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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 November 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 novembre 2019

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I have a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–Danforth has a point of order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I seek unanimous consent to bring forward a motion calling on the Auditor General to review the costs related to the government's cancellation of renewable energy contracts.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I didn't have advance notice of this, but the member for Toronto–Danforth is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion. Agreed? I heard some noes.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Joel Harden: It's a great privilege today, in the House, to have so many advocates for dyslexia. I want to welcome Alicia Smith; Riina Makk; Anne Boys-Hope and her daughter Sarah Hope, both from Ottawa Centre; Lark Barker; and Christine Staley from Dyslexia Canada. Thank you very much, all of you, for being here. Thank you for being here this morning for our press conference together. Cheers.

M. Sam Oosterhoff: J'ai le grand plaisir de vous présenter l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, qui est dans la Chambre aujourd'hui. Nous avons Melinda Chartrand, Johanne Lacombe, Roger Lemoine, Claudette Gleeson, Roch Pilon, Robert Demers, Langis Dion, Martial Levac, Janine Griffore, Marie-Josée Roy, Stewart Kiff et Jean-Guy Fréchette. Bienvenue à la Chambre aujourd'hui.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to welcome Suleiman Sualim from the great riding of York South–Weston. Welcome to your Parliament.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'd like to welcome some of the presidents and CEOs of mental health and addictions care providers in our province who are joining us in the gallery this morning: Dr. Catherine Zahn from CAMH, Karim Mamdani from Ontario Shores, Joanne Bezzubetz from the Royal Ottawa, Carol Lambie from Waypoint Centre and Alisha Tharani, executive director of Mental Health Partners.

I'd also like to welcome Gino Cucchi from CHIN Radio and Alicia Vianga from After Breast Cancer. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome Bob Clement from the Rainbow District School Board and Sheryl Evans-Price from the Algoma District School

Board. It was a pleasure to talk to you this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a long list of people from Guelph here today for *Wrapped in Courage*: Sly Castaldi, the executive director at Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis; Dr. Mavis Morton from the University of Guelph, along with students Brady, Rosalyn, Ellie, Ivan, Taylor, Shea, Mackenzie, Rhayne, Shannon, Natalja, Andreia, Megan, Bryce, Rachael, Mykaela, Simon, Tyler, Jessica, Sarah, Nicole; and also Lindsey Thomson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to introduce Pathways to Education Canada, who support youth in low-income communities with the resources they need to graduate from high school and break the cycle of poverty. I'd like to welcome Sue Gillespie, president and CEO; Marsha Josephs, Federico Vargas, Ryan Powell and Peter Duong. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm pleased today to welcome members from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses to Queen's Park—especially advocates visiting from Mission Services Hamilton, located in my riding of Hamilton Centre, including Carol Cowan-Morneau, Libby Schofield, Kathleen Jessup, Valerie Sadler, Erin Snajdman-Griver, Laura Santone, Wendy Kennelly, Mara Torres, Marie Valcour, Reanne MacLean, Sheryl Bolton, Jaclyn Smith, Jessica Webber, Lindsay Gill, Alyssa Richards, Angie Ratzlaff-Lane—and Alyssa Zandwyk from Interval House of Hamilton. Thank you all for the important work you do helping women who are fleeing violence.

Also, I'm pleased to welcome members from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, including president Cathy Abraham; president of the public council of OSTA-AECO and student trustee with the Thames Valley District School Board, Sarah Chun; vice-president of the public council of OSTA-AECO and student trustee with the Renfrew County District School Board, Sam Abbott. Thank you all for the work you do in public education in our province.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Today I also want to welcome the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, OPSBA, and their leadership: president Cathy Abraham, vice-presidents Michael Barrett and Carol Ann Sloat, and past president Laurie French.

As a former trustee myself, I want to welcome all of the hard-working trustees to the Legislature today and thank them for the work that they do—including student trustees and Indigenous trustees. Good luck with your advocacy day—and a special shout-out to Shelley Laskin, who is a

long-time friend and trustee with the Toronto District School Board.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I have two sets of guests I'd like to introduce today.

From my riding, I have Marcus, Simone and Alicia Smith, as well as Riina Makk. Thank you for being here today.

I'd also like to welcome OAITH executive members in the gallery today: Arlene McCalla, Sue Weir, Kendall Trembath, Lorris Herenda, Jane Scheel, Sly Castaldi, Sandy Watson-Moyles, Carol Latchford, Silvia Samsa, Marlene Ham and Amber Wardell. I look forward to our lunch reception.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome Jessie Rodger from Anova, who's also a constituent of mine. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It is my pleasure to introduce three ladies who work so hard for the women in my riding: Julia Fiddes, Silvia Samsa and Sojie Tate. They work with Women's Habitat of Etobicoke, and I am so honoured to be able to work alongside.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today Debbie Zweep, who is the executive director of Faye Peterson Transition House and who has done great work in our riding; Ellen Chambers, chair of the Lakehead District School Board; and Kathryn Pierroz, vice-president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, from Rainy River District School Board.

Hon. Doug Downey: I'd like to welcome the delegation from the Commercial Gaming Association of Ontario to the Legislature today: Cameron Johnstone, Peter McMahon, Tony Rosa, Lynn Cassidy, Richard Schwar, Ron Foster and Bill Wilson. Welcome.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the over 50 representatives of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and the Ontario Student Trustees' Association who are here for their advocacy day, including former colleagues of mine from the Toronto District School Board: trustees Stephanie Donaldson, Shelley Laskin, Jennifer Story and Chris Moise—a special shout-out to all of the chairs who are here.

Aussi, c'est un grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue aux membres de l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a belated welcome—I'd like to thank the member from Don Valley East. I understand he was in the hometown of Perth and in the riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston recently. I trust he had an enjoyable day up in Perth.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I'd like to recognize all the hard work of our legislative pages, particularly Emily Pagliaro, who is today's page captain. Her parents, Robert and Denise, and her brother Daniel are visiting Queen's Park from Aurora today. We're so grateful for Emily's contributions to the Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Suze Morrison: On behalf of myself and my colleague for University–Rosedale, I'd like to warmly welcome Chris Moise, the school board trustee who represents both of our communities of Toronto Centre and University–Rosedale, to Queen's Park. Welcome, Chris.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I have just a few to introduce: the chair of the Halton District School Board, Andréa Grebenc, who is up behind me; and also, from Halton Women's Place, Laurie Hepburn, Rebecca Feuerstein, Diane Beaulieu and Carm Bozzo. Thank you so much, everybody, for coming here today. We're looking forward to chatting with you.

1040

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome Donna Danielli from Halton. I'd like to welcome Don Werden from Grand Erie and Kate Baggott from Niagara. There's nothing better than representing the publicly funded education system in Ontario.

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to recognize Donna Danielli, one of our two school trustees in Milton and also the executive director of Milton Transitional Housing. She does a tremendous, tremendous job. Thank you for everything you do for the community, Donna.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I see my friend Elaine Johnston, who is here. Meegwetch, my friend. Also, from the Algoma District School Board, trustee Sheryl Price. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Kathleen O. Wynne: Je voudrais accueillir, avec plaisir, l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques ici à Queen's Park : Melinda Chartrand, Johanne Lacombe, Roger Lemoine, Claudette Gleeson, Roch Pilon, Robert Demers, Langis Dion, Martial Levac, Janine Griffore, Marie-Josée Roy, Stewart Kiff et Jean-Guy Fréchette. Bienvenue.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'd like to officially recognize the birth of my first nephew, Dryden James Park. He is an early riser, Speaker, born at 5:40 a.m. at eight pounds 10 ounces.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to welcome members from the Ontario association of transition houses, specifically Thom Rolfe, who is the executive director of Hiatus House in Windsor. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Stan Cho: It's my pleasure to introduce to the House this morning the newest member of Team Cho, Ashley Seo. Welcome to the team and welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Chris Glover: It's my pleasure to welcome to the House my colleague in Spadina–Fort York, trustee Stephanie Donaldson, and my former colleagues from the Toronto District School Board, Shelley Laskin, Chris Moise and Jennifer Story. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to echo the comments from members opposite to welcome OPSBA here to the people's House: Cathy Abraham, president; Rusty Hick, executive director; Sarah Chun from the student leaders, and so many student trustees and trustees from across Ontario who represent over 1.3 million students in this province. We're grateful for their leadership. I look forward to all members of this House joining us this evening in the legislative dining room for a reception in their honour.

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to welcome Sharon Floyd, executive director of Interim Place in Peel. Also, I do recognize that David Green from Peel District School Board is here. And I'd like to welcome anyone else from Peel District School Board who's here visiting today.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I wanted to welcome Dave McDonald from the Upper Canada District School Board; Marjorie Adam from the Renfrew County District School Board; and Karen McGregor from the Limestone District School Board, whom I'll be meeting with this afternoon.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As we have all been doing, I will also welcome local school board trustees and Ontario Public School Boards' Association folks, but specifically Michael Barrett, OPSBA's first vice-president and chair of the DDSB; Donna Edwards with the Durham District School Board; and Corrie McBain, OPSBA regional chair and chair of the York Region DSB. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: On behalf of the member from Whitby, I would like to introduce Carol Barkwell, who is executive director for Luke's Place, and Laura Oliver, who is the communications manager for Luke's Place. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to welcome Tom Henderson. He's with the District School Board Ontario North East. He was my grade 8 teacher, so he's the reason I'm here. Thank you.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I would like to introduce constituents from the riding of Markham–Thornhill: Vinay Bhide and Sharavati Bhide. Leela Bhide is serving as a page, and her parents are here. Thank you for being here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Guy Bourgouin: J'ai le plaisir de présenter l'équipe de l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, j'ai eu la chance de rencontrer ce matin : Melinda Chartrand, Johanne Lacombe, mon ami Roger Lemoine, Claudette Gleeson, Roch Pilon, Robert Demers, Langis Dion, Martial Levac, Janine Griffore et Marie-Josée Roy, ainsi que Stewart Kiff et Jean-Guy Fréchette. Soyez les bienvenus à Queen's Park.

