts to education are robbing young people of the opportunities they need to get into the trades. Schools have had to cancel construction and technology classes, and one school completely scrapped their youth apprenticeship program.

Speaker, no matter how hard the minister tries to spin it, this cancellation means only one thing: fewer opportunities for students to learn about the skilled trades. When is this government going to reverse their cuts and stop making life harder for those who want to enter into the skilled trades?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, I was proud to stand with the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development and the Minister of Children last week, along with the parliamentary assistant for education, when we announced a historic investment in the skilled trades. An additional 50,000 students this year are benefiting from our investment: over \$10 million more this year to incent more young people to enter the skilled trades, to enter apprenticeship and the high-paying, dignified jobs that exist within this sector.

We know that one in five jobs will soon be in the skilled trades. We appreciate that in remote regions of this province—in the north, in the southeast and west, in every region—there's a supply issue of labour talent. We are working hard to skill up this province and incent young people, particularly underrepresented groups and women, to see themselves pursuing these wonderful, dignified, high-paying jobs. We've announced 120 additional programs benefiting 50,000 students in over 2,000 schools. We know there's more to do, and we're going to continue to work together to ensure more young people enter this critical sector of the economy.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Speaker, this minister can say anything he wants about his so-called investments in education. He also said not one teacher would lose their job, and we know that that wasn't true either. The Ontario Public School Boards'—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Sorry. Withdraw.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association warned the government that their cuts mean that there will be very limited opportunities for students interested in the skilled trades. One school has already scrapped their Specialist High Skills Major, a program designed to help kids interested in the trades—and trades get jobs.

Again to the Premier: It's not just students who are going to suffer under the cuts to education. Our economy will as well. Why does this Premier not think Ontarians deserve better?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I will say that the only thing that the member opposite had correct in his question

is that this week is National Skilled Trades and Technology Week in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, with the Minister of Education and right across the government, we're providing more opportunities to young people right through our education system to explore that opportunity of getting a great job in the skilled trades.

My friend, someone I work very closely with, Arlene Dunn, who is the Canada's Building Trades Unions director, recently said to me that we are going to be short 260,000 skilled trades jobs in the next 10 years across Canada. A lot of these jobs pay over \$100,000 per year, Mr. Speaker. That's why we continue to educate our students, talk to parents and talk to guidance counsellors about the hope and opportunity in the skilled trades right here in Ontario.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Stan Cho: My question is for the Solicitor General. Monday marked the start of Crime Prevention Week in Ontario, an opportunity to highlight how the public can work with and support our front-line police officers and first responders in preventing crime. Now, more than ever, criminals rely on increasingly complex methods to victimize law-abiding people and to evade capture. In addition, in communities like mine and across the province, we hear stories of young people caught in a cycle of violence, often leading to criminal activity.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General tell this House how the police services are working with the public and community partners to prevent crime, and why these partnerships are so vital?

1120

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Willowdale. He's absolutely right. The opportunity that we are having today during Crime Prevention Week, as we mark it with "Preventing Crime, Protecting People" and having the police association join us here in an education day, is important because it is not just our police services that protect us. It is citizens. It is community groups. It is the engagement that we need and we expect from our leaders in all areas, whether it's in education or our workforces.

I trust and I hope that members opposite and across all political spectrums are meeting with their police services members today, because they can share some very true depictions of how we can make a difference to make their job easier and our communities ultimately safer.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: Speaker, through you, thank you to the minister for that response. I know all of us agree on the importance of preventing crime in our neighbourhoods.

Many of our communities have faced increased gun and gang violence recently, which I know is a concern for all of us in this House. Tackling the scourge of gun and gang violence is a key priority that requires the support of many of our government's ministries, including the Solicitor

General, the Attorney General and the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Through you, can the Solicitor General please tell us what actions our government is taking to prevent and tackle gun and gang violence in our communities?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Willowdale. It really is a multi-ministerial, all-government approach. Working with our partners with the Police Association of Ontario, with the Ontario chiefs of police, we have some very concrete ideas that they have brought forward and we are moving forward on.

Of course, guns and gangs do not limit themselves to municipal boundaries, and so our investment of \$16 million to develop a comprehensive, province-wide strategy to tackle guns and gang violence includes meaningful intervention and prevention for at-risk and gang-involved youth, and tough enforcement, suppression and prosecution for serious offenders. These are all pieces that we are working on because we are listening to the feedback from our front-line officers.

If I may, I would like to invite the members of the PAO, who are here today for our lobby day, to join the Premier and I in his office after question period to continue that conversation—and thank you for your service.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, 11,000 scientists worldwide, including scientists here in Ontario, signed on to a statement calling on governments to recognize that we are facing a climate emergency. Ontarians are already feeling the impact of that climate crisis, from people facing floods on the Great Lakes to First Nations communities forced to evacuate because of wildfires.

Ontario has to be a leader taking on this climate crisis. Will the Premier reverse course today? Will he join New Democrats, scientists, youth and governments around the world and declare a climate emergency here in this province?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much for that question opposite. We do take our work in fighting climate change and ensuring we have a healthy environment very seriously on this side of the House.

Last year, we proposed a draft environmental plan for the province of Ontario and we've started implementing some of those processes as we go forward. It's good to mention that we've put forth our emissions performance standards to the federal government, which will target large emitters of greenhouse gases in this province. We're awaiting whether or not the federal government will accept those results.

But what that will do, it will make sure that the polluters at the highest level are lowering their emissions over time. We're going to be coming out with our new heavy truck emissions program, which will target the diesel trucks that are on our roadways to lower their emissions. We've changed the mandate for renewable additives to gasoline.

Ethanol will go up to 15% in our gasoline by 2025. And we've started our work towards renewing our recycling program in this province. We'll divert organic waste and plastics away from our landfills and ensure that we create the new—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, again to the Premier: I hope he considers this an important question. It's time to get real. It's time to listen to people. It's time to listen to the science, time to get to work on a plan for actually addressing the climate crisis. What was just listed off is not going to deal with what we're facing. We all know that.

It's time to stop throwing public money at a failing court case. That is a waste. It's time to stop pretending that inaction or minor action is a solution. It's time to get to work building a prosperous and low-carbon Ontario.

Will the Premier commit today to reversing course and coming up with a real plan to tackle the climate crisis?

Interjections.

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

The question has been referred to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: We are taking our role in the environment very seriously. Ontario leads the way with reducing greenhouse gas emissions 22% below 2005 levels, and we continue on that process, Mr. Speaker.

We've also done other things with our plan, working towards a healthy and clean environment. We've issued a \$950-million green bond to capitalize on the province's ability to raise funds at low interest rates to go towards public transit initiatives, extreme weather infrastructure, energy efficiency and conservation projects. We're waiting for the report from the special commission on flooding.

What is missing throughout conversations over the years in this province, Mr. Speaker, is resilience and adaptation to climate change. We've incorporated that into our plan to fight climate change. We're not only going to deal with the causes of climate change and the high emissions in this province; we're also going to work with municipalities and individuals to ensure that they're able to adapt and become more resilient to the changes in climate, because we're taking our job seriously with regard to the environment. We will build a healthy economy and we'll balance that with a healthy environment.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Speaker, the data economy offers tremendous opportunities for companies based in Ontario to develop data-driven business models and unlock the commercial value of data. Creating jobs and growing businesses is a central part of how our government is improving the lives of Ontarians each and every

day with the ever-growing potential of a data-driven economy.

Speaker, can the minister please tell this House how the government is helping to promote trust and confidence in the protection and use of public data while stimulating economic growth?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to thank the member from Perth–Wellington for the question. I really appreciated his participation in the seminar and consultation that we hosted last week in Stratford. I have to share with the House that, as the member alluded to, data is a resource that has limitless potential, but we need to be very thoughtful as to how we move forward with it.

That's why I'm very pleased to share that our government is developing a provincial data strategy, the first of its kind in Canada, that will help Ontarians and businesses alike to benefit directly from the data economy, but assuring all the while they could be confident in personal privacy and cyber security.

To accomplish this goal, we have done many things. We're hosting online and in-person consultations. We've released three consultation papers that we're soliciting feedback on, and we've also pulled together an all-star task force, a digital and data task force, made up of industry and academic experts who are really interested in helping us hone our consultations to address the thoughtfulness that needs to—

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the minister for her answer and for joining me at the first rural round table in Stratford on Ontario's data strategy last week. I know many Ontarians will be very glad to hear of the actions the minister has taken to ensure that businesses and members of communities across the province are given the opportunity to work with our government as it builds its data strategy.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the development of the data strategy, our government recently launched its third discussion paper on the theme of smarter, better government. Can the minister tell this House what our government is doing to make government better utilize data to improve services for the people of Ontario? And what is our government doing to make government data more open and giving Ontarians more control over their own data?

1130

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, thank you very much to the member from Perth–Wellington for that question. Our goal is to make sure that we're chipping away and breaking down data silos, because we're serving Ontarians best when they only have to tell their story once. Our goal is for Ontarians to trust the cyber and the opportunities that are going to be presented to them. We've been studying the top 10 services at ServiceOntario, for example, and we're moving those top 10 services online so, again, Ontarians will not be experiencing those long lineups that we see across the province. It's going to be easy for Ontarians to access their stickers for their drivers' licences, or their health cards.

Most importantly, we're listening, because, again, this is a journey that is going to revolutionize the manner in which we govern. We're being very thoughtful and listening to the concerns and the opportunities that we're hearing from Ontarians, be they academics, experts or somebody who just wants to make sure that their personal information is safe and secure—

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

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is to the Premier. Today, thousands of students at universities across the province are walking out of their classrooms to protest this government's cuts to OSAP. I've had students call my office in tears who, thanks to this government's cuts, could not afford to return to school this year. I've talked to others who are working full-time jobs while studying full-time because their OSAP grants and loans were cut in half.

Premier, students should be spending their time studying, not worrying about making ends meet. Will you do the right thing, stop this attack on students and reverse these reckless cuts?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you very much to the member for the question. We're all aware that changes were made by the previous government to the OSAP system before the last election—in fact, on the eve of the last election. Those changes that were made were principally made in a fashion which allowed students to access OSAP who came from higher-income families, and they were receiving grants.

Now, the Auditor General has reviewed the changes that were made, and she noted that OSAP had increased by over \$2 billion within the first year. It got so expensive that it wasn't sustainable any longer.

We needed to protect the future of OSAP for future generations. That is what we have done. Not only have we protected it for future generations, but we've also reduced tuition by 10%, saving students more money, keeping money in their pockets, so that they can get the education they need.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: The students who were not able to return to school this year because of your OSAP cuts do not feel protected by this government. The Liberal government did double tuition fees in this province and then, as an act of penitence, tried to increase OSAP. But now your government has actually cut it by \$670 million, and not only that, but they have jeopardized funding for student food banks, for women's centres, for LBGTQ centres on campus.

Given that the minister received over 3,000 letters from students begging this government to reverse this heartless decision, it is clear that these cuts are making life worse for students and families across the province. Why does

the Premier think that students don't deserve the financial support they need to access college and university, while this government squanders money on lucrative appointments for friends and family?

Hon. Ross Romano: Again, if you don't want to take it from us, listen to the Auditor General: \$2 billion in the first year and \$2.7 billion within the next three years. That's double the cost of the OSAP system, double over budget. It was not sustainable. We needed to protect it for future generations, Mr. Speaker. These changes had to be done to ensure that we would still have OSAP for our students.

What we've done now is reduce tuition by 10%, saving students \$450 million across the province. That's not for a single student. Every single student across this province will see those savings. That is a significant savings for students. We're keeping money in their pockets and making sure that they have access to high-quality education, the education they need, Mr. Speaker, and the education that they deserve. We're making sure that OSAP is there for the students who need it most.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question is to the minister who inspires women and young people today, the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. In Ontario, as we know, women make up 48% of our labour force. We can do better. Far too often, women are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and math. We can do better. In fact, women make up less than 4% of the skilled trades labour force. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we can do better.

Unfortunately, among those who work in those sectors, they're often concentrated in part-time, lower-paying or administrative roles. With so many satisfying, high-paying jobs in these sectors, we can do better, and something needs to change.

So I wanted to ask the minister if she can inform this House of what our government is doing to ensure that women are represented in all aspects of the growing STEM economy.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Barrie–Innisfil for that question. It's always a great opportunity to talk about what our government is doing for the skilled trades in Ontario.

Speaker, by 2021, one in five jobs in Ontario will be in the skilled trades. With so many people retiring in the coming years, the need for skilled labour is ever-increasing. This also means that we need more young people in the skilled trades and STEM, and who better to join such a rewarding sector than women?

We need more women in the skilled trades and STEM workforce—women like Negin, who I met yesterday with the Associate Minister of Energy, or Julia, who I visited on her construction site. Negin is an engineer for Ontario Power Generation, and Julia is a site supervisor for Bridgecon Construction. Both of these women add so much value to their companies that allows them and their companies to grow and to thrive.

I want to thank all of my colleagues for working to end the stigma around the trades and let all Ontarians, especially women, know that Ontario is open for skilled trades jobs and open for skilled trades business.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I know that this topic is a very passionate subject for the minister, and I congratulate her on all of her hard work.

I know she has been working all summer, meeting with different organizations and people who care, to get more women into the workforce, and give women a hand up when it comes to being in the workforce and also pursuing the skilled trades.

Yesterday, I noticed that the minister had been meeting with the Paro Centre and the YWCA in Toronto and was talking about all of the great work that they had been doing to make sure that they're providing more opportunities for women in the skilled trades and for them to enter the workforce.

I was wondering if the minister could highlight some of the other groups and individuals that she has been speaking to and working so hard with to encourage more women to pursue such important sectors like our skilled trades.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you again to the member for her question. Women's earnings are crucial to the well-being and financial stability of their families. That is why we are working hard to let young women and girls know that skilled trades and technology are not just for boys. This means making women and girls aware of the opportunities in these sectors, and providing the right training to help them succeed in their studies and their careers.

One organization that is actively working to promote skilled trades for all students, but especially young women, is Kickass Careers, founded by Pat Williams and Jamie McMillan, who I introduced earlier and who are in the gallery.

Jamie is a journeyman ironworker-boilermaker. Through her organization, Kickass Careers, she works hard to take her success in the skilled trades field and teach girls and young women how rewarding a career like hers can be. I'm honoured to meet with her this afternoon after question period and talk about the future and what we can do to get more females involved in the skilled trades and technology sectors.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is to the Premier or the Deputy Premier. I guess it's to the Acting Premier. Good morning, all.

Before the election, the Premier promised to help those involved with harness horse racing because they'd been put under the thumb of the well-connected Woodbine Entertainment Group by the previous Liberal government. But instead of helping the harness horse association, the Premier is watching Woodbine squeeze them even further.

In April, Ontario Racing stopped funding the Ontario Harness Horse Association and told its 3,000 members to join a rival association that is controlled by Woodbine. Thousands of jobs connected to local tracks in communities such as Leamington, Dresden, London and Sarnia are now at risk.

1140

Will the Premier or the Acting Premier intervene to reverse this decision and restore funding to the OHHA?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government to respond. I recognize the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise for the first time in this session, so I welcome all members back to the House.

Thank you to the member opposite for a very important question. The benefits for the horse racing industry are entirely managed by the horse racing industry themselves. As a result, the association representing the horse racing industry across the province is leading this transition, and we've encouraged everyone in the Ontario racing community to sit down with all parties in order to develop a workable solution. We remain committed to the success of the horse racing industry, Mr. Speaker.

I will also remind the members opposite that our government has taken clear action to support rural communities through new investments to help the province's horse racing industry create and protect jobs.