Mr. David Piccini: I'd also like to welcome school board trustees who are here today. I see Jaine Klassen Jeninga from my riding of Northumberland–Peterborough South. To anyone else who is here from Northumberland–Peterborough South: Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I would like to also welcome our Toronto–St. Paul's TDSB trustee, Shelley Laskin, as well as TDSB trustees Chris Moise, Stephanie Donaldson, Jennifer Story and also a personal friend and icon, Alicia Vianga, the executive director of After Breast Cancer, along with a list of trail-blazing women: Arlene McCalla; Sue Weir; Kendall Trembath; Lorris Herenda; Jane Scheel; Sly Castaldi; Sandy Watson-Moyles, east regional rep of OAITH; Carol Latchford; Silvia Samsa; Marlene Ham, executive director of OAITH; Amber Wardell and Megan Flynn. Thank you so much, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure today to introduce Jessie Rodger, the executive director of Anova. They're here today for the event called Wrapped in Courage lobby day. Welcome, Jessie.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always a great pleasure to welcome our autism families and advocates back to Queen's Park. Today we have with us Michau van Speyk

and Amanda Mooyer with her son Finn Lynch. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, for your indulgence. I have three trustees I met earlier today: from the Greater Essex County District School Board, trustee Sarah Cipkar; trustee Robert Hunking from the Avon Maitland District School Board; and trustee Jack Fletcher from Lambton Kent. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm very excited to welcome Zoey Kiff, a student from Stanley Park Senior Public School, to Queen's Park, along with her mom, Angela. Thank you, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to welcome a number of friends from OPSBA, who are here in the gallery today. In particular, I want to warmly welcome Jake Skinner, a constituent of mine from the Thames Valley District School Board; Arlene Morell, chair of the Thames Valley District School Board; Sarah Chun, president at OSTA-AECO and student trustee at the Thames Valley District School Board; and of course, Jan Johnstone, chair of the Bluewater District School Board. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This is going to have to be the last one: the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to welcome Margarita Mendez, executive director of Nellie's women shelter. Welcome to Queen's Park.

WEARING OF SCARVES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm advised that the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues has a point of order, and I recognize her.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since we're already wearing them, I thought I would ask for unanimous consent to wear purple scarves in recognition of the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The minister is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear purple scarves in recognition of the UN day recognizing violence against women. Agreed? Agreed.

I should advise the House too that, normally, you would ask for unanimous consent before you start wearing the scarves.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, can I just start by saying that although the Tiger-Cats lost last night at the Grey Cup, we are very proud of our team. They had a great season, and we'll get 'em next time. Oskee Wee Wee!

My first question, of course, is to the Premier. Last week, the people of Ontario first learned that the Premier was spending at least \$231 million on cancelling and tearing down renewable energy projects. Since then, the Premier

has repeatedly refused to let the auditor in to review the cost of cancelling these contracts, including by blocking our UC just this morning.

My question is: What is the Premier trying to hide?

Hon. Doug Ford: The Leader of the Opposition knows that we're saving \$790 million for the taxpayers. I'm so proud to go around and tell people how we're saving energy costs by getting rid of the wind turbines, getting rid of these solar farms that have made our electricity costs the highest in North America, putting it on the backs of the hard-working men and women in this province, and putting it on the backs of companies small, medium and large, making them uncompetitive in the global market.

If we could cancel another \$790 million and save the taxpayers—that's not just saving the \$790 million. When they get up and running, it's more hundreds of millions of dollars. So I'll do that all day long.

1050

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to just take a moment to remind the Premier that last year, when the Premier first announced that he would be tearing up contracts and tearing down wind farms, the Ford government insisted that it wouldn't cost us a dime. When they found out it would cost us at least \$231 million, they quietly buried that number and hoped that no one would notice it.

Now the Premier says the costs won't climb higher. Why should anyone take the Premier's word? Call in the auditor, Speaker. Call in the auditor.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition isn't telling the people is that why they're doing their laundry at 9 and 10 o'clock at night is because of the policies. The NDP and the Liberals went into these ridings without any approval of the municipalities and rammed it down their throats.

What the Leader of the Opposition isn't telling people is that, through the wind turbines and solar panels, we're paying 10 times what the amount for electricity should cost: 80 to 89 cents a kilowatt, when it should be costing six, seven or eight cents. That's what the Leader of the Opposition isn't telling the people of Ontario—that they've been getting gouged for the last 15 years under the NDP and the Liberals.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When the previous Liberal government first announced they would be scrapping the gas plant contracts, the Liberals insisted that the price would be \$230 million. The Liberals insisted that the auditor had reviewed the numbers in public accounts and signed off on them. Yet when the auditor was actually able to look at the real cost, the price tag ballooned to \$1 billion.

Now we have the Ford government making the same claims that the Liberals used to make and refusing to let the auditor in.

The Premier promised change, Speaker. Why is he repeating the exact same Liberal tactics he used to criticize? What is he trying to hide?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: It's actually what we're trying to expose. One of my favourite periodicals, the *Climate Change Dispatch*, says, "Germany Pulls Plug on Wind Energy As Industry Suffers 'Severe Crisis'...."

"Power grid operators had been struggling to keep the grid stable due to erratic feed-in and the subsidized feed-in of wind energy caused German electricity prices to become among the most expensive worldwide."

Well, I'll be a chicken fried in goose fat, Mr. Speaker. It turns out that there's another jurisdiction that's having the same challenge as we are.

We saved the ratepayers \$790 million by ripping up those contracts and making sure that we have an electricity system that is less complex and more affordable. We'll continue to do that all day long.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier as well. But I've got to say, the people of Ontario have seen this movie before. It was called the gas plant scandal. Now it's called the wind farm scandal. People deserve better than this.

Last week, the Premier claimed that blowing \$231 million, ripping up contracts and tearing down windmills was actually a plan to lower hydro rates. When he was looking for votes last year, the Premier promised to lower hydro rates by 12%.

Can the Premier tell us: Have the hydro bills gone up or down since he became Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: They're talking about the movie. The Leader of the Opposition was the producer of the movie for the last 15 years. She was the executive producer.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, there has never, ever been, in the history of Ontario, a larger transfer of wealth from the hard-working ratepayers of this province to the political insiders of the NDP and the Liberals—ever. They made hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars on the backs of the hard-working people, and they're happy about doing that.

We aren't happy about doing that. We're lowering hydro rates. We'll hit our target of 12%, Mr. Speaker. We can assure you of that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the Premier forgot to mention is that the bills are actually going up in the province of Ontario since he became the Premier. Families across Ontario know this, even if the Premier does not know it. As one Ontario farmer told Ontario farms.com this week, "This government was supposed to clean up hydro, saying they inherited a mess from (Kathleen Wynne's) Liberals." Instead, the Conservative government is "just creating more of a problem...."

The Premier said bills would come down by 12%, Speaker. Was that a stretch goal or can the Premier tell us when bills will start to decline like he promised?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Let's review some of these increases here: November 1, 2009, 5.5% increase; November 1, 2010, 6.25%; November 1, 2011, 8.7%; November 1, 2012, 8.8% increase; November 1, 2013, 8.9% increase; November 1, 2014, 8.2% increase—you're sitting down for this one, Mr. Speaker—November 1, 2015, a 22% increase, authored by the previous Liberal government, supported 100%, as it pertains to these energies, by the NDP.

We will never miss an opportunity to reduce costs in this complex system. It runs the risk of putting Ontario out of business. We're open for business, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to see to it that energy costs are reduced for people across Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, here are the facts. At a time when the world is embracing clean, renewable power, the Premier is literally tearing it down. Ontario families are not just getting stuck with the \$231-million bill for this; they're also seeing the cost of electricity continue to climb.

The fact is, the Ford government has no plan for the climate crisis. Hydro bills are continuing to climb. In fact, just a couple weeks ago, November 1, 2019, the bills went up again under this government's watch, and we're paying—we're literally paying—clean energy companies millions of dollars not to generate power. How does the Premier justify this?

Hon. Greg Rickford: We take the OEB's decision to raise it to the rate of inflation, which isn't even a fraction of those previous years, very seriously. Our plan is focused on reducing costs introduced by the former Liberal government and supported 100% by the NDP. That's why those pressures keep bearing down on the price of electricity, Mr. Speaker. We aim to fix it.

In the meantime, let's talk about the 6,000 workers in Pickering who would have been put out of business a year and a half ago. On June 9, 2018, they'd have got their walking papers because they don't support one of the cleanest, safest forms of green energy in the world: nuclear energy. We stand up for the workers in Pickering and across the Durham region, Mr. Speaker, and we're hopeful to continue our investments in those refurbishments that will see the province of Ontario do even better than 92% emissions-free in the production of our energy. It has nothing to do with—

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

PHARMACARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. On Friday, the Premier met with the Prime Minister in Ottawa. Insiders with knowledge of discussions report that the Premier told the Prime Minister that Ontario already had robust drug coverage and that Ontario families wouldn't be interested in a national pharmacare program.

For Ontario families spending thousands of dollars to get the prescription drugs they need, can the Premier confirm that he told Ottawa not to move ahead with a national pharmacare plan because Ontario didn't want one?

Hon. Doug Ford: First of all, I'm glad the Leader of the Opposition knew what we were saying in a private office, but that's another whole story.

Anyway, what I was saying is, we're going to discuss the national pharmacare program. We don't believe the federal government should be spending \$20 billion when we do have a robust private sector plan that takes care of a lot of prescriptions and through companies—because you know something? Not everyone works for the government, by the way, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people are working in the private sector. Plus we do have a strong OHIP+ plan, but the 4% who may not be covered are covered under Trillium. That was the discussion in there. We will have a robust conversation when the Premiers get here on December 2.

1100

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I find it quite worrisome that this Premier has just acknowledged his plan to continue to privatize more and more of our health care system—although that's not what he told the people of Ontario during the election campaign.

For weeks, the Premier had bragged about the key role Ontario would be playing on the national stage—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition. The House must come to order so I can hear the person who is asking the question. Again, I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition.

Start the clock.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: He's spending millions of dollars fighting a losing court battle with his fellow Conservative Premiers. He has sent fundraising emails complaining about equalization payments to Alberta. But when the Ontario seniors and families in our province struggling with serious illnesses and the costs of medication needed someone to speak up for them in Ottawa, the Premier told the federal government to do nothing. His private sector buddies apparently are going to fix the problem.

Why is the Premier willing to fight for Alberta's equalization payments but not for Ontario families struggling with the cost of prescription drugs?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, here's a perfect example for the world to see of how they spin the words. I said the private sector, people working in the private sector. All of a sudden, it turned into private health care. One thousand per cent we are not touching the health care sector, making it a private sector, as the leader of the NDP wants to fearmonger to the people of Ontario.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

Mr. Stephen Crawford: My question is to the Premier. The Premier had an historic meeting with the Prime

Minister—his first meeting since the election—this Friday. The Premier discussed the role of Ontario in the federation and how it is of vital importance. Ontario is a major driver for the economic strength and success of this country. Our province is one of the job leaders in this country thanks to the policies that our government has put in place. Nearly half of all immigrants to Canada in 2019 settled in Ontario. As you have stated, what's good for Ontario is good for Canada, and what's good for Canada is good for Ontario.