And, Mr. Speaker, as has been mentioned many times, we will continue to commit to creating the conditions for lots of good jobs in this province, and we'll have more to say in the supplementary.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, grooms, trainers, drivers, owners and breeders should be free to choose their own representatives. They should not be forced to join an organization controlled by a powerful Toronto-based corporation that wants them silenced and gone.

Rural communities in Ontario count on the thousands of jobs provided by the horse racing industry. Will the Premier, the President of the Treasury Board, the finance minister, the Attorney General and everybody else meet with the OHHA, stop the attack on rural Ontario, reverse Ontario Racing's unilateral decision, and allow those in harness racing to decide for themselves who can best represent their interests?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members take their seats. Again, the President of the Treasury Board to reply.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Again, we're going to harness every opportunity—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: —I thought I might get a little bit of levity, but now, I guess not, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. I apologize to the minister. He may reply.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is reversing the damage done to the horse racing industry by the previous Liberal government, propped up by the NDP.

For example, our optional Slots at Racetracks Program is returning slots and providing increased support to eligible racetracks, because unlike the others, we understand the importance of horse racing to our local communities. That is why we continue to support the industry, Mr. Speaker.

But let me tell you what we plan to do. We inherited the largest subnational debt in the history of this province. Mr. Speaker, we inherited a massive deficit. Later on today, the Minister of Finance will talk about how we continue the positive work to create the opportunities for Ontarians to create jobs so that all those people who want to work in this great province will continue to have a job and join the 272,000 who have already got jobs.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. In September, I had the pleasure of joining the minister for a tour of Cinespace, one of the many production companies that make their home right in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore. During her visit, we toured the set of Umbrella Academy, a Netflix hit based on the comic book series of the same name, which I binge-watched for the next couple of days, and it was an excellent production.

According to Netflix, this Toronto production provides up to 1,850 local jobs each and every year through their investment. We had the opportunity to meet a caterer who said, “You know what? I just live down the street and I can drive up here to work every day. It’s great to see the local jobs and that people get to live right in their community.”

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please update the House on the value of the film, television and creative industries, what they do and what they bring to our province?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Speaker, for my first question as the new and first Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. That fuels a spectacular double bottom line; that is, first, to preserve and protect our cultural fabric, as we do in storytelling, as well as looking at the economic imprint, a \$71-billion economic imprint, within this ministry. The member is right. It fuels a \$1.9-billion economy in film and television, and creates hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Speaker, I say that we are the world in one province. And next week I’ll have the opportunity to showcase Ontario to the rest of the world as I join the Canadian Film Centre, Music Canada, the Motion Picture Association Canada and so many more in LA as we meet with senior executives with Apple TV, Universal, Netflix, Disney, NBC and so many more, so that we can continue to grow the bottom line for these job creators.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you to the minister. I look forward to seeing what comes of your trip and the opportunities it presents for Ontarians as you show international conglomerates that our government is truly open for business.

Mr. Speaker, last week the minister spoke to the Economic Club of Canada on her ministry’s dual bottom line. The Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries is an economic powerhouse contributing billions of dollars to our economy and hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Can the minister tell us how she’s leveraging this expanded portfolio to protect and preserve our cultural heritage while growing the ministry’s total economic imprint?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Again, I’d like to thank the member for her question and for drawing a very important distinction that we have within the ministry, when we combine heritage, culture, sport and tourism, as well as industry. We recognize, as Ontarians, that they contribute to over \$71 billion in economic activity, and when they’re creating jobs and putting paycheques in people’s pockets, then we can build and protect on what matters most, and that is our health care and our education and our infrastructure.

This ministry combined allows for about \$12 billion in revenues for the government of Ontario, and next week, when I’m in Los Angeles, I can’t wait to speak to more job creators as well as those creators who are creating amazing talent in the province of Ontario. I’m looking forward to it, Speaker, and looking forward to working with the member.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Point of order.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I’m seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding independent members’ responses to ministerial statements.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Guelph is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to put forward a motion without notice regarding independent members’ responses to ministerial statements. Agreed? Agreed.

Again, I recognize the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 35(e), the Green independent member and the Liberal independent member for Ottawa South split the time allocated for responses for independent members on today’s ministerial statement by the Minister of Finance.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Schreiner has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 35(e), the Green independent member and the Liberal independent

member for Ottawa South split the time allocated for responses for independent members on today's ministerial statement by the Minister of Finance.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gurratan Singh: It's with great pleasure I get to introduce to this House Mr. Jovan Singh Deol, who is the younger brother of Manpreet Deol, my constituency assistant for Take Our Kids to Work Day. He's not my kid, but I wish he was. Welcome to this House, Jovan.

Hon. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Rick Byers from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to introduce two people. First of all, Jamie Lim is here from the OFIA—a constituent of mine and somebody who is well known in this House. Also, Mr. Watson from CUPE is here. I'd like to welcome them both.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Jeremy Instead. He is our newly minted OLIP intern. I very much look forward to working with him. Welcome, Jeremy.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to just acknowledge and welcome Jae Truesdell to the Legislative Assembly. He was here when I tabled a couple of my bills in the last session. I'm glad to have him back in the House, smiling. Welcome, Jae.

M. Guy Bourguin: Il me fait plaisir de présenter un ami : le président de l'AFO, Carol Jolin.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

IMMIGRATION FRANCOPHONE

M. Guy Bourguin: Je suis très heureux de prendre la parole lors de la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone. Parler de l'immigration francophone au XXI^e siècle est de parler de diversité, d'ouverture, de cultures et d'accents. Nous parlons donc d'une francophonie nette et clairement plurielle.

Vous savez, si on exclut le Québec, 70 % des immigrants francophones qui arrivent au Canada déclinent de s'établir en Ontario. De plus, environ 60 % des immigrants francophones qui arrivent en Ontario appartiennent à une minorité raciale et ethnoculturelle. Cette diversité est un trésor qu'on doit protéger et encourager.

Toutefois, le taux annuel d'immigration francophone est en déclin, malgré le fait que l'ancien gouvernement libéral avait adopté une cible de 5 %. De plus, c'est

difficile de comprendre comment on pourrait faire face à cette promesse en immigration francophone quand le gouvernement n'hésite pas à couper nos services.

Nous ne pouvons pas rester les bras croisés. Il nous faut des institutions et des services de santé, de justice et d'éducation à la hauteur du défi. Monsieur le Président, le gouvernement de l'Ontario doit s'adapter à la cible d'immigration francophone, et il doit agir dès maintenant.

PARASPORT

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour to be able to stand in the Legislature today. I rise in the House to share how our government's investments in sport initiatives have directly benefited a parasport family in my riding of Niagara West.

Participation rates in sport and physical activity are significantly lower among individuals with disabilities, especially children. Only 26% of children with physical disabilities are participating in sport.

Parasport provides the 1.85 million Ontarians living with a physical disability the opportunity to participate in competitive and recreational sport programs in an effort to challenge, inspire and overcome limitations.

It's why I want to recognize our local athlete Owen Konkle, a resident of Niagara West who has received elite athlete classification by the International Federation for Intellectual Impairment Sport. It's very, very impressive. Coached by his mother, Jennifer, Owen is a great example of how aspiring athletes across the province can greatly benefit from parasport initiatives and programs.

I want to acknowledge, as Niagara prepares to host the 2021 games, the generosity of the Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and how important it is to highlight these competitive sport and parasport initiatives, not only how they lead to local economic investments but how these initiatives also provide opportunities for athletes like Owen to compete on a national stage.

We will continue to pledge our support of every aspiring athlete seeking an equal opportunity to compete, for athletes like Owen Konkle.

TREATIES RECOGNITION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Today, I spoke about the importance of treaty relationships between the crown and First Nations for Treaties Recognition Week. Learning more about treaties through events is just the beginning of recognition. Recognition comes from action, and that action starts here.

The first real step is the passing of my private member's bill on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Ontario. But this is just one piece, Mr. Speaker. The reality on the ground is that our people continue to live in the Far North without proper infrastructure such as clean drinking water, which is a basic human right. This is a crisis that the

provincial and federal governments have no will to change.

This lack of will is shown in the issue of the Robinson annuities case. Leaders from the communities that signed the Robinson treaty have taken the government to court to get the enforcement of the crown's promises in their treaty. The Robinson-Huron Treaty stated that the signatories would receive an increase in treaty annuities based on the economic value of the land. We know that Ontario is very rich in natural resources, a fact that has been stated over and over in this chamber.

As an honourable treaty partner, Ontario should be working with our communities, not forcing them into litigation to share the wealth of this province. Meegwetch.

VETERANS

Mr. Daryl Kramp: To colleagues in the Legislature today: We won't be here on Remembrance Day, so in my time allotted to members' statements I would like to offer a personal reflection.

My father served in the Second World War and was a proud member of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. They suffered many, many deaths and casualties in their mission to liberate Holland and Belgium. My riding of Hastings–Lennox and Addington is also home to the vaunted Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, which served with great distinction in the Italian campaign. For many, many years, I had the honour to work with and to support the men and women of Trenton air force base, the air capital of Canada.

On a sombre note, though, I was sadly privileged to attend many of the highly emotional repatriation ceremonies for those lost in Afghanistan. Their sacrifice has been honoured by thousands of thoughtful Canadians who have gathered on overpasses on the solemn journey on the Highway of Heroes, originating at CFB Trenton.

Words cannot express our sorrow, our gratitude and our pride. So to all Canadians, I say—and I know I speak collectively for all of us—we will remember them. Lest we forget.

Interjections: Lest we forget.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My riding of Toronto–Danforth strongly supports the expansion of transit. My constituents are fed up with being stuck in traffic. They want to be able to get onto streetcars and onto subway trains, and far too often they can't.

For those reasons, they've supported the construction of the relief line, even though it would cause huge disruptions in my riding. They support the expansion of GO Transit service because they know people have to get from the suburbs to downtown, coming through my riding. They've engaged in long discussions with provincial officials about soundproofing and vibration mitigation. Notwithstanding the disruption, people have been supportive of that project.

The recent decision to abandon the relief line, which will push back rapid transit by many years, has been very upsetting to people. The decision to take the Ontario Line above ground south of Gerrard in my riding so that this line, with heavy rail, with trains passing every 45 seconds within metres of people's bedroom windows, is not a reasonable approach. This is not good planning.

1510

This is hugely problematic. This needs to change. Parks need to be protected along those rail lines. People's homes need to be protected along those rail lines. The project needs to be revamped so that a subway train actually goes underground. I ask the Premier to rethink that design so that people's homes, parks and neighbourhoods are protected.

DAVID CAPLAN

Mr. Michael Coteau: I rise today to talk about a former member here in the Legislature whom we all tragically lost in July of this year. A lot of people knew David Caplan as a local school board trustee, as the MPP for Don Valley East, as a cabinet minister and a government member in the former McGuinty government, where he served as the Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I knew David as a hard-working, caring person with deep ties to his community.

David was a true politician in many forms. He remembered people's names. He loved to go from door to door to talk to people and really try to figure out how to solve their problems, and regardless of anyone's political stripe, he always found common ground with anyone he was with.

David's accomplishments during his time in government were many, but I believe his number-one gift to this province was his work in rebuilding our roads, our hospitals, our courts and other essential infrastructure. He followed in his mother Elinor Caplan's footsteps as a bold, collaborative and hard-working cabinet minister, but above all, David Caplan was a dedicated father of two sons, Ben and Jacob, and he was a husband to his loving wife, Leigh. No matter how busy he was or what was going on in his life, he always made time to spend with family, and he loved his community of Don Valley East.

EASTERN ONTARIO LOCAL FOOD CONFERENCE

Mr. Jim McDonell: There's always something exciting going on in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and November is no different. This year, we're proud to host the Eastern Ontario Local Food Conference at the NAV Centre in Cornwall on November 13 and 14. This year's event promises to be the best yet. With three regional food tours, a delicious local food-tasting reception and full-day conference programming to inspire and motivate you, this is an event not to be missed.

This year's theme is "Growing Communities Together," and the conference will explore exciting local food initiatives in the region. The program features prominent entrepreneurs, municipalities and organizations all creating an opportunity for local food. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is organizing the conference in partnership with the city of Cornwall and the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

"The Eastern Ontario Local Food Conference is a must-attend event for anyone who shares our mission to grow Ontario's agri-food sector and support rural communities," said Ernie Hardeman, Ontario's Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The conference offers a unique opportunity to explore our economic opportunities and community connections.

Warden Jamie MacDonald and Mayor Bernadette Clement are looking forward to welcoming visitors to the area. Eastern Ontario has a thriving and innovative agri-food sector, and having a chance to share our ideas and successes with others will benefit the whole region. We hope to see you all there.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to make this House aware that insurance companies in Ontario are not recognizing the minimum entry-level training program that became law in 2017. I'll tell you how that impacts businesses and jobs in this province.

Janice and Peter Laroque in my riding have a container business, JPL Storage. They deliver containers and rent them. Their son Earl is joining the business and has worked in the business for years. He got his AZ licence. He took the course, 200 hours. They went to get insurance, and he can only get facility insurance. They can't pay it, and basically that's going to shut this business down. That's happening across farms. That's happening across small businesses across this province.

I brought this issue forward to the former Minister of Finance. I didn't get the response that I was looking for. I have brought this issue to the current Minister of Finance, and he is still looking at it. I am now bringing this issue to the House, to the Premier.

Small businesses, farms, JPL Storage—if Earl has to go work for a big trucking company for three years, the business is done.

This law is on the books. This is a good regulation—a regulation that should be enforced.

I'm asking for the House's support to save JPL Storage and save these companies that are going to be put out of business because they aren't protected by our regulations.

SALVATION ARMY

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: This past Thanksgiving was a graceful one. It gave us time to reflect and be thankful for the blessings we have and how fortunate we are.

In our province today, the sad reality is that there are still people who do not have the same necessities and privileges as we do.

This year, my team and I took time to volunteer at the Salvation Army shelter in my riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville.

The Salvation Army operates around 50 emergency shelters across Canada and provides thousands of emergency transitional and supportive housing beds each night for men, women, youth and families at risk. The Salvation Army allows people to feel respected, hopeful and dignified at a time when they need it most.

I'm amazed and humbled by the great work and services the Salvation Army, their staff and volunteers provide every day in Mississauga East-Cooksville and across Ontario.

Our government and I will work tirelessly to help ensure that all Ontarians have the opportunity to grow and prosper.

As the winter holiday season approaches, let us all remember to take some time out to help our neighbours in need and follow the great example of the Salvation Army.

JOUR DE L'INDÉPENDANCE DE LA POLOGNE POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Le 11 novembre, nous honorerons nos héros qui ont tant sacrifié pour que nous puissions vivre en paix.

But for me as a Polish Canadian, November 11 carries a dual significance: On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, following 123 years of partitions and occupation and being wiped out from the map of Europe, Poland became a self-governing nation once again. Despite the many decades of struggle, Poles managed to win back their freedom and rightful sovereignty, owed largely to their patriotism and heroism.

Polish Independence Day is the most important national holiday in Poland. It celebrates the strength, bravery and resilience of the men and women who fought for centuries to maintain their freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Here in Ontario, we are proud of the contributions that Polish Canadians have made to our province since first settling here 155 years ago.

I am also proud of our very own mini Polish Canadian caucus here on the government side, with Minister Yurek, Minister Yakabuski, Minister Surma and myself. We take every opportunity to showcase our rich heritage and history, which sometimes includes singing the Polish anthem to your Uber driver—right, Minister Yakabuski?

Our Premier values the work ethic and multi-faceted contributions that Poles have made to Ontario. He also has a self-inflicted perogies addiction.