With that in mind, can the Premier please share with this Legislature more about your meeting with the Prime Minister and your advocacy for key Ontario priorities?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the great MPP from Oakville. I was out there last week. They absolutely love him out in Oakville.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, we had a very collaborative meeting, a very productive meeting with the Prime Minister. We talked about things that we can agree on, many things, one being transit, our \$28-billion transit plan, and the infrastructure plan; we have over 350 projects that we're waiting to get approved and funded through the federal government. We talked about health care. We talked about economic development and jobs. I'm sure he was just as proud as I am about creating 252,400 jobs, the largest economic growth we've seen in North America out of any of the states or provinces, because we're making sure we create an environment for companies to thrive, prosper and grow.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you for the response, to the Premier, and for your continued strong example of leadership on the national stage. I know in Oakville and Halton region, the need for expedited approval and action when it comes to infrastructure and transit projects is of critical importance.

The Premier, along with other prominent Canadians, has raised the issue of division and disunity in this country since the election. Mayor Nenshi from Calgary recently spoke with the Prime Minister about his concerns on western alienation, stating, "Careless words, and careless thoughts," if left unchecked, "could easily rend asunder what has taken generations to put together in this country."

Mr. Speaker, we know the Premier has great relationships with the other Premiers and people throughout this federation. Can the Premier speak to his views on the importance of those relationships and national unity?

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you for the question from our great MPP.

In that spirit, we had a call with Premier Pallister, putting a little wager on the game. I want to first of all congratulate the Hamilton Tiger-Cats for doing an incredible job. I want to congratulate the Winnipeg Blue Bombers for winning the Grey Cup. I agreed, if they won, I'd have to wear their jersey for a little bit of the day, so I'm sure he'll be bringing a jersey over on December 2 for me to wear.

But in saying that, we have to be united. We have to send a message around the world of certainty that Canada

is open for business. Nothing scares businesses more than when we give them uncertainty. But I can assure you, we're going to be talking about a united Canada, because united we stand, divided we fall, and we will always be united here in Ontario with Canada.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question this morning is for the Premier.

Premier, this past weekend, I toured Cootes Paradise with Royal Botanical Gardens representatives. I also toured the city of Hamilton's combined sewer overflow facility with public works officials. It was important for me to understand the magnitude of this disaster. An estimated 24 billion litres of raw sewage seeped into Hamilton's water systems for over four years. I learned that the Royal Botanical Gardens was not notified by the ministry or by anyone else that this disaster had taken place.

Mr. Speaker, my question this morning is: When did the Premier first become aware of this disaster, and what steps did he take to inform the community directly—and I mean directly—about these dangers?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Our government continues to take the health and safety of all Ontarians very seriously, and it's unfortunate that the city chose to keep this information from the public. However, we are ensuring that the city of Hamilton is taking every necessary step to clean up the sewage spill, repair and fix the combined sewage overflow tank equipment and prevent failure discharges.

As soon as we learned about the spill, Mr. Speaker, we directed the city of Hamilton to report back to us on steps that were being taken. That wasn't enough for us. When this failed to happen, we ordered again that this be done. Additional follow-up was requested and the incident was forwarded to the minister's investigation and enforcement branch.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I understand that the ministry has initiated an investigation, and it would be very helpful for the residents of Hamilton, to make that investigation public. We don't even know if it's complete. That would be something we would expect from this ministry.

But it wasn't just the Royal Botanical Gardens that were kept in the dark. Diane, who is one of my constituents, lives in the affected area. She and her family get their household water directly from a well that draws from Cootes Paradise. Diane contacted my office, and she was very alarmed and upset that they were not notified once by anyone or made aware of the risk. She says that, to this day, I'm the only one that has bothered to return any of her calls.

I would like to ask the Premier again, Mr. Speaker, and make it perfectly clear that people have a right to know what's in their water and that the provincial government has a responsibility to protect the residents of Ontario. The ministry has the power to notify the public about significant health and environmental risks. Why were the people

of Hamilton not notified that 24 billion litres of raw sewage flowed into our water system for over four years?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, it begs the question: Why would the NDP members of Hamilton not take their city council to task for keeping this information from the public?

As this investigation—

Interjections.

Hon. Greg Rickford: No, seriously—that conveniently overlooked those facts—again, still on the fact-free diet—is ongoing, it would be inappropriate to comment further. But I want to be clear that the role of the ministry is to ensure that the city of Hamilton is taking all the necessary steps to clean up the sewage spill.

Our government is committed through the draft made-in-Ontario plan—the ministry is committed to increase transparency and accountability by mandating real-time monitoring of sewage overflows and making sure that the city of Hamilton is held to task on cleaning this mess up.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Michael Coteau: We've heard a lot today about collaboration and working with other levels of government. My question is to the Attorney General: Attorney General, can you please tell us why you continue to fight losing battles against student governments, the city of Toronto and the federal government?

1110

Hon. Doug Downey: I thank the member for the question. As the member knows, the decision has come out recently, and as we're in an appeal period it's difficult for me to address that question directly. I'll maybe ask that he pose another question that I can answer.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: I do have another question, Mr. Speaker. We've seen massive cuts to climate change mitigation programs and to legal aid services. We've seen cuts to municipalities.

My question to the Attorney General is this: Can you tell us how much we've actually spent on these losing court battles over the last year?

Hon. Doug Downey: As the member well knows, all of our costs are put out in estimates to be reviewed every year. Everything is fully disclosed. We disclose everything that we can in terms of transparency for the government.

The estimates committee is meeting now. All I can say is, the member opposite knows where to find the answers, and I look forward to discussing them with him further.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Amy Fee: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Being open for business and open for jobs means being open for trade. India is a country of 1.3 billion people and represents one

of the fastest-growing markets in the world. Ontario is also home to a proud, vibrant community of over 830,000 Indo-Canadians.

The minister recently had a trade and investment mission to India, including 12 Ontario businesses in the IT and infrastructure sectors. Can the minister inform this House about the recent successful trade and investment mission to one of the world's most important markets?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler.

We're pleased to be able to speak to the new investments that we secured during our business mission to India. Following months of engagement, our government was able to announce that VVDN Technologies would be opening their engineering centre in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. Their new facility will create over 200 new, high-value engineering jobs for local residents. These are jobs for people with master's and engineering degrees—200 new engineers.

Premier Ford and our team understand that provinces must take a greater role in promoting economic development and trade given that we live in a globally competitive world. Actions like these show our government's commitment to attracting investment opportunities and working with our global partners to bring prosperity to the families of Ontario.

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

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you, Minister, for that answer, and also thank you for securing that deal for the people of Kitchener and all of Waterloo region. Strong local economies lead to stronger economies for everyone here in Ontario.

My question is back to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Minister, our province does \$3.2 billion of two-way trade with India. Can the minister explain his approach to securing trade and investment opportunities in key international markets?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We took a hard look at the trade relationship between Ontario and India before we left and we were surprised—I might say, shocked—to learn that of that \$3.2 billion, Ontario exports only \$389 million to India, a country of 1.3 billion people. We see that as a blank canvas, full of new trade and investment potential. That's why missions like these are so very important. We want to ensure that Ontario businesses have access to these key markets like India.

During our successful mission, the business delegation was able to secure 150 business-to-business meetings and expand their footprint in a key international market. They had huge success from their trips as well.

Our government is taking a proactive lead when it comes to international trade and strengthening job creation in Ontario. Building a strong presence in these key markets is vital to our open-for-business, open-for-jobs, open-for-trade plan.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. Last week, we learned that this government's obsession with

taking our school system from bad to worse had resulted in a school in Ottawa being closed for two days because of mould from leaky pipes.

Students in classrooms across this province are wearing coats and mittens to class because the heat isn't working, buckets catch drips from the leaky school roofs, and even the water fountains aren't safe to drink from.

To the Premier, Mr. Speaker: Under this government's watch, the school repair backlog that got out of control under the Liberals has grown by \$400 million, to a whopping \$16.3 billion. When are you going to stop making our kids suffer and start reversing your heartless cuts to education?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We are absolutely committed to ensuring that children are able to learn in a positive and safe learning environment, which is why some months ago I announced the opening of a \$550-million capital investment, on an annualized basis, to make sure that we remediate the backlog that we inherited after 15 years of the former Liberal government. Mr. Speaker, we're also committing to meet the Auditor General's request of 2.5% in allocation. We are doing that through a \$1.2-billion annual allocation to maintain our schools because we expect schools in this province to be positive learning environments for every child in Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, those numbers don't take into account that you're also covering new school bills. If the Premier won't listen to my numbers, maybe he will start listening to Ontarians.

Today the Ontario Public School Boards' Association released new public opinion data that makes it crystal clear: Ontarians don't see education as a place to make cuts. In fact, they overwhelmingly see it as a place to invest. But this government continues to push ahead with plans for fewer teachers, bigger classes and a risky, mandatory online learning scheme.

Last week the Premier stood in this place and bragged about how proud he was that his government eliminated funds earmarked for school repairs. Why does the Premier think that mouldy schools, overcrowded classrooms and chaos in our education system are anything to be proud of?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, Ontarians, through that OPSBA report, have suggested that they support more investments in public education, in the future of this province, which is why, under this Premier's leadership, we are investing more than \$1.2 billion more this year than we did last year.

That very survey suggested overwhelming support for expanding opportunities in the skilled trades. It's why, under this government, more students, over 50,000 women and men, will be in skilled trade programs in this province, under our leadership.

In that report, they support more investments in special education and mental health. It is under this Premier's leadership that we have more than doubled the investment in mental health and increased special education to the highest levels ever reported in Ontario history.

In that report, they also support standardized testing—a question I'd ask members opposite if they too support. Over 70% of families support that. We believe in measuring success, we believe in ensuring accountability for all members of education and we believe in listening to those we serve.

We're going to continue to invest in education and the defence of public education in this province.

INVESTMENT REGULATIONS

Ms. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Our government has a plan to build Ontario together, and with every day that passes we see more and more examples of how our plan is working. We're making life more affordable, we're building smarter government and we're preparing people for jobs.

A large part of the work our government is doing is supported by our plan to create a more competitive business environment. Earlier this month, there were a number of initiatives outlined in the fall economic statement to this end. Could the minister please highlight our plan to create a more competitive business environment?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member from Burlington.

Last week, I spoke at the Ontario Securities Commission's Dialogue conference, and we shared some of the key elements of our plan to create a better business environment to create more jobs. In particular, our plan addresses the need to modernize the financial services sector: to reduce regulatory burdens, to foster competition and to improve investor experience and investor protection.

The Securities Act is long overdue for a comprehensive review. In fact, the five-year review cycle is 15 years out of date. The legislation needs to be modernized, and that's why we're establishing a Securities Modernization Task Force that will solicit input from stakeholders to inform the creation of a 21st-century securities regulatory framework.

We want to harness Ontario's potential, Mr. Speaker, for investment and business so we can keep the good news about jobs growing here in Ontario.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the minister for his answer, and for his continued dedication and hard work for the good people of Ontario.

The work being done to improve Ontario's competitiveness is exciting. There is no doubt that we can make our province a top global destination to invest, work and create jobs. Our government's vision is becoming a reality.

1120

The minister mentioned our government's capital markets plan as an important part of our plan to create a more competitive business environment. Could the minister please inform the House about some of the work the Ontario Securities Commission has recently completed as part of our capital markets plan?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you again to the member from Burlington. As she mentioned, the capital markets plan is part of our plan to make sure that Ontario is the kind of location where people will invest.

Earlier this year, the OSC undertook an unprecedented consultation regarding capital markets. Nearly 70 comment letters were received—750 participants in three round tables talking about burden reduction. I'm pleased to acknowledge the receipt of the OSC's report last week—107 constructive recommendations that I'll be reviewing, about investor protection, about reducing the costs of investing in Ontario, about bringing us into the 21st century from a regulatory perspective.

Mr. Speaker, our government will work diligently and review the report's recommendations. We thank OSC for the detail and scope of their work. We look forward to continuing to work with the Ontario Securities Commission and other regulators to make sure that we continue on the path to job growth in the great province of Ontario.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is to the Premier.

In January, your government launched an attack on student unions and the services they provide on college and university campuses across Ontario. In a unanimous decision last week, the Ontario Superior Court ruled in favour of the Canadian Federation of Students legal challenge and overturned this attack because, as they said, the minister had no statutory authority to interfere with democratic decisions made by students respecting their student association membership fees. The judges also wrote that the government's defence of their attack was repugnant to the core principles of parliamentary democracy.

So my question to the Premier is, will the Premier respect the court's decision and the rights of students and not waste more taxpayer dollars on an appeal?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Ross Romano: The Ministry of Colleges and Universities is currently reviewing the decision, and we will have more to say about this at a later date.

But I would like to remind the member opposite and everyone watching at home, if you go back about 18 months and you remember the course of the election, we made five critical promises to the people of Ontario. One of those promises was to restore trust and accountability in government. That is what the Student Choice Initiative is all about. The Student Choice Initiative is about ensuring that students have clarity with respect to what ancillary fees are, clarity to know what it is they're spending their money on, and the ability to choose whether or not they want to spend their money on this. It is critical that we respect our students and allow them the opportunity to choose how it is they spend their dollars.

That is why we moved forward with the Student Choice Initiative. We are currently reviewing and will do so—

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

Mr. Chris Glover: For the last year and a half, your government has attacked the legal and constitutional rights of the people of this province, and your attack on the student unions and the services they provide on campuses has created chaos. There are shortfalls in funding for food banks, for LGBTQ2 and Indigenous centres, for campus newspapers and campus radio stations, just to name a few.

In the middle of a mental health crisis on campuses, where research shows that 46% of students are at risk of anxiety or depression, your attack has led to a shortfall in funding for peer-to-peer counselling and other support services.

Since it was this government's unlawful actions that led to these funding shortfalls, will the Premier do the right thing and fully restore funding for these services without burdening students with retroactive fees?

Hon. Ross Romano: Going back to that election period once again, another promise our government made to the people of Ontario was with respect to health care. We talked about mental health and the importance of it. We've learned so much over the last number of years and how critical it is that people have come forward and are willing to talk about what ails them.

This is so critical, and that is why our government has made investments. Pursuant to a \$3.8-billion landmark investment our government has made over the course of the next 10 years in mental health and addictions, our government has specifically earmarked \$16 million of that for this coming year towards mental health awareness on campuses. We continue to make these investments because we know how critical it is for our students to have the opportunity to go to school and get all the supports they need while they're at school, Mr. Speaker.

That is why our focused Student Choice Initiative ensured, as an essential element of that: that mental health on campuses would be maintained, such as programs for mental health and counselling. That is why we do the things we do, Mr. Speaker, to help—

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

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. David Piccini: My question this morning is to the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Minister, each year 2.5 million Ontarians—that's one in five Ontarians—will experience a mental health or addictions challenge. It has been reported that one in 20 can experience symptoms of major depression in any given year. I know that our government has pledged to make substantial new investments in mental health and addictions services over the coming year.

Minister, can you please tell the members of this Legislature more about mental health and addictions services available to Ontarians and how our government plans to strengthen supports for those experiencing mental health and addictions challenges this year?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'd like to thank the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South for the great question.

Mr. Speaker, our government is continuing to make mental health and addictions a priority in the province. Due to the lack of action that we've seen by previous Liberal governments, propped up by the NDP, Ontario has been faced with a mental health and addictions system that is overwhelmed by extensive wait times, significant barriers to access, a lack of standardized data and widespread fragmentation. That is why our government is continuing to make mental health and addictions a priority.

This year alone, we have invested an additional \$174 million in more on-the-ground mental health services to support people, families and caregivers in communities across Ontario. We'll continue to consult with local front-line care providers and listen to the people who are impacted the most to ensure that Ontario has better access to appropriate mental health care in our communities, where and when they need it.

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

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to thank the minister for his response and for being a true champion and advocate for mental health and addictions supports in the province of Ontario. It's reassuring to hear that under the leadership of Premier Ford and our government we are continuing to make mental health and addictions a priority. I know that constituents in my riding of Northumberland–Peterborough South are finally going to receive the necessary tools and resources that they need to address ongoing mental health and addictions concerns in our community.

Minister, could you please provide the members of this Legislature with an update on the work that you're doing to address long-standing gaps and barriers to access in Ontario within the mental health and addictions system?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thanks again to the member for that great question.

As Ontario's first Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, I'm honoured to have the opportunity to work alongside the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health to address mental health and addictions in the province.

Recent data reveals that between 2016 and 2017, roughly 158,000 Ontarians visited an emergency department for a mental health or addictions-related issue. This number continues to increase steadily each year. These are staggering numbers.

Our government will always place a high priority on the needs of people, and we're committed to building an integrated mental health and addictions service system that will support people throughout their entire lives. We'll continue to work together to ensure that nobody is left behind. Working together with my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, from partner ministries, we're going to build a system where services are easier to access, are of high quality and focused on better outcomes—

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Suze Morrison: My question is to the Premier. Last year, the Premier scrapped rent control for new buildings in this province. One year later, tenants at a new building at 22 John Street in York South–Weston were facing double-digit rent increases last week. What's worse is that the developer received millions of dollars in grants from this provincial government.

Why does the Premier think it's okay to hand out public money to developers who then turn around and gouge their tenants?

1130

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for Toronto Centre for that question. She's the tenants' rights critic for the official opposition. As I addressed in a question from her last week, I want to reiterate that our government is committed to the well-being of the people of Ontario, and we're also committed to have a system that protects both tenants and landlords. As she knows, we consulted broadly for our Housing Supply Action Plan. We're analyzing many of the suggestions that both tenants and landlords have said. I know that she expressed dissatisfaction in that answer and she's having a late show tomorrow night.

I can't tell you, Speaker, how encouraged I was when I heard the deputy leader of the official opposition, the member for Brampton Centre and my new housing critic, say this: "I'm sure that members on the opposite side of the aisle don't expect us to be advocating for landlords as well, but I understand that we need to have both parties protected in order to find a real solution and address the affordable housing supply problem that we have here in the province." I'm encouraged by those types of words by the deputy leader, and I look forward to working with her—

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: If this government was so concerned about making sure we have enough supply, you could ensure that buildings that are being built have affordable housing by allowing for inclusionary zoning rules. But instead of requiring developers to include affordable housing in their buildings, the Premier pushed through a law that rolled back inclusionary zoning. Then he went on to scrap rent control. Now tenants at 22 John Street—which is just the first of, I'm sure, many substantial increases we're going to see over the course of the coming months—are facing steep rent increases, even after the same landlord collected millions of dollars from the province in exchange for the promise of affordable housing.

Will the Premier admit that he does not care about tenants and only cares about doing favours for his developer friends?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again to the member opposite: I've made it very clear in this House what our government wants to do in terms of affordable housing. I've stated very, very emphatically how we are willing to work with any partner. I stood at World Habitat Day and held up a

model developer, the Daniels Corp., who has done tremendous work with Habitat for Humanity Toronto. I said it that day and I'll say it again to the member opposite: We will work with any partner, any non-profit, any Habitat for Humanity, any co-op, anyone, whether they be in the private sector or the public sector.

I look forward to working with my new colleague at the federal government. We need to leverage every federal dollar, every provincial dollar and every municipal dollar to build affordable housing in this province, and I call on that member and that party opposite to work with us on our shared concerns.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: My question is for the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. Today is the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and this month is Woman Abuse Prevention Month. Violence and abuse against women does not discriminate. It crosses every social, economic and cultural boundary in our communities, and unfortunately, it is happening in Ontario. One in three women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime, and women are three times more likely to be stalked and four times more likely to be a victim of intimate partner violence. If you are an Indigenous woman, belong to a visible minority or the LGBTQ2S community, the risks are even higher.

Can the minister please tell this House what she is doing to combat violence and abuse against women?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for Mississauga Centre for that important question.

The safety and security of all women in Ontario is a top priority for myself as a woman and a mother of three daughters. I want to acknowledge OAITH, who is here today at the Legislature to raise awareness for their *Wrapped in Courage* campaign. I encourage all members to join on the staircase after question period for a picture.

Abuse comes in many forms—it could be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial—which is why today and every day we need to raise awareness and to call out every kind of abuse. We are committed to preventing and addressing violence against women in all its forms.

I had the opportunity this summer to meet with some of our violence against women coordinating committees to speak with front-line workers on how we can improve and better serve those who are fleeing for their safety.

Our government is investing more than \$166 million in supports for survivors and violence prevention initiatives. This is just one step in how we can combat abuse. I'll have more to say in my supplementary.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you to the minister for her answer and advocacy on this file.

This summer, I had the honour of hosting round tables on combatting human trafficking with front-line workers, law enforcement, and in some cases survivors, including

representatives from the Indigenous and francophone communities. They spoke at length about the tragedy that is human trafficking and how it robs the safety, livelihood and dignity of victims as young as 12 years old, who are being exploited and abused. This is a crisis happening right in front of our eyes—across our province, in our biggest cities, like Mississauga, and in our smallest towns, and it will not be tolerated.