But in all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all my caucus colleagues, I would like to wish all Polish Canadians living in Ontario, happy Polish Independence day. Sto lat.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 31, 2019, the bill is ordered for third reading.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Deepak Anand: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr18, An Act to revive 1191650 Ontario Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PLAN TO BUILD ONTARIO TOGETHER ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE PLAN POUR BÂTIR L'ONTARIO ENSEMBLE

Mr. Phillips moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 138, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes / Projet de loi 138, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter, à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Minister of Finance care to give a brief explanation of his bill?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I will defer to ministry statements, Mr. Speaker.

CARIBBEAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE CARIBÉEN

Ms. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to proclaim the month of August in each year as Caribbean Heritage Month / Projet de loi 139, Loi proclamant le mois d'août de chaque année Mois du patrimoine caribéen.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member from Brampton Centre care to give a brief explanation of her bill?

Ms. Sara Singh: Absolutely, Speaker. Thank you. Caribbean Heritage Month is an opportunity to recognize and reflect on the history of the Caribbean region, its culture, and the significant contributions of Caribbean Canadians and the contributions that they make across Ontario. August holds a special significance for many Caribbean Canadians, with the celebration of Emancipation Day, several cultural and harvest festivals, and a number of independence days that are also observed in the month of August.

A special thank-you to all the people and community groups who participated in our community consultations to proclaim the month of August as the month they've chosen.

1549408 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2019

Mr. Pang moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr19, An Act to revive 1549408 Ontario Inc.

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.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in this House today to deliver our government's 2019 economic outlook and fiscal review, but more importantly to share our plan to build Ontario together.

C'est avec si grand plaisir que je vous présente notre plan pour bâtir l'Ontario ensemble.

Over 16 months ago, the people of this province were struggling. They were being squeezed by higher gas prices, more taxes and skyrocketing electricity costs. They were working harder, paying more and getting less. In response, our government, under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, introduced a bold new vision, and the people of Ontario bought in.

We promised to build a future where they were not only working to make ends meet, but where their government helped enable a better quality of life and a higher standard of living for all of its citizens.

We promised to start by lowering taxes, making hydro rates more affordable and ensuring home ownership was more than just a dream.

We committed to building world-class highways and transit systems that would be admired and studied around the world for their efficiency and their affordability.

Our loved ones would be cared for in state-of-the-art hospitals, where service levels were high, wait times were low, and the transition from home to hospital and back was easy.

Our young people would be prepared for the jobs of the future, with skills to be adaptable lifelong learners in an ever-changing world.

Ontario would be the economic powerhouse of Canada and we would be able to compete in a global economy, a province that celebrates our entrepreneurs, admires wealth creation and brings jobs and opportunity to every region of the province, rebuilding the necessary link between a growing economy and our ability to afford world-class government services.

This vision is within our reach. Our government has a plan to build Ontario together and we are taking the steps to bring that vision to life. But we cannot do it alone. The people of this province are our greatest asset. By giving them the tools to succeed, Ontario has everything that it needs to take on the world and to win.

If we are going to build our future, we first must acknowledge and overcome the challenges that we inherited. As the members of this House know, Ontario has the largest subnational debt in the world.

The members of this House also know that three-quarters of Ontario's \$163-billion budget come in four line items:

- \$64 billion on health care;
- \$30 billion on education;
- \$17 billion for children and social services; and
- \$13 billion to service our debt.

We pay more to our creditors every year than the \$11 billion we spend to train students for our future in colleges, universities and in our training centres. Mr. Speaker, if I use the example of my former ministry, the Ministry of the Environment, we pay our creditors more in just 17 days than we spend on the environment, conservation and parks in a year.

In fact, if you total all the provincial budgets for environment across the country—\$1.6 billion—we pay 11-plus billion dollars more just to service our debt. How can this make sense in 2019?

Besides the fiscal mess, we also inherited broken systems from the previous government: hallway health care, declining math scores, overcrowded transit systems and congested highways. We were elected to end this debilitating legacy. We were elected to clean up this mess.

Over the past 16 months, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we have made considerable progress. We have worked diligently to reduce wasteful spending, fix inefficiencies and make government smarter. Today, I am pleased to report that our government is beating its deficit projection by \$1.3 billion for this year. In fact, the deficit has been reduced to \$9 billion from the \$10.3 billion first projected in the 2019 budget.

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Our government has adopted a balanced and prudent approach to governing. Our commitments are what we balance against, and our commitments are to put more money back into people's pockets. Our commitment is to make sure that we invest in essential public services, and our commitment is to make sure that we return Ontario to a sound financial footing.

Our plan to build Ontario makes a conscious decision to balance the budget in 2023 so that we can provide the immediate financial relief that families and individuals need, and so that we can also provide the needed investments in critical public services like health care and education.

I am pleased to inform the House that because of this measured approach, we are investing an additional \$1.3 billion in critical public services this year. Our government is investing an additional \$400 million into health care and we're investing \$200 million more into education versus the 2019 budget. Over last year, this represents a spending increase in the health care sector of \$1.9 billion and in education of \$1.2 billion. This is our balanced approach: putting more money into people's pockets, investing in vital public services and delivering on our plan to balance the budget by 2023.

We all know in this House that many people are finding it hard to make ends meet. Solving this challenge is not about grand gestures, but rather practical, meaningful actions that make life easier for everyone.

For example, we believe the best way to help low-income workers is to stop taxing them. That is why our government brought in Ontario's low-income tax credit, one of the most progressive tax breaks in a generation, benefiting 1.1 million Ontarians by providing relief of up to \$850 a year.

Through Ontario's child care tax credit, we are providing 300,000 Ontario families with an average of \$1,250 a year and leaving it to families to decide the best way to provide child care for their family. This is in addition to our government's \$1-billion commitment to build an additional 30,000 child care spaces.

We are saving the average family \$275 a year on fuel and other basic necessities through our cancellation of the previous government's cap-and-trade carbon tax.

For northerners, we are proposing to reduce the aviation fuel tax, saving money for individuals and families on vital issues like groceries and travel costs.

Our government is making life easier for families by letting kids ride for free on GO trains and buses, and we're helping 100,000 low-income seniors by providing them with free, publicly-paid-for dental care.

We're cutting post-secondary tuition fees by 10% this year and freezing tuition next year to help keep more money in the pockets of students and their families.

In total, our plan to make life more affordable is putting \$3 billion back into the pockets of Ontarians this year.

Mr. Speaker, again, we all know in this House that Ontario is facing a shortage of skilled labour. Over the next five years, one in five new jobs will be in the skilled trades. Without a skilled workforce, we're unable to build the homes, the transit, the universities, the schools and the hospitals that we need now and in the future. That is why we are placing renewed focus on science, technology, engineering and math, the STEM curriculum, and on the skilled trades in the grades K to 12 curriculum.

We have introduced a new funding model for colleges and universities based on outcomes, not on enrolment. Over time, it will tie 60% of provincial funding to performance, specifically getting our students ready to be successful in a modern workforce.

We're also modernizing our skilled trades and apprenticeship system to encourage more employers to hire and train apprentices.

Our government also recognizes the important contribution of Ontario's 622,000-strong Franco-Ontarian community—the contribution they make to our culture, to our identity and to our prosperity. We must ensure that our francophone students have access to high-quality post-secondary education so they can be prepared to be participants in a modern workforce, and our government is looking forward to working with the federal government to build the Université de l'Ontario français.

From the first day that a student sets foot inside a classroom to the day that they graduate and start their career, our government's plan to prepare people for jobs will ensure that everyone who is willing and able in Ontario has the tools and opportunity to meet their potential.

Mr. Speaker, our government has a plan to create a competitive business environment in Ontario, including small business, which is the backbone of our economy. Some 98% of businesses in Ontario are small businesses, and they account for one third of all private sector jobs. To date, our government has taken over 100 actions to cut red tape for business. Ultimately, these and other measures are expected to save business \$400 million in compliance costs.

Today, our government is moving forward with our small business success strategy, and we are also delivering on a key campaign commitment about tax relief for small businesses. We've started by proposing to cut the small business tax rate by 8.7%. This will save 275,000 small businesses across Ontario, from family-owned shops to innovative start-ups, as much as \$1,500 a year. Taken with other measures, we expect to deliver \$255 million of tax relief to Ontario small business in 2020. These savings can be reinvested to help these businesses grow, create more jobs and help boost our economy.

Mr. Speaker, as I speak to people across the province, they share Premier Ford's view, his view that improving Ontario's competitiveness is one of the keys to our long-term prosperity. A competitive business environment means more jobs for workers, and it means that businesses can grow. It gives me great pleasure to announce the creation of the Premier's Advisory Council on Competitiveness. The council will work with business leaders and workers alike across the province to find ways to improve our competitiveness and report back with actionable recommendations. To date, our government's actions to provide accelerated capital cost write-offs, cancel the cap-and-trade carbon tax, reduce WSIB premiums and other measures are saving Ontario businesses \$5.4 billion this year alone.

The people of this province want transit built, and they want it built now. They want their governments to stop talking, get together and start working to put shovels in the ground, and that is exactly what we are going to do. Our government has a plan to connect people and places, to build more transit faster. We're moving forward with a historic transportation vision for the GTA which includes a \$28.5-billion subway plan that is made up of the North York extension, the Eglinton West extension, the improved three-stop Scarborough subway and the all-new Ontario Line. These projects will relieve congestion, reduce emissions and unlock new housing and job opportunities for individuals across the GTA.

Our government is also working to expand our GO train rail network. We've increased service by 8% this year and are adding and extending 140 trains per week. We're on track towards all-day, two-way GO service every 15 minutes in core segments of the network. And starting in the spring of 2020, GO customers will start seeing free WiFi rolled out across the entire fleet.

Our government is also making significant investments in expanding the provincial highway network. We're investing \$2.7 billion this year to improve the safety of roads and relieve congestion for Ontario drivers. Whether it's twinning Highway 17 or the Garden City Skyway or widening the 401 from London to Tilbury or between Mississauga and Milton, these critical projects will keep people and products moving safely through our province.

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Mr. Speaker, our government has a plan to build healthy communities as we work to end hallway health care and cut hospital wait times. As I said earlier, we are investing an additional \$1.9 billion in our health care services this year. We are directing every available dollar to front-line care, breaking down the administrative silos that have prevented patients from getting the care they need and deserve. We are investing an additional \$68 million in small and medium-sized hospitals to reduce wait times and improve patient care in those communities. Our patient-focused health care will also be enhanced by the introduction of Ontario's new Digital Health Strategy. We are making a historic investment of \$3.8 billion in our mental health care system over the next decade, starting with \$174 million this year.

Over the past year, our government has listened to the families of children with autism. Our government is investing an additional \$279 million in the Ontario Autism Program, bringing the total for that program to \$600 million annually. This investment will help bring more children off the wait-list and give them and their families the supports they need as we work to build a sustainable, needs-based program, informed by the good work of the autism program advisory panel.

Mr. Speaker, our government has been clear from the outset about the importance of balancing a healthy economy with a healthy environment. That is why, after years of delay by the previous government, we introduced a comprehensive producer-pay model to reduce plastic waste. Our improved Blue Box Program will significantly increase Ontario's recycling rates, keep plastic out of our lakes, rivers and streams, and save money for taxpayers. And for the first time in Ontario history, I am pleased to announce that May 12, 2020, will be our first annual day of action on litter, spearheaded by the MPP from Barrie–Innisfil.

Mr. Speaker, we know that inefficient and outdated processes mean that government cannot easily respond to the challenges and the needs that those we serve have. That is why we have a plan to make government smarter. We're adopting new smart initiatives, like a digital-first approach, that can help save money and deliver services more conveniently. We're centralizing procurement, which will drive approximately \$1 billion of savings annually.

Our government has also established a new value creation task force to identify opportunities to generate new, recurring non-tax revenue streams. This new revenue will be reinvested back in core services—core services like health care and education.

Mr. Speaker, our plan to build Ontario means that we need to work with all of our partners at all levels of government to deliver critical services like health care and building transit and highways. It's what Ontarians need, and it's what they expect of us. As Premier Ford has made clear, we look forward to working with the new federal government on our shared priorities. To quote the Premier, what's good for Ontario is good for Canada, and what's good for Canada is good for Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, colleagues, our government's plan to build Ontario together is working. We're cleaning up the fiscal mess that we inherited so that we can invest now in public services that we need and so that we can continue to invest for our children and for our grandchildren.

Our economy is thriving. As a result of the hard work and ingenuity of the people of Ontario and the policies of this government, since June 2018 we've seen the creation of over 272,000 net new jobs in Ontario. But a strong economy is not only about the numbers. It's about building a province where the people have the tools and the opportunities to be the architects of our future, where they can keep more of their paychecks, where they can afford a good home, where they can start and grow a business, create jobs and build our province, and where the role of

government is to enable the opportunity for a better quality of life and a higher standard of living for all of our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that our government and the hard-working people of Ontario will make this vision a reality. By unleashing that potential, we will build a more prosperous Ontario together.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: With all due respect to the minister, I think we need to be perfectly clear, and that is that this plan is not working. This plan that cuts the services that the people of Ontario need is certainly not working, and this fall economic statement makes it perfectly clear that this is a government that has no plan to reverse these deep cuts.

You have no plan to reverse the cuts that have only made the lives of the people of Ontario even worse. It's very clear by your fall economic statement that you still plan to fire 10,000 teachers over the next few years, and education workers in the province of Ontario. It's clear from the statement that you're keeping the \$700 million cut from colleges and universities, and you continue with a threat to withhold what is left. We continue to see, despite what you would like to purport here, that health care and education spending is squeezed to less than inflation. There is nothing in this fall economic statement that will give relief to people around hallway medicine. But, you know, this fall economic statement goes a little further. It twists the knife even deeper when it comes to Indigenous affairs, when it comes to our environment and when it comes to legal aid.

The minister can stand here and tell his colleagues and the MPPs in the House that things are changed and this is a new government, but people know what they know. They know that life is not getting any better for them under this government. We hear the stories every single day in this House about the struggles that the people of Ontario have. With this government's first budget, we took things from, I would say, bad to worse. After 15 years of Liberals that cut our services and did not fund health care to the tune that it needed to in order to address hallway medicine, we now have with this fall economic statement a perfectly clear indication that this government plans to stick with these cuts.

There are so many things in here that I think are egregious. I would just like to say, despite what we hear day in and day out, this government has continued, I would have to say, waging war on the environment. Rather than tackling climate change, this is a government that continues to double down. After decimating every environmental effort in the 2019 budget, this government has continued to slash millions out of what's left in this budget.

We hear about people wanting to have access to justice in this province; we've slashed millions, hundreds of millions, from that budget as well.

We know the state of education in Ontario. We know that they're squeezed to a less-than-inflationary increase. We know the conditions of our classroom. We hear now that we have a \$16-billion backlog in repairs. We hear

about lead in the water. Nothing in this budget is there to address that.

I have to say that the thing that I find most egregious is the lack of respect of this government to address the state of Indigenous affairs in the province of Ontario. We heard from our member this morning asking questions that this government chose not to answer directly. In budget 2019, this government slashed the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs in half, and in this fall economic statement this government is continuing to carve millions out of a starved ministry. Really, what will this do to efforts for reconciliation? It will drag us backwards.

We've heard loud and clear from the francophone community about their concerns.

1550

Je vais simplement dire que cet énoncé économique n'a rien à offrir pour la communauté franco-ontarienne. Il y a presque un an, jour pour jour, le gouvernement conservateur annonçait l'élimination du Commissariat aux services en français et l'annulation du financement pour des institutions éducatives et culturelles. Les Franco-Ontariens doivent-ils se contenter avec cet énoncé économique parce qu'ils n'auront pas de coupes massives comme l'an dernier? Franchement, les priorités des Franco-Ontariens sont loin d'être représentées dans cette annonce.