In my city of Mississauga, I spoke to an outreach worker who spoke about how it sometimes takes up to 12 interventions to help victims exit their situation and seek help, and how supports need to meet the victim exactly where they are at.

Speaker, can the minister further explain how human trafficking impacts our province?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you again to the member for the question. I also want to thank the member, as well as the member for Cambridge, for your work on this important file.

In total, we held 13 round tables with those who have been impacted by human trafficking. These round tables are helping to inform a more responsive and supportive system for survivors of violence and trafficking, and to change the attitudes that give rise to violence against women. I want to thank all of the stakeholders who participated in these round tables, including Indigenous partners, who face a higher risk of violence and trafficking.

I would also like to thank the Minister of Education for placing an emphasis on teaching children and youth what sex trafficking is in the health and physical education curriculum.

We all need to work together across sectors and across jurisdictions so we can raise awareness and put an end to human trafficking and violence against women and children in all its forms.

WOMEN'S SERVICES

Ms. Jill Andrew: My question is for the Premier. Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. While the government might want to pat themselves on the back, their shameful record shows they've got nothing to brag about.

One of the first things the government did when they got into government was slash the Roundtable on Violence Against Women. Since then, they've doubled down by slashing funding for rape crisis centres. They've cut essential supports for survivors, including victim compensation funds. The housing crisis, for goodness' sake, disproportionately impacts women; they're on the hook as well.

Today, on a day when the rest of the world is working together to eliminate violence against women, will this government finally stop working against us, reverse their reckless cuts and start putting their money where their mouths are?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Children, Community— I apologize; minister of children and women’s issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for your question.

As I have said, the safety and security of all women in Ontario is a top priority for me as a woman and as a member of this Legislature. I have three daughters. When you look at the numbers, one in three women are affected by sexual violence. I find that very disturbing and I take it personally.

We are committed to preventing and addressing violence against women in all its forms. It’s important to make sure that those who are affected by violence and exploitation receive the supports they need while offenders are held accountable through the justice system.

I met with five of our violence against women coordinating committees this summer to see how we could improve and better serve those who are fleeing for their safety. I also visited over 15 women’s shelters across the province this summer to get their feedback on how we can better support those who are fleeing violence.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you to the associate minister for visiting those shelters. She’s probably learned that some shelters have one staff for 30 clients, and they have PTSD.

Emergency shelters across the province are over capacity, and this government’s cuts are taking things from bad to worse.

In Timmins, the closure of Tranquility House means shelters are struggling to meet the demand and women are getting turned away.

In London, the cuts resulted in a women’s shelter laying off front-line workers, despite a growing number of women needing their services. As of this June, the shelter had to turn away more than 2,500 women because they didn’t have enough beds.

1140

Supporting women fleeing from violence shouldn’t be a Conservative speaking point, Mr. Speaker. We need action and we need it now. Will the Premier invest in these essential front-line services and reverse these callous, harmful cuts?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you again to the member for your question. We are investing in violence prevention and community supports that support women and their dependents.

This year, the ministry is investing more than \$166 million in supports for survivors and violence prevention initiatives. For example, we fund supports such as emergency shelters, counselling, 24-hour crisis lines, safety planning and transitional housing. We have boosted support for rural front-line agencies to increase collaboration and reduce geographic and transportation barriers. The ministry is also funding 18 Indigenous agencies that provide emergency shelter, counselling, child witness programs and other supports, both on- and off-reserve.

We are looking and working with our municipalities on how we can be supporting those better. We do respect women

and children experiencing violence and will do everything that we can to support them.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. Recently, the minister led a delegation to Los Angeles to meet up with top film, TV and music executives to drum up more business for Ontario. At the end of the mission with Ontario’s culture industries, the Canadian Motion Picture Association’s Wendy Noss said, “The studios we represent make substantial investments in Ontario through the production of long-running television series and major feature films, as well as post-production, visual effects and digital animation projects. Minister MacLeod’s mission to LA demonstrates the Ford government’s commitment to grow and support the film and television industry.”

The Canadian Film Centre echoed these sentiments by saying that it was encouraging to see Minister MacLeod’s passion for the industry and her commitment to break down barriers to continue their invaluable work.

Can the minister tell us what she is doing to attract more film and television productions in Ontario and to the many studios in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It was a real pleasure to have the opportunity, with the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, to attend Canada’s Walk of Fame this past Saturday as we celebrated Canadian talent and Canadian unity.

When I had the opportunity to go to Los Angeles on our mission with the film, television and music industries, I was grateful to the Motion Picture Association of Canada, as well as Canadian Film Centre and Ontario Creates—to put together amazing round tables and top-level meetings with senior executives at those ranging from Netflix to Apple TV to NBC to Universal to CBS to Sony and to so many others.

What we heard is, they wanted stability on their tax credits, and I was able to deliver the message that Ontario remains open for business and we remain committed to the stability of the tax credits. We heard about the labour shortage below and above the line in film and television—and I remain committed to working with the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development to ensure this. We also heard that there is a shortage of film stages, and we are doubling that capacity.

We have 10,000 film-friendly locations in the province of Ontario. We’re open for business, we’re open for jobs and we’re open for the best movies in the world.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is great news for Ontario and that is great news for the hard-working people in Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

The minister’s tour also included the president of the Canadian Independent Music Association, who noted that the association was impressed by our government’s enthusiasm for independent artists, entrepreneurs and companies within the industry.

Music Canada also echoed those sentiments by saying “We were thrilled to be involved in Minister MacLeod’s tour to see once again first-hand how the music industry operates and how deeply interconnected it is across borders and between cultural industries. Maintaining the health of our entire creative ecosystem has never been more important to the future of our cultural economic community.”

Can the minister tell us how the music industry in Ontario could benefit with greater cross-border consultation?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity. As the member knows, we have spent some time with the Canadian Tenors on the weekend, and we are very proud of them and so many others from the province of Ontario.

Speaker, Music Canada and the Canadian Independent Music Association, with Ontario Creates, set up some amazing meetings for us with so many who are putting music into movies and television. I would be remiss not to say that Ontario generates 75% of Canada’s total music industry revenue. Think about *The Big Bang Theory*. The theme song music is from the *Barenaked Ladies* from right here in the province of Ontario. You can’t listen to a radio station anywhere in North America and not hear Alessia Cara, Drake or Shawn Mendes. We have homegrown talents like Serena Ryder, whom I’ll be spending some time with later this week.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to continuing to grow the Ontario Music Fund so that we can continue to listen to Canadian artists right here in Ontario and around the world.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. The WSIB’s experience rating rebate program leads to claims suppression of workers injured on the job because it gives financial incentives to employers to file fewer claims, not provide safer workplaces. Under the Liberals, claims suppression and chronic underfunding of the WSIB through drastic rate cuts paid by employers was already bad; but under the Ford government it is getting worse.

Now the Ford government is promising even more millions in giveaways to employers at the expense of workers’ safety. And that’s after the government has already cut \$16 million in safety prevention resources and allowed even more self-regulation of important safety measures. These changes will continue to make Ontario workplaces less safe.

Will the Premier reverse his deep cuts to workplace health and safety programs, yes or no?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: As the member opposite knows, currently there is an operational review of the WSIB, which I look forward to receiving by the end of the year.

Mr. Speaker, let me make it perfectly clear: Health and safety is a top priority for me as Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, and a top priority of Premier Ford and our entire government.

I was proud to join with workers on Friday, with small businesses, medium-sized businesses and large businesses to introduce a first-of-its-kind program in Canada that’s going to improve health and safety in the workplaces.

Mr. Speaker, we are now going to move to recognize health and safety champions in this province who excel at improving occupational health and safety in the workplaces. This is a great day for workers in the province, and it’s also good for business.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I’ll certainly agree with the minister: It’s good for business—not necessarily workers, particularly workers at Fiera Foods, or the young electrician who was killed on the job recently.

Speaker, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board was set up so when someone was hurt on the job, they didn’t have to resort to the courts to get justice. No worker should be sentenced to poverty because they were injured on the job.

Instead, the Liberals, and now this Conservative government, have treated WSIB like a slush fund for their well-connected friends.

This government last week—last week—announced millions in rebates for employers, taking money away that should be available for injured workers. At the same time, WSIB is refusing to cover injured workers’ claims. It’s going on all the time in Ontario.

Why is this government carving out millions—millions—in WSIB funding to go to employers and not the injured workers?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, obviously the member opposite didn’t read the press release that went out last week. This is going to improve the health and safety of every worker in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, businesses get rebates when they improve their occupational health and safety program in that specific business.

But apart from the announcement we made on Friday, the other exciting thing that’s great for workers in this province, and great for businesses, is that on January 1, 2020, we’re moving to a new rate framework in the province of Ontario. Those businesses that improve health and safety ensure a safer workplace for every worker in the province. Those businesses will be recognized, will pay lower rates. Those will be the health and safety champions that we recognize here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes question period for this morning. This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Joel Harden: It’s a great privilege again to recognize some of our friends in the advocates-for-dyslexia community who are here today: Alicia Smith, Alicia’s son Marcus and her daughter Simone; Riina Makk—thank you, Riina, for being here; Sarah Boys-Hope and her

daughter—Sarah, really good to see you; Lark Barker—good to see you too. This is an important community, dear to my heart. I'm glad you're here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, hard-working people in London North Centre and all across the province are struggling to find a decent place to live. In late September, I called upon the government to release emergency funds to address the lack of affordable housing in my community. The ministry's response ignored these concerns and discussed employment rather than housing. Too many families are only one paycheque away from homelessness. In fact, the need for social housing has increased by 70% in the last two years alone, with the wait-list for affordable housing numbering over 5,000 Londoners in my city. The CCPA estimates you need to make anywhere from \$16.50 to \$27 an hour to rent a two-bedroom apartment in London. This is an impossible standard for many hard-working tenants, let alone Londoners on OW and ODSP.

I'm thankful that groups like the London Homeless Coalition, the London tenants' association, and so many other community organizations are standing up and demanding action. There's a real opportunity for the government here, Speaker. Ontario needs bold leadership, not a government sitting on their hands waiting for others to step forward. Londoners know that housing is a human right, and it's time they had a government that agrees with them. Do something.

OAKVILLE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I would like to speak today and offer my sincere congratulations to the Oakville Community Foundation for their 25th anniversary. I attended their Brightlights Celebration, where they raised funds to support the community classroom program to ensure Oakville students receive a chance to have free local arts, cultural and heritage experiences.

Some of you may not be aware of this, but Oakville has the highest poverty rate in Halton region. Hence, I strongly appreciate the honourable work engaged by the Oakville Community Foundation. Their objective is to ensure that our community has long-term investments to address local issues effectively. They work with numerous agencies and individuals on the best approach to address these issues that result in a significant positive impact.

The Oakville Community Foundation is graciously funded by more than 200 families and organizations. They designate endowment funds to support specific areas of need such as youth, the environment, heritage and others. The community foundation has provided more than \$40 million in charity grants over 25 years. Some of these organizations include the Kerr Street Mission, Home Suite

Hope Shared Living, Lions Foundation dog guides, the Children's Aid Foundation of Halton and many more.

To all the volunteers, workers, donors and supporters of the Oakville Community Foundation, thank you for making Oakville a better place to live.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: School shouldn't make students anxious, but nickel-and-diming education is becoming way too stressful for them. Zoey Kiff, a student in my riding, attends Stanley Park Senior Public School. She wrote to me about her concerns that her school will not be able to afford to replace any of the chairs if they happen to break. She has picked up on the financial strain caused by years of Liberal and Conservative neglect.

As if that's not enough, autism cuts are making things worse. Zoey's family has been searching for a program that meets the needs of her brother, Mike, who is on the autism spectrum. Underfunding of public education has left schools struggling to find the resources necessary to support him, so her family has been forced to bear the financial burden of a private education.

The Conservatives are failing Zoey and her family. Callous cuts have left schools unable to meet students' basic needs. Families and educators are working harder than ever just to get by and are now forced to take on an additional fight for students' access to education.

I love and appreciate Zoey for speaking out—she's with us today—but students shouldn't be forced to speak out. They should be focused on their classes, on getting good grades and making their families proud. We must do better. Our children are watching.

CANADIAN CELEBRATION OF WOMEN IN COMPUTING

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, can you imagine? Women are fewer than 20% in most undergraduate computer science programs. That's one in five. Women underrepresentation in the IT sector is an issue that still exists in our society.

I'd like to recognize the Canadian Celebration of Women in Computing, also known as Can-CWiC, which is Canada's premiere networking event organized to inspire and encourage female students to participate in computer science, founded in 2010 by Professor Wendy Powley from Queen's University. On November 8 and 9, the conference was held in my riding of Mississauga—Malton, and I had the opportunity to join and address the attendees.

The conference had over 700 participants and featured 40-plus panel sessions on different issues like imposter syndrome, implicit bias, professional development and workshops for faculty and high school teachers on inclusive teaching in computer science. Attendees included 438 students, and participation was highly subsidized by many high-tech companies and sponsors from a similar field. They were able to do this thanks to the effort of volunteers:

Professor Powley, Dr. Inmar Givoni, Dr. Amber, Professor Jaqueline Smith, Dr. Kelly, Dr. Sheila, Dr. Joanne, Dr. Kate Larson and Dr. Kahani.

As Milka Duno, a renowned race car driver, once said, “When you put the helmet on, it doesn’t matter if you are woman or man: Your mission is to compete to win. The important thing is your ability, your intelligence and your determination.”

Once again, I’d like to thank the Canadian Celebration of Women in Computing for doing such a wonderful thing.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I’d like to speak on the changes to the Mining Act under Bill 132. Bill 132 contains some changes to the obligations of the mining companies to consult First Nations on closure plans that are required before the opening of a mine in Ontario. The consultation requirements for mining closures have shifted to “an appropriate consultation”—within 45 days, and at the discretion of the director of mining rehabilitation, not even the minister. This is a troubling signal to me and to others across the north.

If Ontario plans to do business on treaty territories in the north, mechanisms for this development cannot be unilaterally imposed. Legislation put forward by Ontario on what they call “the Far North” cannot undermine treaty and provincial crown obligations related to First Nations. Bill 132 is being fast-tracked by this government without giving communities appropriate engagement and time to respond.

Every day when I sit here, I hear, “The economy is booming. All Ontarians matter. Affordability is important. Every Ontarian needs a safe place to live.” What is unsaid is, “Unless you are a First Nations person.”

Government structures will not make the changes in our communities, but they can support us. Our people have always known what our nations need. Ontario needs to listen and work with us, not what they are doing now. Meegwetch.

EDUCATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: With another school strike looming, parents and students in Ontario need real solutions. Let me lay out some facts for people to consider.

In 13 years, Ontario’s public education system has declined by over 100,000 students, yet there are 20,000 more teachers and staff. In just 10 years, per-pupil spending has increased to over \$13,000 per year, an increase of 39%. Wages and benefits now comprise 78% of the education budget. Secondary students receiving special ed support has risen to 27%. Educational scores have declined while Alberta, BC and Quebec have better outcomes. And violence in our schools puts everyone at risk.

A month ago today, I sent the Minister of Education a letter recommending that this House convene a select committee on education. I shared this recommendation with school boards and unions. Who knew there were so

many crickets in November? Nothing but crickets. Tomorrow, ETFO and OSSTF begin their job action, something that may have been prevented had the minister taken my advice and convened a select committee.

I have to question: Do any of these parties have the best interests of students and education in their hearts?

1310

SIMCOE CHRISTMAS PANORAMA RIVER OF LIGHTS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Ontario’s first and best festival of lights—Simcoe Panorama—is set to illuminate the night and the spirit of all who witness its grandeur.

Over the past few weeks, workers and volunteers have been in full swing, wrapping Simcoe’s Wellington Park in Christmas magic. It’s a sure sign we’re about to embark on the holiday season—shopping, visiting with friends and family—and of course, for the little ones, it means the arrival of Santa.

Simcoe’s festival of lights has been brightening the lives of those near and far for over 60 years. Over those years, things have changed, but the volunteer committee prides itself for balancing progress with tradition. There are now over 60 displays. They fit into three of the original categories: religious, traditional or fantasy. The majority of the displays are three-dimensional, and they’re built by committed volunteers. For those of us who remember, the displays harken back to the old department store Christmas windows. Speaker, there are also horse-drawn trolley rides, a Christmas market and, of course, Christmas carolling.

This year, the official light-up of the park is Saturday, November 30—this coming Saturday—at 6 o’clock. It’s indeed one of the highlights of the year, certainly for me and definitely for the Christmas season. I invite all to come and see the sights and sounds of Simcoe Panorama. The festival runs until January 5 from 5:30 to 11 at night daily.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Arts and culture is a vital industry for Ontario’s economic growth and stability. There’s no denying that. But we, as a society, often take arts and culture for granted, even while we consume it with almost every breath.

The arts are what helps us connect with each other, help us share messages of hope, of love, of despair, of laughter, even of social concern and a desire to initiate positive change. Through the arts we foster empathy and share our histories. We educate each other. We learn about our neighbours and about ourselves. We broaden our perspectives, and we do it in a way that brings us together. Arts and culture build community.

Our province is home to so many incredible artists, but it is a struggle to develop and share their skill, talent and craft with us because the work of an artist is usually freelance and carries with it no stability. It’s extremely precarious work. Artists, more than most other professions, are often expected to provide their labour for

exposure rather than a paycheck, but exposure does not pay the bills. Every audition, every author submission, and every demo album is hours of work at their own expense in the hopes of securing just one more paid gig. The pressure is intense, and yet these deeply talented people keep persevering and sharing their art with us, and we are so lucky to be able to experience their craft.

Speaker, to gain an appreciation for arts and culture, one just has to imagine our lives without it. So let's promote arts and culture; let's support our artists. Our lives will be so much richer for it.

CAMBRIDGE ATHLETES

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Earlier this month, I was honoured to attend the 2019 City of Cambridge Sports Awards ceremony, and I would like to recognize the recipients in the Legislature today. Congratulations to:

—Emma Spence, gymnastics, with the Tim Turov Athlete of the Year Award;

—Cambridge Cubs major peewee tier 1 with the George Hill Team of the Year Award;

—Abbey Van Duzer, volleyball and para-Alpine with the Heart of Sport Award;

—Jacob Hespeler Secondary School senior football 2018, High School Team of the Year Award;

—Buddy League—Cambridge, adaptive baseball, the Sports Organization of the Year Award.

—Ron Guse, a hockey official, the Don and Benita Rope Sports Contributor of the Year Award; and finally,

—Professional Athlete of the Year was taken by Whitney McClintock in waterskiing.

Cambridge has turned out so many great athletes, and there's one more I'd like to mention: NHL star Dean Prentice, who was born in Schumacher, Ontario, but spent many years as a pillar in the community of Cambridge. Dean passed away recently, and he will be sorely missed.

Dean got his start in the Ontario Hockey Association, playing four seasons with the Guelph Biltmore Mad Hatters. In 1952, he made the leap to the National Hockey League. His career spanned 22 years. He first played for the New York Rangers and later joined the Boston Bruins, Detroit Red Wings, Pittsburgh Penguins and Minnesota North Stars.

After a career in the NHL, Dean turned his attention to his community. When he returned to Ontario in 1977, he became the recreation director for Ayr in the township of North Dumfries. Then, in 1988, as missionaries of Forward Church in Cambridge, Dean and his wife, June, joined the Hockey Ministries International staff team.

Cambridge will be forever grateful for the impact that he and his wife have had on the community.

SENIORS COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Over the last month I was so pleased to join with several organizations in my community of Oakville North—Burlington that received

Seniors Community Grants from the Ministry for Seniors. These grants help local groups support what matters most: helping seniors remain connected to the community, fighting social isolation, and helping seniors stay healthy.

Some of the excellent organizations that received the grants for seniors include:

—the Oakville Chinese Network Society, which was able to bring in a specialist in Chinese arts to teach the Oakville seniors Chinese painting society;

—the South Asian seniors association of Oakville, which works with South Asian seniors and which held seminars to introduce and promote awareness on safety and well-being for seniors within the community;

—St. Luke's Anglican Church, Palermo, which is working with seniors to plan and cook a variety of nutritious and budget-friendly meals in a healthy and safe environment; and

—the Willow Foundation, which was able to offer art classes to seniors at Post Inn Village in Oakville, giving them a chance to develop artistic skills and connect with others.

I've been pleased to join with all four of these groups, and I congratulate them for all the hard work they do on behalf of our wonderful seniors in our community.

I'd also like to thank the Minister for Seniors for this program, demonstrating our government's strong commitment to seniors.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AN ACT TO PROCLAIM DYSLEXIA AWARENESS MONTH, 2019

Mr. Harden moved first reading of the following bill:
An Act to proclaim Dyslexia Awareness Month, 2019.

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

Would the member for Ottawa Centre care to explain his bill?