People expected relief from this government. We heard families desperate for relief. The minister says that they listened to the families of children with autism. They listened to them because they were in the gallery, in this hall, crying and letting you know their condition. So that is how you have to listen to them.

People protested around the block about these cuts. We have protesters right now, students, who are speaking out about their opposition to the cuts to post-secondary education services.

You can say you're putting more money in people's pockets, but they know that that is not true. People are still struggling and they're still being squeezed, and they know it. The people of Ontario expected relief. They did not get it today, and the people of Ontario deserve so much more.

Mr. John Fraser: There's definitely a change in tone from last year's fall economic statement. While the minister may be singing in a different key, it's still the same song.

When we look back to last year's fall economic statement, the government manufactured a phony \$15-billion deficit as a context for deep cuts—cuts that hurt families. Remember, this is still the government that wants to make class sizes larger, not smaller. They're still cutting mental health funding, and have no plan for climate change. They're continuing to cause chaos for families of children with autism, and they're burdening students and their families with greater debt for a post-secondary education. Their priorities haven't changed.

This year, the government is still exaggerating the deficit to use as a context for cuts. The government inflated this year's deficit to \$9 billion, and they've done this in a couple of ways. Firstly, their estimated increase

for tax revenue is 2%, when the average over five years has been 6.4%. I think most economists would agree that it's about \$2 billion short. The government still continues to hide pension assets inside the deficit. When you take this into consideration, the deficit is billions of dollars lower—billions of dollars lower. It's probably half of what the government is reporting. Does that sound familiar? It does to me.

The problem with an exaggerated deficit being used as a context for cuts is that it hurts families. So, in education, the government is still spending less per student and wants to drive that number even lower. That's going to mean larger class sizes and less support for vulnerable students.

We will be spending less in real dollars on post-secondary education, and children and community services. And their projected increased rate for health care of 2.3% doesn't even meet the demand. Those are numbers that should be concerning to Ontarians.

So, Speaker, we still can't trust their numbers, but I'll give them a break. If the minister truly wants to sing a new song—not a different key, but a new song—then they can start by reporting Ontario's deficit accurately and investing in those things that all of our families depend on.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's clear for the fall economic statement that a change in tone in the House does not equal a change in policy direction. Here's the bottom line: The government's cut-first-think-later approach to governing is not working. The \$1.3 billion in increased spending announced today is just a reversal of the cuts from the spring budget.

The question we have to ask—and I think that people of Ontario deserve an honest answer: Is the increase in the budget deficit from this year to next year of \$1.6 billion a real number or not? This government has a history of inflating budget deficits. They said we had a \$15-billion budget deficit; in reality, it's a \$7.4-billion budget deficit. Is that being used to justify cuts?

Here's what I want to know: Does the government have something against addressing the housing crisis in Ontario? We have an affordable housing crisis in this province, yet the FES cuts the ministry's budget by \$368 million next year.

What does this government have against farmers? I love farmers. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs budget is cut by \$130 million next year.

Colleges and universities: If we're going to be competitive in a 21st-century economy, we have to invest in our colleges and universities—a \$671-million cut to student aid to help people attain post-secondary education.

My biggest disappointment: no vision here in how we embrace a clean and caring economy, the fastest-growing sector of the global economy; nothing in here about how we create a pathway to prosperity while addressing the climate crisis.

The FES talks about an auto strategy, but doesn't even mention electric vehicles, even though we know \$255 billion will be invested in that by auto manufacturers over the next five years.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have, in the Speaker's gallery, a very special visitor who was a member of the Legislature in the 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st provincial Parliaments. Tim Hudak is here. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Applause.

PETITIONS

POET LAUREATE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas poets laureate have been officially recognized at all levels of Canadian government and in at least 15 countries around the world; and

"Whereas the establishment of our own poet laureate for the province of Ontario would promote literacy and celebrate Ontario culture and heritage, along with raising public awareness of poetry and of the spoken word; and

"Whereas Gord Downie was a poet, a singer and advocate for Indigenous issues, and designating the poet laureate in his memory will serve to honour him and continue his legacy; and

"Whereas Bill 6, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario in memory of Gord Downie, will establish the Office of Poet Laureate for the province of Ontario as a non-partisan attempt to promote literacy, to focus attention on our iconic poets and to give new focus to the arts community in Ontario;

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

"To support the establishment of the Office of Poet Laureate as an officer of the Ontario Legislature and that private member's Bill 6, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario Act (In Memory of Gord Downie), 2018, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I fully agree. I'm going to sign my name and give this to Omar to bring up to the front.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a very timely petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

"Bill 2, Urgent Priorities Act, 2018;

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

"Bill 5, Better Local Government Act, 2018;
 "Bill 32, Access to Natural Gas Act, 2018;
 "Bill 34, Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018;
 "Bill 36, Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act, 2018;
 "Bill 47, Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018;...."

There's quite a few more so I'm going to skip over them, as I'm allowed to do.

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

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

I affix my signature and give it to page Elizabeth W.

1600

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr. Jeff Burch: I have a petition here from the Canadian Union of Public Employees entitled "Communities, Not Cuts."

"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've added my signature and will hand it to page Kiran.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Dave Smith: I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the ban on hunting and trapping in sections of Ontario to protect the eastern hybrid wolf was put in place without regard for the overall ecosystem;

"Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario's ecosystem;

"Whereas this ban is no longer needed and is in fact causing more damage to Ontario's ecosystem and increasing unnecessary encounters between wildlife and Ontarians;

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

"That the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry immediately lift the ban on hunting and trapping set in place to protect the eastern hybrid wolf."

I'll sign this petition and give it to page Jack.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have a petition here on behalf of the good people of Hornepayne, and others from White River and Killarney. The petition is entitled "Support the Highway of Heroes Tree Campaign."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Whereas over three million tonnes of CO₂ will be sequestered, over 500 million pounds of oxygen will be produced and 200 million gallons of water will be released into the air each day, benefiting all Ontarians in the name of those who served our country and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice; and

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

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

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

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I affix my signature and present it to page Aarya to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Dave Smith: I have another petition, entitled "Consumption and Treatment Site in Peterborough-Kawartha.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I'll sign this petition and give it to page Bernat.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of CUPE Ontario members. It's entitled "Communities, Not Cuts," and it reads:

"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, will affix my signature and give it to page Zakiyya.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Billy Pang: This petition is for the benefit of all Ontario pet owners and the businesses that serve them.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario regulation 493/17, part III, section 14, states that 'every room where food is prepared,

processed, packaged, served, transported, manufactured, handled, sold, offered for sale or displayed shall be kept free from live birds or animals'; and

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

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

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

I affix my name to this petition and pass it to page Alisha.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Mr. Joel Harden: I have a petition 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

1610

"Whereas the" current Ontario "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 want to thank Christina Thompson from Ottawa as she's one of the people who gathered these signatures. I will be signing this and giving it to page Pearl for the Clerks' table.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

"Bill 2, Urgent Priorities Act, 2018;

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

"Bill 5, Better Local Government Act, 2018;

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

"Bill 34, Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018;

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

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

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

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

"Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, 2019;

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

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

"Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act, 2019;

"Bill 81, Supply Act, 2019;

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

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

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

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

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Elizabeth.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 132, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking various Regulations, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to

dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet from Tuesday, November 19, 2019, until Friday, November 29, 2019, for public hearings; and

That the Committee shall meet in London, Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie, Kenora, and Toronto; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 132:

—Notice of public hearings; and

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 10 a.m. on Friday, November 15, 2019; and

—That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designate following the deadline for requests to appear by 11 a.m. on Friday, November 15, 2019; and

—That each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk, by 1 p.m. on Friday, November 15, 2019; and

—That each witness will receive up to 10 minutes for their presentation followed by 20 minutes for questioning, with eight minutes allotted to the government, 10 minutes allotted to the official opposition and two minutes allotted to the Green Party independent member; and

—That the deadline for filing written submissions be 5 p.m. on Friday, November 29, 2019; and

—That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 9 a.m. on Monday, December 2, 2019; and

—That the Standing Committee on General Government shall be authorized to meet on Tuesday, December 3, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 11 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

—That on Tuesday, December 3, 2019, at 5 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

—That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday, December 4, 2019. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

—That upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on General Government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

—That five hours and 20 minutes shall be allotted to third reading debate: two hours and 30 minutes allotted to the government, two hours and 30 minutes allotted to the official opposition, and 20 minutes allotted to the independents; and

—That, notwithstanding standing order 81(c), the bill may be called for third reading more than once in the same sessional day; and

—That in the event of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes; and

—That, except in the case of a recorded division arising from morning orders of the day, pursuant to standing order 9(c), no deferral of the second reading vote shall be permitted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Fedeli has moved government notice of motion number 69. Further debate? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll be speaking for about 20 minutes on this topic, and sharing my time as well. This bill, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act—I have to tell you, I'm so excited and so appreciative of the work that the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape has done.

I visited a friend of mine, Kayvan Rouhani. He owns Happy Jack's dry cleaners. Last Friday when I was back in the riding briefly, I went and saw Kayvan, as I do every couple of weeks, and I said to him, "You know, Kayvan, you are really going to like this bill, Better for People, Smarter for Business. You're a dry cleaner that has been here for a long time in North Bay. You've always talked to me about red tape, red tape, red tape; the government should make regulations and get out of your hair." Well, I said to him, "We've got really good news for you, and for all dry cleaners, as a for-instance. This bill, Better for People, Smarter for Business, will remove outdated regulations and duplicative federal requirements."

The federal requirements are stronger rules. There are more stringent federal inspections for Ontario dry cleaners. So we're going to stay with the federal rules and get the province out of the way. We're proposing to revoke the mandatory training requirements for dry cleaning businesses under the Environmental Protection Act and defer to the stricter federal regulations. This will reduce the burden for small business people like Kayvan and other dry cleaners right across Ontario. It's making the rules and getting out of their way. The stricter federal rules will apply, and this will ensure that the environment is protected and human health is protected.

After I saw Kayvan, I went to Debbie. Debbie Bamford has cut my hair since I don't know when. The 1970s? The 1980s? I honestly can't remember the first time Debbie started cutting my hair. She was with a hair salon and she decided to move into her own home, and that's where she has cut my hair for, certainly, a couple of decades.

1620

When I went to get my hair cut from Debbie, as I do every second Friday when I'm home, I said to her, "I got some really good news on this Better for People, Smarter

for Business Act that we're doing, Debbie. I told you we were going to be bringing something in that's going to cut red tape for you while you cut my hair. This particular bill will stop requiring barbers and hairdressers to collect"—if you could imagine that this was a rule—"the name and contact information from their clients." That's something that she needed to do. She also was told that she needed to have a dedicated sink for cleaning tools, as well as having those records of the name and information.

So what we're going to be doing is taking that second requirement away. That requirement was meant for tattoo shops and other related shops, never for simple hairdressers in their home, for a simple home hairdressing salon. It was never meant for that, but it complicated life for Debbie and for every other hairdresser and barber who works out of their house or has a small shop somewhere. So this is intended to make life easier for someone going in to get something as simple and routine as a haircut, but it also really cleans up the red tape for my friend Debbie Bamford.

Now, on Saturday, I was in Trout Creek, and I went and visited the ladies of the Trout Creek United Church. They were selling their apple pies. I bought five of them, Speaker. You might not notice, but I did buy five apple pies. I talked to the ladies. There is nothing, I've got to tell you, there is nothing like a turkey dinner made by these ladies. So I was telling them, when I was buying my apple pies, "I've got good news for you today, ladies. When we have the next turkey dinner, the next pancake breakfast, new rules come in."

There is really something different about a restaurant with the proper equipment that's required and all of the details, versus the Trout Creek United Church ladies putting on a turkey dinner. We're making life easier for them. We are making life easier by changing the rules and the requirements of what they need in the kitchen. We understand that they use this kitchen once or twice for the turkey dinner and the pancake breakfast, but the same requirements as a fast-food chain are required.

The law today doesn't distinguish between a fast-food restaurant and these not-for-profit soup kitchens, after-school programs, the new food rescue programs that are there, the delivery organizations that run in schools, community centres, churches, mosques, temples, synagogues. All of these places that cook a meal once in a while have the same strict rules as a fast-food chain restaurant. Well, we're going to make it easier to feed those less fortunate, and certainly the people who want to help and donate to their favourite organization.

So all of the convoluted rules and all of these confusing rules that they have to navigate through—they will be left easier. Right now, they're forced to spend needless hours trying to understand what applies to them and what doesn't so they can continue to do their good work in the community and raise money for their organizations.

We're launching a consultation on additional exemptions for these organizations that serve low-risk food: baked goods, fruits, vegetables, this type of thing. This will continue to ensure our health and safety while those

groups like our soup kitchens and food banks can feed those in need rather than spend their time deciphering government regulations.

So I saw Kayvan, I saw Debbie, and I saw the ladies at the Trout Creek United Church when I was home last weekend, talking about the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act.

Just before that, I also saw some members of the Ontario truckers' association. I talked to them about this new bill as well—the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. I said, "You do acknowledge, we've heard from you, that you have to correctly do a three-hour annual safety inspection, but you also need, on another day, to do, at another place, a 30-minute emission testing." That takes the trucks off the road and stops them from doing their valuable work.

What we will do is put this together in a one-stop approach. They still have to have the three-hour inspection; they still have to have the 30-minute emissions testing. But this will have a new, enhanced program for heavy-duty vehicle emissions tests which will be combined with the existing commercial motor vehicle safety inspection. We'll start that in 2021, if passed. Completing both tests at the same time will save truckers time and money so they can focus on keeping goods moving across Ontario while maintaining the necessary protections for environment and safety.

Earlier today, in question period, Prab Sarkaria, the minister of small business and red tape, talked about a couple of other areas that the bill will help. It will help those in the mining sector and in the forestry sector. Think about this: The mining industry alone accounted for nearly \$10 billion worth of minerals two years ago—26,000 direct jobs and 50,000 more indirect jobs in Ontario. We know that the rules and the regulations in Ontario are hurting our mining sector. We understand that. We know it. We hear it from them constantly. That is why we're proposing, in this bill, a 45-day service guarantee on filing or returning their closure plans and the amendments, ensuring that the government fulfills our responsibility in a timely manner. This is a big change.

On Monday night, I went to Woodstock and announced our new business supports system. I won't get into what the details are because that's not what I'm speaking about today, but one of the benefits in this new bill—in fact, members from Chatham-Kent, in your neck of the woods, who spoke very highly of you, Speaker, were there that night. When I said that in these business supports, the southwestern development fund, which we announced that we're enhancing—when I said that there will be a 60-business-day guarantee, there was a cheer in the room. That's what mattered. It wasn't about the money. It wasn't about the fact that we're investing \$100 million in four years on these business supports in eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario. It wasn't that. The cheer was that we said, "You will have a guaranteed answer in 60 business days." It was amazing. This bill, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, will offer a 45-day service guarantee to the mining sector on their filings.

Speaker, on the forestry sector, you heard the associate minister this morning again. The forest industry generates \$16 billion annually in revenue and supports 155,000 direct and indirect jobs for people in the province of Ontario. But many of the forestry companies are caught up in a duplicative approval process. It costs money and has big delays. What we have agreed in this bill, should it be passed, is to streamline the approvals for forestry operations and end that unnecessary duplication in the process. This is just about making pure common-sense regulatory changes, letting job creators do what they do best and create jobs, like the 272,400 jobs that have been created in the province of Ontario since we were elected. That's exactly what we want these job creators to do.