Mr. Joel Harden: I would. Speaker, if I could beg your indulgence and the indulgence of my colleagues, I have in my hand here a pin from Decoding Dyslexia, which is one of the organizations I've learned a lot from. I was wondering if I could wear this pin while I briefly describe the bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You have to seek unanimous consent.

Mr. Joel Harden: I would like to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa Centre is seeking unanimous consent to wear a pin while he explains his bill. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Bill Walker: And a tie.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, MPP Walker, and thank you, members. Thank you, Lark Barker, for the button.

It is with great pleasure that I briefly describe the purpose of this private member's bill. I come from Ottawa Centre. This is the land of Paul Dewar, who is probably

one of the most famous parliamentarians who lived with dyslexia and who did our community proud.

What this private member's bill would do is commit us to the same path that our friends in Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland have done, and that is to work through the channels we have to educate our communities across this great province. They're aware of what early detection of dyslexia can do, what mandatory education for educators in dyslexia can do, what identification of what awareness can do, and, quite frankly, what we can do as a province can do to fulfill our Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act obligations to make sure all of our public services are as accessible as they can be for all kinds of learners.

Again, I want to thank all of the advocates here in the gallery for how you've educated me, particularly the children who are here with us today—Marcus and Sarah, I'm looking at you—for the courage they have shown in standing up and speaking your truth. It does a lot of good.

1320

MOTIONS

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your indulgence, I have a few here.

I'm seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the adjournment proceedings scheduled for November 26, 2019.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion; I didn't hear the rest of it. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the adjournment debate scheduled for Tuesday, November 26, 2019, filed by the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, be answered by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks or his parliamentary assistant.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved that the adjournment debate scheduled for Tuesday, November 26, 2019, filed by the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, be answered by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks or his parliamentary assistant. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 123

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I am seeking unanimous consent to move a motion to change the sponsorship of Bill 123, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting electric vehicle charging stations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is again seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion to change the sponsorship of Bill 123, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting electric vehicle charging stations. Agreed? Agreed.

Again I'll recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that sponsorship of Bill 123, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting electric vehicle charging stations, standing in the name of Mr. Calandra, be transferred to the member for Whitby, Mr. Coe, and that the member for Guelph, Mr. Schreiner, be added as a co-sponsor.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that sponsorship of Bill 123, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting electric vehicle charging stations, standing in the name of Mr. Calandra, be transferred to the member for Whitby, Mr. Coe, and that the member for Guelph, Mr. Schreiner, be added as a co-sponsor. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

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

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

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

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that notice for ballot item number 92, standing in the name of Mr. Kanapathi on the list drawn on July 11, 2018, be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra moves that the notice for ballot item number 92, standing in the name of Mr. Kanapathi on the list drawn on July 11, 2018, be waived. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move government notice of motion 71: That, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(iii) the House shall continue to meet past 6 p.m. on Monday, November 25, 2019, for the purpose of considering government business. Filed November 21, 2019.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 71. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM LIBERTÉ DE RELIGION

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in the chamber today to speak in defence of our fundamental freedoms, national unity, and Ontario's drive towards greater prosperity.

Earlier this month, the Legislature spoke together as one voice to affirm our belief in equality, freedom of expression, and the protection of those who express those beliefs in a public or highly identifiable manner.

Generations of Ontario Premiers have been seized with the dual responsibility of building a strong and prosperous Ontario while working to build a united Canada. Ontario Premier Bill Davis worked towards the patriation of the Constitution, Premier David Peterson helped draft the Meech Lake Accord, and Premier Bob Rae was a strong voice through the negotiations that led to the Charlottetown Accord. In 1995, when Canada stood on the verge of an unprecedented crisis, Ontario Premier Harris stood side by side with leaders across party lines to defend a united Canada. Premiers McGuinty and Wynne worked with other Premiers from across Canada to build a stronger, more unified nation. Premier Ford is building on the legacies of those who came before him to strengthen our economy, unify our people and bridge the barriers between different provinces and regions of the country.

There can be little doubt that in this chamber we have many things that we do not agree upon, but those disagreements and differences of opinion result in the strong debate that has given us a strong and prosperous province. As we debate this motion today, let us reflect upon the work that we must do to make our province even better. We have seen in Ontario that hate crimes were on the rise between 2016 and 2017. Just last week, ugly scenes of hate and prejudice rocked York University. It does not matter if the hatred is focused on an individual, a religious minority or the LGBTQ community; it is easy to look outside our walls, but we must continue to tear them down here in the province of Ontario.

As a province, we fight to leave no one behind, to give voice to those who do not have one and a hand up to those who need help. We pride ourselves on being a province built through the hard work of peoples from across Canada, other countries and diverse backgrounds. Our success has been a result of generations of people who chose to come to Ontario from around the world, knowing that being a member of our Ontario family meant that they would also be part of the broader Canadian family.

Later today, we'll turn our attention to another motion seeking to affirm our commitment to diversity and the protection of individuals who express their religious beliefs through symbols or clothing. Let me be clear: Ontario's

Progressive Conservatives will vote in favour of this motion, like we did earlier this month with a similar motion.

On the wall in my office is a framed copy of the Canadian Bill of Rights. It reminds me of the words of former Prime Minister Diefenbaker, who said, "I am a Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, or free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind."

Beside me is our Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. He wears a turban as a symbol of his faith. An MPP who wears a kippah, a Catholic who wears a cross, a Muslim whose wife wears a hijab: Their expression of faith will never be an obstacle that stands in the way of succeeding in Ontario. It will never be an obstacle to prospering or to raising a family in the province of Ontario. They can have confidence, each of them and all Ontarians, that we all, every member of this Legislature, will defend and protect their right to be who they are and who they want to be.

While the recent federal election highlighted the divisions in our nation, we in Ontario know that these divisions can be overcome. Our government will work every day to help overcome them. Last week, Premier Ford met with Prime Minister Trudeau and expressed his commitment to working with the federal government to build a strong Canada and, by extension, a stronger Ontario. Later this week, he will meet with Quebec Premier Legault, and next week Premiers from across Canada will come to Toronto so that we can continue to build on the legacies of Premiers who have gifted us the greatest country in the world in which to live, work, invest and raise a family.

Our Premier remains focused on celebrating the things that unite us and working across party lines here and across the country to address and make progress on protecting what matters most to Ontario families: a strong economy, a better health care system, an education system that gives our students and the next generation of nation builders every opportunity to succeed; a province where the seniors who gifted us a great nation are respected and treated with dignity, where artists are supported and athletes are championed; an Ontario that brings people together, tears down barriers and provides the opportunity for everyone to succeed; an Ontario that is a strong, reliable partner and friend; a province that understands that we need to improve where we fall short but has a plan that leaves no one behind.

To our friends in other provinces, I say directly to you that Ontario understands and respects your right to govern in the best interests of your people. We will work with you to build a strong, prosperous Canada by making our province even stronger.

1330

À nos amis du Québec, je tiens à vous assurer que nous comprenons à quel point il est important pour vous de protéger votre langue et votre culture. En Ontario, nous travaillons et nous continuerons de travailler à faire

rayonner le français et la culture francophone, non seulement dans nos communautés francophones fortes et fières, mais partout en Ontario, où les programmes d'immersion dans nos écoles sont plus populaires que jamais et où la francophonie et le bilinguisme sont des atouts importants qui contribuent à la prospérité économique de notre province, au Canada et à travers le monde.

Nous respectons également votre droit de gouverner votre province sans ingérence et dans le meilleur intérêt de tous les Québécois. Deux de nos plus importants pères fondateurs, Macdonald et Cartier, ont compris que lorsque l'Ontario et le Québec travaillent ensemble, le Canada peut accomplir d'autant plus.

As Premier Ford has said, a strong and prosperous Ontario is only capable through a strong, prosperous Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I want to begin by being very, very clear that I totally agree with the words that are on this beautiful speech that was dropped—so lovely—by a wonderful page.

But I could not help but remember that just a few months back—actually, on March 21, 2019, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination—when I was seated in another chair in this same row, another nondescript envelope was dropped on my desk with point-form notes about how much this government cared about eliminating racial discrimination. The day was set. We knew that this was the day, and yet—pre-thinking about what we were going to say on that day—a ministerial statement was not actually planned. And so again, I stand up, and I have to just be very clear for the record that this was not an organized and planned decision, to have this ministerial statement come out right now. Because of that, it makes it very difficult for people across this province to believe what it is that this government is saying.

I would like to make a suggestion. I would like to help the government help themselves. Instead of writing down all of the things that they believe are a nice hug, warm feelings around being anti-racist or supporting different religions etc., put real investments in action. Do real things that are going to make sure that everybody, no matter their religion, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or gender, will be able to thrive in this province. Put real investments behind that, and I won't have to stand up and remind people that a lot of the government's decisions have not had an equity plan or an equity lens attached to them. A lot of the changes in education are going to impact some of the most marginalized before others.

If you stand up in this House and say that you don't agree with what Quebec has done in Bill 21—which is fantastic, because they are legislating hate and legislating discriminatory practices—then you can't also stand up and say, "But we understand that you can do whatever you want to do."

Just this weekend, I was at an event, and somebody stood up at the event and said that Black people would not be where they are today without the help of white people,

and women would not be where they are today and have the rights they have today without men. As much as allyship is a wonderful thing, the people who are actually impacted by these pieces of legislation need to be centred. If we centre them for real, not because we want to sound really nice with things that we have drafted or had our people draft, and we actually want to make sure that they thrive and are successful in this province, then you will invest in them. You will not just speak; you will actually invest in them. You will stand and up gather your people when your people legislate hate. That is really, really important.

That is a key portion of what I hope everybody will stand up and speak about today during today's opposition day motion, because this is not about political games; this is about real people's lives. This is about a teacher who cannot teach anymore because they wear a hijab. This is about a person who has jewelry, like myself—which many people don't even realize has religious significance—having to take that off, take off that protection, in order to speak for the people of Kitchener Centre. That is hugely unacceptable.

We have actually used action to try to address that, an opposition day motion to ensure that the province does something about it. We have not said, "Hug it out." We have not said, "There is a room here for everybody." We have not said, "But go on with your bad selves." We have said, "No." I hope that everybody stands up in this House and doesn't just say, "We're going to stand up and we'll hope that they hug it out," but that they will actually stand up and do the job, which is to go and explain to people that we cannot legislate hate because that only brings more hate.

Mr. John Fraser: I want to thank the minister for his ministerial statement, the Leader of the Opposition for putting forward this motion for opposition day and my colleague from Don Valley East, who put forward a similar motion a few weeks ago. I want to thank them, especially, as well, too, because I get an opportunity to speak to this motion, which I won't get to this afternoon, which I may get to at another date sometime in the future, hopefully.