I'm off to India next week to talk about Ontario being open for business and open for jobs, and I intend to talk about this bill and tell them that, if passed, here are the many things that are going to change in Ontario. I'm also going to spend time talking to them about the changes we've already made in the province of Ontario that feed into this bill.

Myself, Minister Cho and Minister Hardeman were in South Korea and Japan just two weeks ago, and we talked about Ontario being open for business and open for jobs. We told them that so far, the changes that we've made in cutting red tape and reducing the regulatory burden, plus changes like reducing Workplace Safety and Insurance Board premiums—without changing the benefits to the workers, by the way; the tax increases that we didn't go through with that the Liberal government had proposed and had put in for January 1; the accelerated capital cost allowance, which means that businesses can write off their expenses in-year—all those were \$5 billion worth of changes. This bill, Better for People, Smarter for Business, is the next round of changes, should it be passed.

1630

With the reduction in red tape and the reduction in that burden to business, we expect business to save \$400 million by the changes we've made so far in red tape reduction, these some 80 changes we're proposing now, that I'm speaking to now, and the changes that we have yet to come, the changes we're hearing from the business community all around Ontario, from every corner of Ontario. From Windsor to Wawa, from Kenora to Cornwall, they're telling us, "Here are the things we need changed." These are the red tape reduction pieces that we need so that we can hire even more than the 272,400 people that we have.

When I talked about these changes, the \$5 billion in savings that we have brought to the business community in Ontario in just one year—and a few minutes ago, you heard Minister Phillips say that that number is now \$5.4 billion; that's the new number of savings this year for the business community.

When I talked about that \$5-billion number when we were in South Korea and in Japan, this is exactly why these companies want to come to the province of Ontario. This is exactly why. They want to come because they know that "open for business, open for jobs" isn't a slogan; it's in our

DNA. It's exactly how we feel. This is telling the community, "We have your back," and we're bringing this bill, Better for People, Smarter for Business—we're bringing these changes so that it helps families and it helps business. These businesses want us to put these regulations; to make Ontario a safer, cleaner community; and then to get out of the way, just get out of the way and let the job creators work at the speed of business and do their job. That's all they want.

When we talked about this in South Korea, we heard from Dayli Partners. It was very, very exciting, Premier. They're a life sciences venture capital firm. They announced a \$20-million venture fund along with a partner here, Toronto Innovation Acceleration Partners—a \$20-million venture fund they put in. Now they will invest in start-ups in Ontario in the life sciences sector because of the kinds of changes we've made that they heard about. When they hear about this new bill—this is exactly what they were talking about when we were in Korea, the fact that we're making Ontario open for business and open for jobs. This is another big, big part of it. The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act is a huge part of making Ontario open for business and open for jobs—\$20 million from Dayli Partners.

A day or so later, we met with the Korea Importers Association, and we signed a memorandum of understanding. It's fascinating; it's fascinating that they have never had an MOU with Ontario before—not in the last 15 years, I can tell you. The Korea Importers Association—it's unbelievable. Speaker, there are 8,000 members of just that one association. Korea imports \$535 billion a year in goods and services, but Ontario only does about \$7.2 billion a year in two-way trade with Korea. They import \$535 billion. We've got only great opportunities ahead of us.

When we meet with them and we talk about being open for business and open for trade, we tell them there's another bill coming and, if passed, it's going to do even more things. We expect by the end of 2020 to save the business community a further \$400 million. We're already over \$300 million with this bill, if passed.

These are the kinds of messages that we deliver to companies when we travel overseas and we talk to them about the exciting opportunities here in Ontario—when we talk to them about the \$5 billion we've saved and when we talk to them about not going ahead with the \$308-million tax increase the Liberal government had.

We talk to them about cancelling cap-and-trade, saving the business community \$880 million. We talk about the fact that accelerated capital cost is not just an expression. That was \$700 million the business community saved last year, and we expect them to save \$3.8 billion over the next four more years. That's the \$5 billion that they heard about. And now they're hearing about the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. This is going to be an enormous saving.

Just last week, another company that we met with in Korea, KEPCO—KEPCO is an engineering and construction company. We met with them in Korea, and our teams

have been working together over the past year. They told us that in two weeks they would be coming to Ontario and opening their office in Port Elgin. They expect to do business with the Bruce nuclear plant. This is very, very exciting: the fact that we met with their business leaders; the fact that we've been working on this partnership for a year; and to see it come to fruition with an office opening in Port Elgin. This is exactly why we take these missions and we invest the time to go and meet with these companies.

We met with Toyota, here, first of all, in Cambridge and in Woodstock. They were thrilled with the fact that we are open for business, open for jobs in Ontario. They were thrilled with that. They talked about the accelerated capital cost—how they can write their equipment off, how that helps them. They talked about the fact that it's red tape: "Make the rules, tell us what the rules are and get out of our way so we can continue to invest." Toyota announced their investment of \$1.4 billion in Ontario just this year. They announced that the NX line of the Lexus will be made in Ontario. We congratulated them, in Japan, on winning the J.D. Power platinum award. They are the number one auto plant in the world, Speaker, and they're here in Ontario.

So we continue with this message that we're open for business and we're open for jobs. We will continue to fight for the people of Ontario and for the businesses in Ontario, and that's why we're bringing this bill.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It pains me yet again to speak to another time allocation motion, but before I get to it, I just want to make a couple of comments in regard to the bill.

First of all, it's really interesting that the government, being a Conservative government that always says, "It's not the government that creates jobs; it's the private sector," is trying to take the credit for every job that has been created in Ontario since they were elected. The reality is—you know as well as I do—that a lot of that activity is going on anyway. I think it's somewhat disingenuous to say, "All of that happened because of me," or, "All of that happened because of us." Some of it, yes; there's no doubt. Every government has job initiatives in order to get investment into the province or into their area. Municipalities do the same. But for the government to try to take credit for absolutely every job that has ever been created in Ontario since the last election is a bit rich. Investments happen. Why? Because businesses are looking to figure out ways to maximize profit or seek out new business opportunities. They invest across the world and, yes, they invest in Ontario as well. Some of that happens at times because governments do things right and assist those businesses in moving something forward. But to take credit for absolutely everything is beyond me.

But if the government wants to take credit for every job being created, then they've also got to take the responsibility for every job that we're losing. If you take a look at what has happened in the auto sector in the last year, there's a lot to be concerned about. We have General

Motors in Oshawa, who are losing lots and lots of employment as a result of losing the line in Oshawa that they produce. And we saw what was just recently announced at the Ford plant in Oakville. In that particular case, the government could have played a role, and they chose not to. When the announcement was made in Oshawa, and again when the announcement was made by Ford a couple of weeks ago about the end of another product line, they didn't step up and say, "Hang on. Let's roll up our sleeves and work together to figure out how Ontario could become the location for the next product line that you may have to want to build you cars."

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The minister was right: Auto workers in this province are amongst the best in the world, if not the best. And once you lose that expertise, once you lose those workers in Oshawa and you lose the 600-plus workers that we're going to lose at the Ford plant in Oakville—and we've lost workers already in other communities around Ontario for both GM Oshawa and Chrysler—those workers are hard to get back into the system, because they move on to other things. The government has tried to take credit for jobs being created. They should also take responsibility for jobs that are being lost and what we're not doing.

I think what we should have done is what a number of our members, including the member from Niagara, Wayne—I forget his actual riding; the member for Niagara, I think it is.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Niagara Falls.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member for Niagara Falls and the member for Oshawa and the member from Windsor and others who were in the auto sectors—that we need to have an auto strategy in this province. And our auto strategy has to be about supporting the training needs of employers when it comes to being able to produce the products that they make here, not only in the auto plants—

Ms. Donna Skelly: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I recognize the member on a point of order.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Speaker, I'm not sure what this has to do with time allocation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I'll take that into consideration, but I was listening closely and he is tying what he's saying to what the member had actually discussed as well. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am going to get to time allocation in a minute, but the point I'm trying to make—I'm speaking to what was said in the first speech by the minister who spoke before me from across the way.

My point is that we need an auto strategy that deals with the reality of industry today, and we need to be able to say, "Okay, here's what we can do as a province in order to assist you with tooling up for new product. This is what we can do in order to assist you when it comes to your training needs." That lessens the cost to the employer, makes Ontario a better place to invest. And what can we do in order to try to position ourselves to be able to produce the next line of vehicles?

The other part is, why is Ontario not aggressively pursuing a policy by which we build electric cars here in this province? We see which way that's going. The F-150, which I drive today—I have an EcoBoost F-150 that does about 10.5 kilometres per mile when I'm on the highway. They're coming out with an F-150 that's going to have a range of 500 miles with a battery. Man, you start talking about being able to do 500 miles with an F-150, and that now becomes interesting for people like me and others who want a pickup truck because of where we live; we need the four-wheel drive and the ability to have a truck. I think you have a truck yourself, Mr. Speaker, if I do remember correctly. If you can get 500 miles per charge, you're at a point where this is starting to make some sense. One of those vehicles now—if you buy a deluxe four-by-four pickup truck, you're going to pay \$40,000 to \$50,000. Tesla's talking about building a pickup that does about \$50,000 in cost—that's what it's going to cost you to buy—and Ford is talking about the same.

So why are we not in this province saying, "We will be the innovators in the electric car market. We will help develop the technology. We will invest in R&D. We will help employers to be able to develop some of the technologies and do some of the products that are going to go into these new vehicles"? Because what will happen, I tell you right now, is that it's going to go the way of that new technology.

I want to divert a bit. The minister talked about mining. My good friend the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and I had the great pleasure of being in Chapleau about two months ago at the opening of a new mine operated by Newmont Goldcorp. This Borden mine, as it's called, is all electric. People have no idea what that means. I worked underground, where we were using diesel equipment—big diesel trucks, big diesel scoops and different things—underground. That means to say you've got to haul the fuel underground. You've got spills underground when you're filling those large pieces of equipment, either double boom jumbos or whatever it might be. You're burning the diesel underground in an enclosed environment, which means to say you have to ventilate the mine in a certain way in order to make sure that workers are not put at risk when it comes to what they're breathing.

I can tell you, I headed up the lung cancer-for-gold-miners study back in the early 1980s or mid-1980s. We killed, by the thousands, workers in this province that worked underground, as a result of what they were breathing underground—diesel, blasting fumes, dust and others. This new mine that has been built by Newmont Goldcorp is all electric. Double-boom jumbos, trucks that do the haulage—everything that is mechanical is now electric in that mine, which means to say the underground is safer when it comes to the environment. But it's also better for the environment overall, because you don't have all of those pollutants that you're having to extract and transform into fuels, and then those emissions going into the atmosphere.

They have technology underground at this particular mine, and I was fascinated with this. GPS tracking

underground: Every piece of equipment has got a GPS tag. Every worker has got a GPS tag. That means to say that if I'm working underground, I happen to come off the level, walk on to a ramp and there's a truck coming up and I don't hear it coming because of some other noise going on, I'm going to get a warning and the truck is going to get a warning. I have a good friend of mine, Dave Yuskow, who died as a result of him being run over in a ramp at a mine in Timmins for exactly that reason.

By the way, that technology, the GPS, was developed in northern Quebec and bought here in Ontario. Why are we not investing in those technologies in R&D so that we can do those things here? Ontario is a manufacturing province. We have built this strong economy of ours by manufacturing goods in places like Windsor, Sudbury, Ottawa and different communities across Ontario. We do hardly anything when it comes to R&D and supporting employers when it comes to being able to develop these new technologies so that we can be there in the marketplace to sell and to build those things that people want.

The government can try to take credit all they want for the jobs being created currently in the province—some of them, they can probably take some credit for—but the vast majority of those jobs are created because employers would have done them anyway, right? There may be something that government did that might have helped them; I don't argue that for a second. But then you have to accept, as a government, your failure when it comes to what you're not doing in the auto sector.

People in Windsor, people in Oakville, people in Oshawa and other communities need to know that your government is there. We should have been looking at new product lines. At the very least, we should have been sitting down and saying, "Okay, what do we have to do? Training costs, R&D costs, retooling costs: We can help with those things." But the government decided not to go in that direction and essentially threw in the towel.

I just wanted to say those things in regard to what the government was just now saying about the great job they're doing creating jobs. The reality is, it's far different than what it was made out to be. If you're going to try to take credit, at least take responsibility for the jobs that you're also losing.

Now, on to the time allocation motion. I want to say, first up, we have been, in the NDP, consistently asking not only this government, but governments preceding, going back to the time that I first got here, after we were government—because when we were government we used to travel bills all the time. It was just the way it was done. But since the time of Harris and the time of Mr. McGuinty, Mrs. Wynne and now Mr. Ford, we have fewer and fewer travelled bills out into the public. I think—and I've spoken to this before in the House—it's a huge disservice to the public.

A bill is drafted in this House with good intentions to make something happen. It used to be in this House that if a bill was contentious or non-contentious, depending on what the issue was, there was a back-and-forth between the opposition and the government. The government

would say, “I want to travel my good bills,” and the opposition, obviously, would want to travel the bills that they were unhappy with. There would be a negotiation that eventually those bills would be travelled.

For example, when we were in government back in 1990 to 1995, we did sustainable forestry development. It’s the system, the regime that’s in place today when it comes to managing our forests. A forest company is forced by way of this legislation to plan what they’re going to do when it comes to how many trees they’re going to cut based on the allocation that they have, how they’re going to cut them, how they’re going to replant, how they’re going to deal with species that are in the forest, how they’re going to deal with fauna—all of those issues are dealt with under this regime. I remember, when we brought it forward, industry and the opposition were pretty opposed because we were pushing them so that industry moved into the next century, so that we became a greener industry, because there was a real danger at the time that if we didn’t move in that direction, Ontario would get barred from certain markets when it came to selling paper and dimensional lumber.

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Eventually, what happened was, that bill went out on the road, because we used to send bills on the road. I don’t remember exactly, but it travelled at least three weeks. I remember being on a bus with other members across northern Ontario. We went to Dryden. We went to Ear Falls. We went to Kapuskasing. We went to a whole bunch of towns in between, and we did towns in southern Ontario as well, because as you know there is forestry in central Ontario as well, and in eastern Ontario.

But as a result of those hearings, the member at the time for—I don’t remember what his riding was, but it was Chris Hodgson, who is currently with the mining association. He was the critic for the third party, then Conservative, who worked on that committee. He had just been elected in a by-election. He took his responsibility as a member very seriously to listen to what people had to say and then come up with suggested changes that would strengthen the bill and make it better.

As a result of people coming before our committee—foresters, cottagers, First Nations—you name it; everybody showed up—municipal politicians, concerned citizens—suggestions were made on how to make the bill better. Because we didn’t have time allocation back in that time, the government had to accept some of those amendments, because it was part of the negotiations: “Okay, if you don’t give us amendments on that bill, we’re going to hold something else up somewhere else.” Government had to concede some of the points that the opposition was making because the system of Parliament is set up in that way. The original idea of Parliament is: Government proposes the law; government must always be able to pass the law. The opposition should never be able to prevent it from passing a law. The House could decide to do that, but individually, as members, we shouldn’t and can’t do that. But in the end, they have to listen to the opposition and have to be able to work with us in order to try to strengthen the legislation they have.

In the case of the sustainable forestry development act, that bill was made better, and what is the result? That bill was passed about 25 to 27 years ago. It is still the regime that we have in place today. Forestry companies across northern Ontario and central Ontario see that as something that has worked well for them. Environmentalists see it as something that has worked well for the preservation of the forests and for better management practices. Oh, yes, there’s always somebody who is opposed, but by and large most environmentalists understand what the forest industry is doing, and a lot of what they’re doing is good. We’re a much greener industry today as a result of what happened in that legislation.

We essentially have the same legislation in place today, and the reason that it stood the test of time is because that particular bill got public hearings; the government was made to listen to what was being said by the opposition; the government and the opposition agreed to amendments based on what we heard; and we strengthened the bill.

We’ve been after this government since they were elected 17 months ago to do that with legislation that comes before the House, and to date they refused, until this particular bill. I think it’s Bill 124—not 124; it’s 136, I believe, right? I’m looking at the Clerks just to make sure I got my—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Bill 132; excuse me.

The government has finally agreed that this bill should travel. It’s a small step. We’re not going very far and we’re not going very long, but we will be travelling. I think that’s a step in the right direction. However, the way that the government is doing this is that they’re limiting the amount of hearings that we’re getting by way of this time allocation motion—although, there is a move forward; we are going to be travelling, which is good, and we’re now doing it during the session.

When I got here back in 1990, the way legislation used to go through the House was that you would introduce a bill in the spring or the fall session; you more than likely passed it within the session it was introduced—sometimes it would be in the following session, but by and large it would be introduced, passed at second reading and referred to committee in either the fall or the spring session. But then in the summer break or in the winter break, we would then travel the bill for two or three weeks. Members would pack up on committee and they’d go off to Ottawa and Windsor and different communities, and they would hear what the public had to say about that legislation.

That’s not what we’re doing here. We’re going to be travelling this bill while the House sits. Okay; better than nothing. I’m not going to stand here and say, “Oh, this is terrible. Oh, my God, the end of the world has come.” It’s a step. It’s a small step that the government has made to listen to the opposition about travelling bills, and for that, that’s okay. But it’s a limited amount of hearings, number one, and we’re travelling at a time that the House is sitting.

Why is that an issue? All right, so let’s say I’m the member who—well, it won’t be me; I’m the House leader.

But let's say I wasn't House leader, and I was selected to be on that committee and to travel. There may be things that I want to be here in the Legislature for while that bill is travelling around Ontario. There may be an important vote on an item that's important to my community, and I will not be able to be here to vote. There may be something that's being debated in the House that I want to be able to speak to in representing my community. There may be something else on committee that's going on here in the Legislature that I want to deal with. So we're in a situation where some members are not going to be afforded the ability to be here while the House is sitting to deal with the things that we deal with every day because they're going to have to travel that bill.

I suggested to the government, when they first floated this idea a week or two ago, whenever it was—I said that we should travel that during the intersession. There's going to be a break next week; do it next week. I don't like that because it's the constituency week break, and of course, you couldn't travel on November 11 because it's Remembrance Day, but if we wanted four days of travel, we could have arranged that some days next week and maybe another day on a Friday the week after so that we don't do it when the House is sitting. Certainly when the committee comes to Toronto and sits in Toronto in the Legislature, we can do that here. That's not an issue.

But so far the committee is going to travel four days. It's going to Kenora, Sault Ste. Marie, Peterborough and London—good choices. Some of those we suggested ourselves. But we're going to be doing it while the House is sitting. Why didn't we say, "Okay, next week on Wednesday and Thursday or Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, we're going to travel to X communities. The following Friday we're going to travel to another community"? You would have enough time to deal with this bill and have the bill dealt with when it comes to being able to have it finished so that the government can pass it at the end of this session. I just say to the government: We're happy that there's some travel, but I still think there's a way to go. I think we should go back and think about what we used to do here before because it works far better.

The other thing that is really a problem is—it's a little bit better in this one because of the way the motion is written, but normally what the government has been doing with time allocation is that they've been—oh, I wanted to make a point before I go there. Why did the government not allow other bills to travel? There are other bills that have passed through this House that we could have travelled. For example, the government made changes to health care in bills they introduced in this House. We could have travelled that. There was the bill that dealt with the city of Toronto in committee in regard to changing the number of people that are represented on council, the amount of people you can elect on council here in the city of Toronto. Why didn't we allow that to go into committee and to spend some time?

No, the government picked a bill for them that they see as pretty safe. I think they may get a little bit of a rude

awakening. There are things in this bill that I think people are not going to like, and I think we're going to hear that when we go out on the road. The government likes to think that eliminating regulations and making regulations—you know, that chop-chop and cutting through them is a good thing and that's just the best way to go. Well, tell that to the people of Walkerton. I was here, along with other members I think that were here at the time, when the government decided to weaken the water standards when it came to the regulations around safe drinking water, and because of that and some errors that were made by the local operators of that plant, people died.

There's a reason that we put regulations in place. Regulations come for a reason. A tragedy happens, sometimes it's a coroner's inquest, the coroner's inquest makes recommendations on how not for that to happen again and says, "You should pass a law or put a regulation in place in order to make sure that we protect ourselves from that happening again." We learn by our mistakes. What this government has tried to pretend in this bill is that you can just get rid of all of the regulations and it's just not a big deal.

1700

I listened to the minister a little while ago talk about one, and I'm just going to give you my opinion. I might be wrong on this one, but he says that one of the regulations says that a barbershop has to have two sinks: one to wash your tools, your equipment, and the other one to wash a person's hair.

Well, I don't have enough hair to cut, so let's get one thing real straight here. But do I necessarily want my head washed in a sink where you've been washing other things, such as knives, clippers, combs, and whatever else you're using in the business? You're picking up things from other people, and that's going to be in that sink unless you sanitize it in some way. Is there any kind of guarantee that the person is going to sanitize every use of the sink after it's been used?

So, there's a reason why regulations were put in. I don't know where that particular one comes from. It might have been because of an incident that happened. But you've got to think hard, when you do these things, that you're not biting off your nose to spite your face when it comes to people's safety. This one may be nothing, and I'm not going to hang my hat on it. There may be some perfectly valid reasons why this has to happen. But I'm just saying that you've got to be careful when it comes to that.

On to the other part of the time allocation motion—and I'm going to wrap up, because I wasn't looking at the time. Some of my friends here want to speak, I'm sure.

The other issue I want to deal with is when it comes to being able to write amendments. This one here is a little bit better, I'll say to the government House leader across the way. We have a little bit more time than we normally have had in time allocation motions to write amendments. But it's extremely frustrating. We had the bill hearings on Bill 124. The hearings were finished on the one day, and we had three hours the next day to draft the amendments in order to present in committee at clause-by-clause, where you do the amendments.

Well, how do you write amendments in three hours? There are only so many people who work at legislative counsel. You've got to digest what you heard. Somebody comes to the committee and presents at 5 o'clock, and you go, "My God, we never thought of that. We need an amendment," and you've got three hours.

First of all, there's nobody at legislative counsel after 6 o'clock at night, so you've got to come in in the morning—which we do. I'm here at 7:30 in the morning every day, like most of my colleagues. But legislative counsel doesn't open until 8 o'clock or 8:30, somewhere around there. You're going to have literally three hours to ask legislative counsel to draft an amendment they haven't put their head around yet. It makes for bad legislation.

To the government: I don't believe in time allocation, but one of the real affronts in the time allocation motions is that we don't have enough time to do proper research and give legislative counsel the time they need to be able to draft sound amendments. We could end up in a situation where even the government wants an amendment, and the amendment is drafted and it's not well thought through because they don't have enough time to deal with it.

The government, in trying to rush legislation forward, I think, is setting up a practice where we're going to have worse legislation in the end, rather than better. The whole idea of committee hearings is to hear what the public has to say, reflect on what they've told us and then amend the legislation accordingly. That's the basic idea behind it.

I say to the government across the way: Step forward. I'm not going to stand here and say, "Oh, you're only travelling this bill, and it's terrible, and you shouldn't travel it." Travelling bills is always a good thing.

But as I say in my summation here, the government should give proper time for committee hearings. We shouldn't be doing it on days that the House is sitting. We should allow amendments to be drafted in a thoughtful way, and give people the chance to at least be able to think about it, and to draft it and have the proper amount of time in clause-by-clause so that we can actually deal with trying to listen to what the other side has to say, either government or opposition, when it comes to what good amendments should be.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I know that other members of our caucus would like to speak to this motion.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to say it's a pleasure to get up to speak to Bill 132, but what we're actually talking about is the government time-allocating Bill 132. They are once again limiting the opportunity for opposition members to bring forward the voices of the people in our communities.

I used to say to the Liberal side, who did it frequently—and I should point out that although the Liberals did it frequently, the Conservatives, who are now government, when they were in opposition, used to rail against the Liberals doing it. And yet, now that they're government, something has changed, and they feel that it's okay to be doing this. So I just wanted to point that out.

Bill 132 is a huge bill. We call it an omnibus bill. Not everybody knows what an omnibus bill is, so I'm just going to say that it's a huge bill that has just about everything but the kitchen sink thrown into it.

It's really important to point out that this government has this huge focus on alcohol. If they consumed as much alcohol as they talk about it, they wouldn't be able to focus. More and more, all we see are announcements from this government about liberating alcohol to make it available, as in this bill, for you to be able to drink 24/7 in an airport. I don't know about any other members here in the Legislature on any side of the House, but that's not something I've heard my constituents call me about and say, "Look, I need to be able to drink alcohol in more places and more frequently." It's just not something that they're talking about. It's not something they've ever talked about, whether that's in a campaign or post-campaign. It has not been a priority for people to be able to tailgate, to go to their kids' soccer game or baseball game and be able to drink while their kid is playing sports. It's not something they've ever raised with me. And yet, this government is focused on that in this bill—making sure that people can drink in more places. Frankly, Speaker, it shows the mixed-up priorities—we'll say "mixed-up"; I actually had a stronger word than that, but you'd make me withdraw—of this government.

While they're talking about making it easier for people to consume alcohol, we have communities across this province, mine included, where we're facing an addiction crisis. I'm not just talking about opioids. I'm talking about alcohol addiction. We have people who have an addiction to alcohol or to opioids, who can go into a detox bed, but then there's no treatment bed available. They wait weeks or months to get a treatment bed.

So while we're talking about mental health or we're talking about addictions, while we're talking about an opioid crisis in communities—not just on this side of the House, but on the government side as well—this government's answer is not to create more beds for treatment; it's to say, "Have a few more drinks and forget about it. Have a few more drinks and it won't matter." Speaker, that's not what the people in the province voted for. It's certainly not what my constituents have asked for.

So as I pointed out, they seem to have this continued and this relentless obsession with making it easier to consume alcohol, and that's rather disturbing.

We have a government that is hell-bent on making booze available anywhere and at any time, but that refuses to properly fund the education system or our social services or mental health and addictions, as I had brought up, or health care overall.

Speaker, it was funny, because I was thinking about this last night, and it came to me: This Premier and this PC government is kind of like the Oprah of alcohol. That's kind of what they're like. They're running around the province and saying, "Don't look at the cuts we're making and how that's adversely affecting the people in this province." What they're saying is, "You get a beer. And you get a shot. And here's some wine for you."

In reality, Speaker, what this government is giving the people of Ontario is a huge, huge hangover, in the form of cuts to health care, to social services, to education—in Bill 132, it's a cut to water and environmental protections. I think, again, nobody in this province voted for that hangover. Nobody voted for that hangover. Most people actually try to avoid hangovers.

Speaker, again, back to talking about the priorities, there's a 25-year wait-list for supportive housing for people with disabilities—25 years long, and only growing. I know the government side likes to look over at the Liberals and say, "Shame on them. It's all their fault." Yes, shame on them. For 15 years, they allowed that to grow. But that is now the Conservatives' issue. That is the government side's issue. They are now government, and it's time for them to step up and do something about it, rather than just pointing across the aisle and saying that it's all the Liberals' fault—a 25-year wait-list for supportive housing.

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In 2017, there were nearly 16,000 people on the wait-list for supportive housing, and that was according to the housing task force report that was brought forward earlier this year.

I want to highlight one story in particular, but it is not an anomaly, unfortunately. It is not a one-off. It is an all-too-common story. I want to talk about Bonnie Keefe, who is from the Minister of Natural Resources' riding. Bonnie has been on a hunger strike for over a week now. She's living in a tent out in front of the town hall, refusing anything to eat, because she wants to draw attention to the fact that her adult daughter, who has a developmental disability, is being bounced around from homeless shelter to homeless shelter, from crisis bed to crisis bed. There's no place that will take her. There's no place that is able to support her. Her story, like I said, is not a one-off. It's far too common across this province.

This government, rather than focusing on alcohol—and I'm a pet person. Part of this bill is allowing dogs on patios. Hurray, you can take your dog out on a patio when you're out and about. But the real focus in this is rolling back environmental protections and making sure that people can drink. People like Bonnie are not focused on drinking. They're focused on their daughter having a safe place to live.

The Passport funding wait-list: Up until somebody is 18 years old, if they have a developmental disability, they are entitled to something called Special Services at Home. As soon as they turn 18, they're cut off, just because they had a birthday. They have to prove they still have a disability because, according to the previous Liberal government and now the Conservative government, at 18, somehow your disability magically disappears. At 18, they get cut off from all supports and services, and they have to apply for Passport funding. That's something that this government could be dealing with: the 16,000 people on that wait-list, who sit and wait two to five years with no support—no support at all—many of whose parents have had to give up well-paying jobs to stay home and be the

primary caregiver for their now-adult child with a disability, because they've been cut off the supports and services that they need.

This government is focusing on alcohol and cutting back environmental protections in this bill. They're not talking about affordable housing.

Speaker, someone reached out to me yesterday, a constituent of mine, to tell me a story. Her daughter-in-law is now raising a child on her own. They looked at an apartment in Windsor. Windsor is well known to be one of the most affordable places to live. That doesn't mean our housing costs haven't risen. That doesn't mean they're not high, but compared to other jurisdictions, like probably Ottawa or Toronto or London, ours are still lower. We have bidding wars on rentals now. It used to be that you could find a place. You'd see an ad and it would say—I'm going to say that in this particular case, it was \$900 a month, which was just within budget to be able to still buy food, pay the bills and make sure that the child is taken care of—just the basics. It was \$900.

So she reached out to the landlord and said, "I'd like to take the apartment." She had a look at it and said, "I would like to take the apartment," and put in an application, only to be contacted and told, "There is a lineup of other people who want the apartment. So you tell me how much you are willing to pay for this apartment, and if it's more than everybody else, I'll give it to you."

Where is this government on affordable housing? I'm not just talking about saying, "Well, we've built a few affordable housing units," or that we've got developers who have thrown in two units out of a huge, multi-residential place. I'm talking about putting regulations in place, putting rules in place, that say that those have to remain affordable. I'm talking about inclusionary zoning. When you're a developer and you build, you have to build so many other units that are affordable, and they stay that way. For the life of that housing, they stay that way. This government isn't focused on that. They're not addressing the growing number of people who are living in poverty: people with disabilities, seniors, post-secondary students who are living in poverty; the increase in the number of people who are having to go to food banks; working people. They want to talk about how many jobs they've created. These aren't necessarily good-paying, stable jobs. A lot of them are working through temp agencies, and companies are taking—I mean, we just have to look at Fiera Foods and what's going on there. How many people have to die at Fiera Foods before this government stops talking about alcohol and actually starts taking care of the workers?

Speaker, I talked about how this government, in opposition, used to—used to—oppose time allocation. I always love pulling quotes from Hansard from the Conservatives and what they used to say about time allocation. This one, in particular, is one of my favourites. It's one of my favourites because I had just spoken to this particular time allocation by the then Liberal government. I had spoken to it, and the now Minister of Natural Resources followed me. So I would like to read out to the

House again—it's already in the record; that's where I got it from. But I want to read out how the Conservatives and that particular member, the Minister of Natural Resources, used to feel about time allocation. This was a time allocation motion, which I spoke to immediately before the Minister of Natural Resources. His point was to then-member of government Jim Bradley, from St. Catharines, who often flip-flopped in his opinion of time allocation. He thought it was terrible when he was in opposition, and used it frequently in government, which actually sounds pretty familiar now, right? That's what we have on the Conservative side. This is what the Minister of Natural Resources had to say at the time: "He has been through the mill a few times"—again, referring to the then member for St. Catharines, Jim Bradley, a Liberal. "He has been in opposition, then government, then opposition, then government again. When he was in opposition, he had a completely different attitude toward time allocation motions.

"Well, I say to the member from Windsor West, I've never been in government, so I never had a different attitude toward time allocation motions....

"I'm tired of the disrespect and the mistreatment of this House and the people of Ontario with the use of time allocation by this government. It has got to stop." And if I know that minister well, I guess he went, "Guillotine!" Because that's what he used to say about the Liberals using time allocation. It was a guillotine.

So I say to the government side now, if you were able to say that about the Liberals when they were in government, if you were able to call them out on a change of heart on how they used to oppose time allocation when they were in opposition and then used it in government, if that was the way you felt then, what has changed, other than power and trying to push through your agenda?

I know the member from Essex wants some time, so I'm going to speed this along.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Take your time, Lisa.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The member from Essex should know better than to tell me to take my time.

I also want to talk, again, about environmental protections. In this bill—which is now time-allocated because they don't want to take the time to really hear the people of the province or the opposition members who represent them—they've changed the language around chemical spills and contaminants. In a time where there's growing concern around our environment, this government is saying, "Let's start cutting regulations. Let's make it easier for polluters."

In this bill, it says basically that if someone or some company pays a fine under the act, they are now protected from being convicted for an incident. How absurd is that? "Well, I broke the law. But you know what? I'll pay a little fine, and them I'm not going to get convicted. And then guess what I'm going to do? I'm going to do it again, and I'm going to buy my way out of it again." Because when you're a big company, you can do that. You make all kinds of money. This government is making it easier for the big companies to make money, so they're just going to keep buying their way out of trouble. And, meanwhile, it's our

communities and our environment and our wildlife that suffer.

1720

I'm going to try to skip through to some of the other really good stuff here—and I don't mean it's good stuff. I just mean that they're good things to talk about, even though the government doesn't want to talk about them.

There's a piece in here about the 407. I think that all of us on this side, and most people in the province, know that for some reason, every time we get the Conservatives, there's something that comes up with the 407. Pretty soon, they're going to make it legal, probably, to sit on the side of the 407 and drink booze and not pay a toll for using the road, maybe.

The 407 operators will now be allowed to add an automatic \$20 enforcement fee for invoices in arrears, without notifying you in a separate invoice. Then, when you don't know you actually owe them money, because they didn't send you an invoice, they have the right to stop you from getting your licence plate renewed.

I told this story once before, a few years ago, here in the House, and it got me in trouble. Some 407 people actually reached out to me. But I'm going to tell it, because it's factual; it happened, and I'm sure there are others that it has happened to as well.

There was this one time I got a bill for using the 407. The thing is, I was in Windsor, and I could prove I was in Windsor. My vehicle was not here in Toronto. I did not use the 407. They also did not send me that bill in a timely manner. By the time they sent me the bill, it was already past due. How many other people in this province are getting false billings for using the 407—people who weren't on the 407? I wonder how many people get billed for using the 407 who don't even have a car. I wonder how that happens.

But this government is making it easier. First, they sold off the 407; they privatized the 407. They allowed a private company to take over the 407 and charge people tolls for driving on it. Now they're allowing that same company, that is making money hand over fist—instead of that money going back into the province to pay for things like education, to pay for health care, to pay for social services, things that this government says we now need to cut—

Mr. David Piccini: Why is she so angry?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I actually just heard the member opposite call me angry. I suggest that maybe he could get up and challenge me on that and get it on the record, or perhaps he could just come over here and have that conversation with me.

I can explain to that member specifically that—I'm angry. You're right: I'm angry. So are other people at the fact that this government is cutting the public services that they depend on, and saying, "We have to do it," while they're handing money over to big corporations and privatizing our public assets like the 407.

So, yes, I'm angry, and I'm okay with that. I'm quite all right with that. Apparently the member opposite isn't. I guess that's his problem to deal with.

This is a really interesting piece of the bill, Speaker. There's a piece in here that says it repeals and replaces proclaimed sections of the Highway Traffic Act—I'm not even sure I'm going to get through this one without laughing, because it's just so ridiculous—which were enacted by the Ford government's Bill 107, the Getting Ontario Moving Act. Essentially, the schedule in this bill, Bill 132, repeals and replaces legislation that this Conservative government, under Premier Ford, introduced in May of this year—May 2019. Here we are, at the beginning of November, and they're already going, "Oops"—

Mr. Joel Harden: Oops, a do-over.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: "I want a do-over. I want a do-over."

They introduced Bill 107 in May, rushed it through with—surprise, surprise; let's sing along, everybody. They rushed it through with time allocation—thanks for playing along—and it passed by June of this year. Now, five months later, here they are trying to repeal and replace it.

You know what my kids would say to that, Speaker? They'd say, "WTF?" That's what they'd say. WTF, Speaker?

The Conservatives' record in their 15 months in government has been plagued with ill-thought-out plans and policies—I wouldn't even say they're thought out; they're ill-conceived; I'm not really sure they're thought out—as well as walking back previous decisions. That's pretty common.

It's clear to us in opposition and to the people of Ontario that this government operates in an act first, think later, and cut first, consult later—fire, ready, aim, if you will, Speaker. That's how this government operates.

There's a saying that bad habits are like a good bed: easy to get into but difficult to get out of. I think it's safe to say that this government is tucked very tightly into that comfy bed, with the covers pulled over their heads, making decisions. But they have an opportunity. They have an opportunity to climb out of that comfy bed and kick those bad habits, the bad habits like we're seeing today with time allocation—or the bad habit of bringing forward legislation they haven't really thought about, haven't really thought through, and then having to back that up. It really has to be embarrassing for them, you would think, that they have to keep doing this kind of thing.

Speaker, I'm just going to finish with one final thought here, or one final quote—or, sorry, before I wrap up, while we're talking about the government side talking about making it easier for people to access alcohol, I want to talk about the workers at Chrysler in Windsor and the third shift and the 1,500 people there who are about to be out of work. That's 1,500 direct jobs. This government is not talking about them—they're not even talking to them. They're not even talking to them. The president of Local 444, Dave Cassidy, has reached out to the Premier several times, as have I—had conversations with him. He hasn't been bothered to return a phone call to talk about the 1,500 workers—direct jobs in Chrysler we're going to lose—or the 270 at Nemak that we're going to lose.

As my colleague from Timmins pointed out, they want to talk about the jobs they're creating. They're not talking about the jobs that are leaving the province. They're not even talking to the workers who are losing their jobs: 270 at Nemak. That plant is sending those jobs to Mexico where they can pay them \$1.50 an hour with a stipulation that women are not allowed to apply. They're not allowed to apply for those jobs. GM Oshawa: 3,000 direct jobs. Where has the government been on that? Ford Oakville plant: 600. They've already lost 200, and another 400 are going.

When you tally in the spin-off jobs, it's usually times eight. When it comes to the direct jobs, the spin-off losses are usually about eight times the direct jobs. We are talking about nearly 41,000 jobs in those four plants alone, and this government's sole focus really has been on alcohol. It has been focusing on alcohol.

As I said, here's one last quote from one of the government members, who happens to be the Minister of Natural Resources, because he talked a lot against time allocation. This is what he said: "It's a sad day for democracy that we have another time allocation motion in this House. I will not be supporting it, my colleagues will not be supporting it and if the Liberals were willing to do the right thing, they wouldn't support it either."

Speaker, when you have a now-government member saying that previously, then I'm going to ask the government members to take the Minister of Natural Resources's advice and not support this time allocation motion.

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

M. Taras Natyshak: Comme toujours, c'est un honneur. C'est un plaisir de vous joindre, de joindre ici dans le débat aujourd'hui. Durant le débat, ma collègue de Windsor-Ouest m'a fait réfléchir avec ses mots. Je pensais aux mots : plus ça change, plus ça reste le même ici.

Une voix.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I think I got it right in French: The more things change, the more they stay the same in this House.

We only have to look at the quotes that my honourable colleague attributed to the now Minister of Natural Resources when he was an opposition member. I swear that he sat right here—I think he did—because my desk is forever in a concave position because of the slashing of what he called the guillotine of time allocation, with his arm coming down, generating a massive amount of force. He was an ardent, anti-time allocation member. He fought tooth and nail against the government that brought in time allocation time after time after time.

1730

Here we are again. The two bills we've seen so far in the last two weeks since we've come back have both been time-allocated. I understand the rationale around time allocation. I think if there is a national emergency or a provincial emergency, times of crisis, then the government has the need sometimes to get bills through this House that would help and support those critical issues. However, this

is all in the context of a government that took a five-month break, that gave itself a five-month vacation, that put itself into the Andrew Scheer witness protection program.

Speaker, it is clear that if they wanted to actually get bills through the House in a proper way, they should have done it how we always do it, starting on the second Monday of September, as the calendar states we should, as the normal standing orders say we should. It was only due to the Premier's initiative to climb under any rock he could find to keep himself out of the limelight that this House is now suffering for the lack of that ability for us to be here.

I point to my colleague, the wise member from Timmins. I listened to his speech here as he opined on the glory days of collaboration in this House. They might not have got along; that's okay. They might have argued. They might have had differences of opinion, but when the rubber had to meet the road, they were essentially forced to take some suggestions and amendments from the government in the way that the standing orders said at that time.

What it simply did, Speaker, and as we heard in his analogy or his case study from the forestry industry, it made for a better bill. It made for a piece of legislation that is still standing on the books, that has longevity, that has merit still to this day because it seems as though—forgive me if I'm wrong. Someone can correct me if I'm wrong. But the more we give thought to bills that come through this House, the more we give critical thought—and that's not just on the opposition side. That's the responsibility of the government members, as well. They have to give some critical thought. They can't just be handed a talking point from their researchers and say, "Well, that's it. This is a perfect bill. Let's get 'er through the House. Tie it to a rocket ship and, whoop de do, it's through. No, you've got to do your due diligence. It is your responsibility. You take an oath to do that, and I see an abdication of the responsibility from this government, frankly, Speaker."

Do we see any inclination where they're trying to atone for some of their previous transgressions? I don't quite know about that. I would say we've maybe returned to some semblance of normalcy that I guess can be an improvement. I'm not going to give them a giant pat on the back. They're free to do that on their own, as they are inclined to do. But I'll tell you, it's our job here to point that out. For those tuning into the House today, they see another time allocation bill, something that is supposed to be a measure that's used really sparingly, not something that we attach to every measure of law through this House. We only have to look at this record: May 2018, November 2017, May 2017 from the member who is now minister of MNR. He understood as an opposition member that we weren't doing this House any favours by time-allocating everything.

My colleague from Windsor West pointed out so many issues that are not included in this bill that affect not only our region of southwestern Ontario but, I would assume, every other region in and around the province, and if you don't recognize them, then you weren't picking up the phone from your constituents. We have a backlog of

affordable housing in Essex county, in southwestern Ontario, of 5,000 spaces; 5,000 affordable housing spaces that people have to wait for before they even get access to one. There are 5,000 people on a wait-list—years and years and decades before they get access to affordable housing. It is a crisis in rural Ontario.

Speaking of rural Ontario, we see a government that made a lot of promises to the horse racing industry, and I mean the standardbred, those smaller tracks that dot the landscape of rural Ontario. You have abandoned them, and you're following the same track—and I have a wonderful record on pointing exactly to where the Liberals were going to go on this, giving full control of horse racing to the large gaming conglomerates. You're doing the exact same thing. It's verbatim, the language that you're using and the language that the finance minister and the President of the Treasury Board used today in answering my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh's question—same path.

You've weakened our environmental standards and those penalties that this government would normally have brought down on polluters—mainly those who pollute our rivers and waterways. You've reduced the maximum fine from \$6 million per case to \$200,000. That's a licence to pollute. That's not a polluter-pay; that's a licence to pollute, and business will simply factor that sum into their budget and continue to do that. That puts our communities in jeopardy.

I met today with members of the PAO, the Police Association of Ontario, those small municipal forces that dot the landscape of our communities, mostly in rural communities. Right now, this specific detachment is operating at less than a full complement, less than the ratio that would normally provide community safety for our communities. They're operating with a computer system that is the last remaining of its kind in North America because they don't have the funds—and the funds have been cut to policing and community safety through this government. That's not anywhere in this bill.

I met with OCUFA, those who educate our communities. They're still working in part-time, precarious working conditions, where they have to bid for their jobs every four months. These are professionals who have PhDs, who have advanced post-graduate degrees—some of the brightest minds in our communities. Yet what is the signal to them from this government? "Don't count on a full-time job. We don't value the education that you've invested yourself in, in this province, to be worth anything."

When your government tells you that you're not worth being compensated fairly and equitably, how can you boast of a solid foundation of an economy? We've heard the Premier say that today. He says it every day. He's referencing 200,000-some-odd jobs created. This is in an environment where a carbon tax exists which he claimed was going to devastate the economy, yet here we see some job growth. So which one is it? There's always conflicting information from this government.

Speaker, I cede my time to you as the Chair. I appreciate the time to debate this time allocation motion.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I certainly appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this motion right now, Mr. Speaker. It's quite interesting to hear the members opposite talk. I referenced this in an answer to a question the other day: that they always try to make things personal because they actually have nothing to really say when it comes to policies in the province of Ontario.

Let's talk specifically about time allocation. I listened to what the members opposite have been talking about. We've heard that the members opposite want to travel bills, and this government has responded. We responded by saying we will take this bill on the road. That's what we did. We said we wanted to take this bill on the road. We wanted the people of Ontario hear about it. We turned to the opposition a week ago and we said to them, "Where do we go?" We laid out the whole plan. We said, "This is what's going to happen. This is when we will be debating this motion. This is when we will end debate on the motion"—because we wanted to take this bill on the road after the remembrance week.

This isn't something that should come as a shock to the members opposite. They need only ask their House leader and the House officers what the work plan was a week ago when we set it with them. This was the work plan. We asked them, "Where does the bill travel?" They gave us suggestions, and we picked every single one of them. We said, "Fine. No problem. We will go where you want to travel, because we're so confident in this bill that we will travel where you want to travel." So let's talk about this.

We laid out a work plan for them. We had the independent members agree with that work plan. That work plan told them in advance when we were bringing time allocation—a week ago—because we wanted to make sure this bill got on the road, so that we could actually talk about it and take it into the communities. And somehow, now, they're surprised. They're surprised by this. What was it? A week ago, two weeks ago, they were talking about, "Oh, we need to travel"? And now that we're travelling, they're upset that we're travelling.

1740

I can't believe what I just heard. They're upset we're travelling: "Oh, my gosh. We should be travelling during Remembrance Week." Let's take all of the members in this Legislature, during Remembrance Week, and take them to travel, because, oh, my gosh, we can't travel while the House is sitting because they might miss a vote. Well, Mr. Speaker, here's the great thing: You can sub people out. And because we let them know well in advance what is happening the two weeks when the committee is travelling, they should have no trouble subbing people out who actually want to be here for debate or a particular vote. If they can't do that, then how in God's name do they ever expect to govern?

The most ironic part is that the opposition House leader actually is the father of time allocation. In the very short time that the NDP had to govern this province—they

understood that it was going to be their only time governing the province of Ontario. It was such a disaster. I don't have to tell you. You know it was a disaster because the people of Ontario have never returned them to government again. Right? So we know it was a disaster. Colleagues, you'll remember this. I know a lot of you will remember just how bad that Bob Rae government was.

The opposition House leader was a member of that government. And as I say, he was the father of time allocation, and now he's upset—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Please address the Speaker.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —that we're bringing it in.

Here's the other great thing: We brought in a number of changes to the standing orders. A number of changes—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Paul, Listen, Paul, it was a dumb idea.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Oh, wait, wait, wait. The opposition House leader says that that wasn't his idea, time allocation, back then. So now, the only member of the NDP caucus—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Timmins on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: If the member's going to quote me, he should quote me properly. That's not what I said.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That's not a point of order, but thank you very much.

Continue.

Hon. Paul Calandra: We've hit a sore spot. Clearly, I think we've hit a sore spot with the opposition House leader, because he's all tangled up in his words and so is the rest of the caucus—like a pretzel. They're all tangled up. They don't know if they're coming or going. The only thing Ontarians know for sure is that when they left, they're never coming back to this side of the House. That's one thing Ontarians know for sure.

The member opposite talks about time allocation. We put a number of proposals forward over the summer with respect to making this place work better so that we could reduce the need for time allocation, so that we could give independent members more opportunity to speak, so that we could travel committees more often. Because for the last 15 years, when the Liberals were in office, committees just stopped travelling. It's not something that they did, and we said that we want to change that. So we put these proposals forward, colleagues, and what do we get back from the NDP? "We can't work nights. Are you crazy? Who works nights? We're not supporting the changes to the standing orders because we don't want MPPs working in the evenings."

Earlier in question period, they talked about Hamilton. I had an uncle who worked at Stelco in Hamilton. He worked a lot of nights. I don't think any of those people at Stelco or the police officers here today are going to shed too many tears because MPPs have got to work until 9 o'clock. I don't think they're going to be all that upset about it. The only people that are upset about it—it wasn't the independent members; they're not upset about it. It

certainly wasn't members of the government caucus; we're not upset about it. We're ready and willing to work into the evenings to pass the bills that the people of Ontario have asked us to come and pass, to give more time so that members opposite could debate, so that we wouldn't have to bring in time allocation. But who said no? Was it the Conservative caucus? No. Was it the independent Liberal caucus? No, it wasn't. Was it the Green Party? No. You know who it was? Was it the NDP? Yes—the only time they say "yes." They didn't want to work nights because it's too hard on them. So they want us to talk more about bills, but when we give them the opportunity to talk, they say, "We've got to be home by 5:30 or 6—can't get there on time."

That is what we are facing across the aisle, Mr. Speaker. And we're not going to stop; make no bones about it. We're not going to stop making this House a better House to work in, because we know that that's important to the people of Ontario.

So even if the NDP are so anti-democratic, as they have shown that they are, and if they continue down this path of being anti-democratic, we are going to work hard to make this House even better, so that the people of Ontario get even more value from their members of provincial Parliament, even if it means that we make the NDP work in the evenings. Even if it means making them work in the evening, we're going to make sure that this House works better.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, if you will: They talked about Bill 124, about when we brought in closure on Bill 124. How many amendments do you think the NDP brought in, colleagues, on Bill 124?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Ten?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Ten? No. If you said zero, you're correct: not one amendment.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Not one?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Not one amendment. Do you know why? "It's too hard," the opposition House leader said. "I didn't have time. I couldn't stay past 6 o'clock to write amendments."

Come on. Why would you be able to do that? Well, if this bill, Bill 124, was that important, you know what? Stay up late. Make the amendments and do what you have to do. If you want to oppose something, then I encourage you to oppose it. Put forward your recommendations so that we can have a debate.

But when I see that they don't even bother to do that, do you know what it says? That we're on the right track, and that they know it. They know it. They take out small, little pieces of a bill that they called "omnibus." In a bill they called "omnibus," they take out small, little pieces.

Now, bear in mind that they also called an 18-page bill "omnibus," right? So it really speaks to what work means to the NDP, right?

Mr. Speaker, let me just conclude by saying this: We on this side of the House are ready to work very, very hard, and are continuing to work very hard for the people of Ontario.

This bill that the minister brought forward is a very good bill. The parliamentary assistants did an exceptionally good job. They toured the entire province. The members of our caucus talked to people. We talked to people in their communities and said, "What is it about government that bugs you?"

Not one person said, "What bothers me is that you guys sometimes have to work into the evenings." Nobody said that, Mr. Speaker. That's what the NDP are fighting for: They don't want to work past 6 o'clock.

Do you know what people said? "Get rid of the red tape. Let us concentrate on doing what we do best, and that is making prosperity for the people of Ontario."

Somebody said, the other day, when they were talking about their hairdresser, "Well, you know, a hairdresser in my hometown said, 'You know what? It doesn't bother me to fill in paperwork, because we have to follow our business and our clients. So why would I be afraid?'"

But here's the difference, and I think it speaks volumes to the difference between us and them: They would force businesses to do that, and we want to take that burden away from them. If a business wants to do that because he or she wants to grow their business, then good for them—and not because the government forces you to do something.

That is what the difference is between us and them. We want to concentrate constantly on what makes this province work better, what makes it stronger and what makes it better for the people who live here. They want to focus on what makes it more complicated for people to be here. As difficult a situation as we were in when we took over from the Liberals—when they left government, they left an \$11-billion deficit in 1995.

Colleagues, this is outrageous. And that's all they have to offer the people of Ontario.

When it comes to time allocation, I will say this to the members opposite—and I say this not to the opposition House leader, but I say it to the members in the caucus: Before you come into this House and start talking about time allocation and how bad it is, perhaps you should find out what it is that the government has proposed first.

On this bill, one of the very first bills we brought back, we said we would bring this motion in so that this committee could go on the road and talk to people. When we asked you where you wanted us to go, we accepted every single one of those recommendations that you had for travel. Instead of one week, we said, "Let's do it for two weeks," because that's what's important to the people of Ontario. "Let's go to the north. Let's go to the south. Let's make sure we have time here in the province of Ontario." We said that we want to continue to do this in the years ahead, and all we have heard from the opposition is crickets—nothing. Nothing, Mr. Speaker.

Let me conclude by saying this very directly, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the people of the province of Ontario: At least on this side of the House, and with the co-operation of the independent members, we are going to do all that we can to make this place a better place for the people of Ontario, even if that means frustrating the NDP

who would rather be home by 6 o'clock than make this Legislature work better.

1750

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I really want to echo a lot of the points that my colleague raised earlier. I'm going to be on that committee that's travelling across Ontario, speaking once again to businesses about the importance of this bill, Bill 132, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019. I have already spoken time and time again, as my colleagues have.

When we were first elected in June 2018, one of the first promises that we made to the people in our constituencies was—to sit down with them and find out, "What is it that you want from a new government? What is it that's holding you back?" To the business communities in our constituencies: "What is it that you want us, this new government, to do to make your life better?" I heard this time and time again: Regardless of where I was in my constituency, regardless of where I travelled across Ontario, business owners, business workers told me, "Get rid of the red tape. It's holding us back. Please get government out of our way. We don't want a handout. Just get out of our way." We said, "Fine. We agree. But tell us what it is that's holding you back." They agreed and they started to let us know, and many of the ideas raised by business owners across Ontario are in Bill 132.

The reason we have to move forward with time allocation is because they believe it's important to get rid of these burdensome, duplicative regulations so that they can retain the jobs within their businesses, hire more people and pay them better wages.

Quite frankly, when we hear from members across the aisle that people are struggling—well, we're saying that what we want to do is make sure they have a good job so that they can make a choice of where they want to live, of what they can pay for their children when they go to university or any other post-secondary education; so they can take their children on vacation. They're not looking for a handout. They're looking for a good job. That's what people in Ontario want. They want to be able to keep more money in their pocket. They want to be able to raise their children in a healthy family. That means they need a good job. That's what this is all about. It's about creating an environment to allow business to do what business does best. But we are not going to be creating those jobs. That's not our job; it's to create the environment.

We're coming up to Christmas season, and for a number of people in Ontario, that's the busiest part of their business year. I know hairdressers will be selling thousands of dollars in spa treatment certificates for moms and women and spouses etc. to give to their better half. This is a big, big season for a lot of retailers. It's the holiday season.

We want to make sure that we take away some of those barriers that previous governments—the government that my colleague spoke to, the 15 years under Liberal rule,

that just added more and more of these 380,000 regulations that currently exist in Ontario; and the previous NDP government that always believed bigger government was great. Well, guess what? It isn't. Big government doesn't create jobs.

Fewer regulations—keeping in mind the health and safety of people in Ontario and protecting our environment—help businesses. When we get out of the way of businesses, businesses that know what they're doing grow. They hire more people because we are growing an economy. People will get out during this holiday season that's coming up, that's right around the corner, and they'll start to spend. They'll be spending more money. What does that mean? More jobs—more part-time jobs for students through the holiday season.

I remember that my youngest son was working at Hamilton airport during the holiday season. Hamilton airport is the busiest cargo airport in the country. During the holiday season, they hire a lot of young people. The Premier has spoken to the increased economic activity in my riding, where the airport is located, and in the city of Hamilton, and that's because we're getting rid of these regulations.

I want people in Ontario to have the best retail season that they've ever seen. Guess what? Bill 132 is going to ensure they will have that. These are the kinds of measures we have to take so that our young people get to work through the holiday season when they're off and they're back from university, back from college, off during the high school break. They can go work at Hamilton airport, and they can put more money in their pockets.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say that this time allocation is important because it's the best thing for bettering people in Ontario, and it's a smart move for businesses. And that's all I have to say.

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

Mr. Fedeli has moved government notice of motion 69 related to the allocation of time on Bill 132, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking various Regulations. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

However, hold on to that bell, because I have a deferral slip:

"To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I respectfully request that the vote on government notice of motion 69 be deferred until deferred votes on Thursday, November 7, 2019."

It's signed by the chief government whip.

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Kitchener Centre, Ms. Lindo, has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Solicitor General. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or her parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn to the member from Kitchener Centre for your time.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Last week, I asked two questions with regard to the release of a report on food insecurity. It was crafted by FoodShare and the University of Toronto. It was speaking about the discrepancy with food insecurity for Black and white households.

My two questions, because it was last week: (1) I was asking what steps the government was taking to address the crisis; and (2) I asked when the government would begin collecting and analyzing race-based data in order to find solutions to systemic problems that were causing real suffering in Black communities.

The response I received, while hilarious, was (1) that I did not understand the role of the Anti-Racism Directorate, and (2) that I should be celebrating the jobs that had been created by the government.

The reason that I'm here today for the late show is because Black families are almost twice as likely to be food-insecure than white families “even when Black people are homeowners and have the same income, education levels and household makeup as white people.” That was from the Toronto Star on October 23.

I went a little bit further for kicks and looked into the report. I just wanted to bring some more information to the table.

(1) “While it matters greatly for white people whether a household has children or is spearheaded by a lone parent, Black households maintain a significantly higher probability of food insecurity regardless of their household composition.

(2) “One in eight (12.4 %) of white children lived in food-insecure households” whereas “over one in three (36.6%) of Black children lived in food-insecure households.”

A final point from the report: “The overriding factor determining vulnerability to household food insecurity is whether one is racialized as Black.”

With that in mind, I wanted to go back to their asks. At the end of this report, they requested the collection of more race-based data, particularly related to employment, as a starting point—just a starting point.

1800

So my question today, again, for the Solicitor General: If it's not the responsibility of the Anti-Racism Directorate to address this crisis for Black families, then I am asking, sincerely: Who in the government is the minister responsible for addressing racism and, more particularly, anti-Black racism and food insecurity? If it's not the Solicitor General—cool. Then who is it? Because I'm having a really hard time going back to the Black constituents in my riding and across the province to answer this question.

The report on food insecurity isn't about jobs; it's about racism. It's not about the carbon tax; it's about racism. It's not about housing; it's about racism. So again, I'm just curious who in the government would like to talk to me, as the critic for anti-racism, about racism. Because if we don't start having these conversations now, then this is going to be a huge crisis in the making again and again and again.

I'll just have to find more reports, of which there are many, to talk about racism and the impact on Black community members. And I will do it, because I've read these reports. I'll turn to the Review of the Roots of Youth Violence and I will talk about racism and the impact on youth. I will stand up in this House and I'll ask about guns and gangs and the impact of policing on Black communities. I'll stand up in the House and I'll talk about affordable housing and the crisis that's facing Black families. I'll stand up in the House and I'll talk about child care and the impact that has on Black families.

In each of those examples, if we do not have an anti-racist lens, an equity lens on the legislation that is passing in this House and on the work from the respective ministries that are overseeing the governance of this province, Black families will suffer. Families that look like me will suffer, and they will call my office and they will ask me for answers. And I will turn to a minister, presumably the Solicitor General, and ask again: What is the plan? What is the strategy?

We need answers now. It is a crisis, and I'm hoping that we'll get some real answers today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now the parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General may have up to five minutes to reply.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: I'm very happy to rise in the House on behalf of our Solicitor General in response to the question from the honourable member from Kitchener Centre.

I know that all of us can agree that, as legislators, we all have a responsibility to build a better society that treats all of its members with respect. Mr. Speaker, I want to reaffirm that our government is committed to advancing racial equity in Ontario. Fighting hatred in all of its forms is not a partisan issue. In fact, members on both sides of this House, of any party—we've all vocally denounced discrimination towards racial minorities and otherwise at every opportunity.

While Canadians overwhelmingly reject hate, we know that racism and other forms of bigotry persist on the margins and are a serious threat that must be addressed.

We all have a role to play in eliminating racism across our province, and our government is working with partners and the people of Ontario to address these threats.

Racism is a threat. It's a threat to the safety of our communities and everyone who calls our province home. We are responsible for ensuring that people in Ontario benefit equally from public policies, programs and services. Speaker, the Anti-Racism Directorate leads the government's anti-racism initiatives to build a more inclusive society and works to identify, address and prevent systemic racism in government programs and services. As the member opposite knows, the Anti-Racism Directorate is doing very important work by the professional, dedicated public servants who work there.

I want to take some time to highlight some of the ARD's initiatives, specifically with respect to anti-Black racism. The ARD is continuing to lead the government's anti-racism work, including support of the anti-Black racism initiatives undertaken by sector and ministry partners.

One such example of these partnerships includes the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, also known as CAST. With support from the ARD, the Children's Aid Society of Toronto expanded on its anti-Black racism strategy to improve institutional effectiveness in service provision, and to provide culturally safe services for Black children, youth and their families.

Another of these partnerships is with the Toronto District School Board. The TDSB's anti-Black racism initiative began in November 2018, and is focused on Black students' success and excellence. This has involved

working with 17 schools and conducting professional training on race and racism, as well as building staff's and students' critical consciousness.

The ARD has also been engaging with partner ministries on the development of targets and indicators for priority sectors: justice, education and child welfare. Targets and indicators for the current strategy were developed with the input of sector partners and published on the ontario.ca website.

The ARD is also developing culturally appropriate training resources to support regulated child welfare, justice and education sectors with the implementation of race-based data collection. Race-based data provides the evidence needed to make decisions that will result in more equitable and fair services and programs for everyone. As part of this plan, institutions across the justice, child welfare and education sectors will continue to be engaged in the collection, analysis and reporting of race-based information.

Mr. Speaker, our government has been fortunate to have access to the advice and expertise of the incredible professionals at the ARD. We will continue to fight against racism and hate.

I do thank the member opposite for her question.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank both members for their respectful debate.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1807.

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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
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Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin
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