This is a really important motion. It's something that we all agree on. I represent a community where families from 125 countries have chosen to make a home. They speak 90 languages. There are dozens of faiths. We work together, we live together, our children go to school together, they play together, and throughout the year, in celebrations, both of faith and of community, we come together. That's what makes our community special, like communities across Ontario.

Bill 21 is something that should be of concern to every Ontarian and every Canadian. It is simply not right to legislate expressions of faith. If you look at all the religions in our country, they are generally united by the same values of love, mercy, compassion, humility and understanding that there is something greater than ourselves. I think that to eliminate that expression is just simply wrong. Those are things that are forces for good in our society, and they're extremely personal for everybody.

I have colleagues in here who wear their symbols of faith: the yarmulke, the hijab, a cross—something, maybe, that we can't see. It's a slippery slope when governments decide that they're going to tell people what they can and can't wear based on the fact that it has something to do with faith or belief. Faith is not the enemy in a civil society. Faith is the thing that pulls us all together, and Bill 21 simply does not recognize that. That's wrong, and that's why we should be debating it in the House today, and why we should continue to talk about it until that bill is withdrawn, so that all Canadians realize that your own expression of faith is welcome, that it's important, that we all recognize our individuality and what we bring to this country, what we bring to this province, what we bring to our communities.

I want to say thank you to all the members of this House, because I am proud that I work in a Legislature where I know we often disagree more often than not, but on something as important as this, we can all come together and say, "We're together. This shouldn't be happening, and we're standing up for those people in our communities, those people of faith, those people who want to be able to express themselves." I'm very proud of this moment.

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PETITIONS

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's a pleasure to read a petition here today entitled "Don't Take Away Social and Economic Rights for Women and Marginalized People." It reads:

"Whereas Bill 47 erased many of the legislative gains achieved through ... 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 ... amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and Labour Relations Act, 1995 create conditions that lead to a growth in precarious employment while also eliminating protections for millions of Ontario workers;

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

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

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

"—reinstate paid sick days, the scheduled increase to a \$15 minimum wage...;

"—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" provincial "round table on violence against women; and

"—restore the child and youth advocate commissioner's office."

I wholeheartedly endorse this petition and will be signing it and providing it to page Filip to deliver to the table.

ACCESS TO PERSONAL HEALTH RECORDS

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

"Whereas the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004," which we'll call "the act" in this petition, "currently allows health information custodians to charge a fee that does not exceed the prescribed amount or the amount of reasonable cost recovery, where no amount is prescribed; and

"Whereas given no amount has been prescribed, the amount of 'reasonable cost recovery' has been left to the discretion of health information custodians; and

"Whereas in 2006 the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care proposed a regulation for fee enforcement under subsection 54(11) of the act; and

"Whereas in 2008 the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (the IPCO) submitted a recommendation for amendment of the act to include enactment of a fee regulation that is substantially similar to the regulation drafted by the ministry in 2006; and

"Whereas the IPCO's recommendation is based on the numerous complaints from members of the public about fees charged by health information custodians for access to personal health records; and

"Whereas health information custodians continue to charge exorbitant fees for access to personal health records, against the recommendation of the IPCO; and

"Whereas the Center for Patient Protection recently cited this as one of the most common public complaints; and

"Whereas inaccessible fees continue to (1) be a widespread barrier to access of personal health records; (2) cause undue hardship and stress to the public; and (3), inundate a tribunal that could otherwise allocate its resources to other matters.

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

"That the government of Ontario enact the ministry's 2006 fee regulation so as to enable hassle-free access to personal health records, as well as transparency and accountability of health care institutions."

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Emily.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a very passionate petition from two London-Fanshawe constituents, Art

Tiesma and Anton Brink. They've been collecting signatures.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a report from the city of London estimated that over 400 Londoners currently use emergency shelters, and other estimations put the statistic as closer to 800;

"Whereas at least 59% of homeless individuals reported experiencing mental health issues, and 57% said they struggle with addiction. Indigenous people are far more likely to experience homelessness in London, making up 2.6% of the population but 30% of the homeless population" in London;

"Whereas London and area shelters are running over 100% capacity on a regular basis and vacancy rates in London are consistently hovering around 1%;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in a provincial housing strategy, affordable housing, and supportive housing for those experiencing mental health issues; and we ask that the government immediately release emergency funds to London's homelessness prevention system, including shelters, so that they are able to provide assistance to people in crisis."

I fully support this petition and give it to page Clara to deliver to the table.

DENTAL CARE

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

"Whereas lack of access to dental care affects overall health and well-being, and poor oral health is linked to diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory disease, and Alzheimer's disease; and

"Whereas it is estimated that two to three million people in Ontario have not seen a dentist in the past year, mainly due to the cost of private dental services; and

"Whereas approximately every nine minutes a person in Ontario arrives at a hospital emergency room with a dental problem but can only get painkillers and antibiotics, and this costs the health care system at least \$31 million annually with no treatment of the problem;

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

"To invest in public oral health programs for low-income adults and seniors."

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Gio.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I have a petition entitled "Stop Education Cuts," and it was delivered to me by Joel Norris in my wonderful riding of Kitchener Centre.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premier's new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes starting in grade 4;

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

"Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take" online courses...;

"Whereas" the Premier's "changes will rip over \$1 billion out of Ontario's education system by the end of the government's term; and

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

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

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

I fully support this petition. I will give it to page Emily with my signature.

ACCESS TO PERSONAL HEALTH RECORDS

Ms. Jane McKenna: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, currently allows health information custodians to charge a fee that does not exceed the prescribed amount or the amount of reasonable cost recovery, where no amount is prescribed; and

"Whereas given no amount has been prescribed, the amount of 'reasonable cost recovery' has been left to the discretion of health information custodians; and

"Whereas in 2006 the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care proposed a regulation for fee enforcement under subsection 54(11) of the act; and

"Whereas in 2008 the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (the IPCO) submitted a recommendation for amendment of the act to include enactment of a fee regulation that is substantially similar to the regulation drafted by the ministry in 2006; and

"Whereas the IPCO's recommendation is based on the numerous complaints from members of the public about fees charged by health information custodians for access to personal health records; and

"Whereas health information custodians continue to charge exorbitant fees for access to personal health records, against the recommendation of the IPCO; and

"Whereas the Center for Patient Protection recently cited this as one of the most common public complaints; and

"Whereas inaccessible fees continue to (1) be a widespread barrier to access of personal health records; (2) cause undue hardship and stress to the public; and (3), inundate a tribunal that could otherwise allocate its resources to other matters.

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

"That the government of Ontario enact the ministry's 2006 fee regulation so as to enable hassle-free access to personal health records, as well as transparency and accountability of health care institutions."

I will sign my name and give it to Eric.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition from the great people of York South–Weston about affordable housing.

“Whereas for families throughout much of Ontario, owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive;

“Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold;

“Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing. Whether a family wants to rent or own, live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario’s social housing stock, commit to building new affordable homes, crack down on housing speculators, and make rentals more affordable through rent controls and updated legislation.”

I support this petition and will give it to page Lennon to take it to the table.

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GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have yet another 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 Liberal government.”

I affix my signature and give it to page Gio.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to present the signatures of 399 concerned constituents of the riding of Bay of Quinte, who sent this to me. I can’t read the actual title. I have to amend it because it actually includes the member’s name, so I’m going to change that. It says, “Tell”—the MPP from Bay of Quinte—“to Reverse Education Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government’s plan to cut 25% of high school teachers and replace in-person teaching with mandatory online e-learning will have devastating impacts on Ontario schools and particularly students in smaller and rural communities in ridings like the Bay of Quinte;

“Whereas these cuts will:

“—severely limit course options in our rural schools and limit opportunities for students to get the credits they need to apply for post-secondary schools;

“—limit student opportunities to pursue all of their learning passions, from art and music to chemistry and literature, in schools without properly staffed music rooms, libraries and science labs;

“—limit the extracurricular activities that enrich our school communities and keep many students engaged in their learning;

“—hurt the most vulnerable students and lead to poorer outcomes for students with special needs, including those struggling with learning disabilities, and anxiety and depression;

“—leave behind students in rural communities without reliable Internet access and students who do not learn well online;

“Whereas every young person who has a dream in Prince Edward county, Trenton, Belleville or anywhere in the Bay of Quinte should be able to pursue that dream at a high school in their own community;

“Whereas our children and youth deserve the best education our province can provide;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to respect children and youth, and to reverse the decision to cut 25% of classroom teachers in our high schools and replace in-person teaching with mandatory online e-learning credits.”

I am very happy to support this petition. I’m going to affix my signature to it and pass it along to page Emily to table with the Clerks.

TAXATION

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have yet another petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government for the people was elected on a mandate to make life more affordable for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan is currently working to reduce targets by the previously agreed upon Paris accord targets without a carbon tax; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province that is meeting the goals of the 30% reduction rates agreed to in the Paris accord; and

“Whereas the seniors, workers, families and small businesses of Ontario cannot afford another tax burden on every purchase they make;

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

“Fight the federally imposed Justin Trudeau carbon tax with every tool at the government’s disposal.”

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Leela.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This is a petition called “Stop the Cuts to Indigenous Reconciliation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario is situated on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples, many of whom have been on this land since time immemorial;

“Whereas in 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report...;

“Whereas reconciliation must be at the centre of all government decision-making;

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

“—continue reconciliation work in Ontario by implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission....”

I fully support this petition and affix my signature, and will give it to page Alexandra to take to the table.

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

OPPOSITION DAY

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

LIBERTÉ DE RELIGION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I rise to move the following motion:

Whereas all people who wear religious symbols, including turbans, hijabs, kippahs, crucifixes and other articles of clothing that represent expressions of their faith, are welcome to serve the Ontario public; and

Whereas discrimination based on religion is prohibited by Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and

Whereas Quebec passed legislation, Bill 21, that prohibits the wearing of religious symbols and violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and

Whereas national civil rights groups including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the National

Council of Canadian Muslims, B’nai Brith Canada, the World Sikh Organization, the Canadian Bar Association, Amnesty International, and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs have all opposed Bill 21; and

Whereas municipalities across Ontario including Mississauga, Brampton, the Peel regional council and Toronto have already passed motions condemning the legislation;

Therefore the Legislative Assembly calls on the government of Ontario to communicate its opposition to Bill 21 by formally requesting the Quebec government immediately repeal Bill 21 and by intervening in any Supreme Court challenge of Bill 21 that may be heard by the courts.

It’s addressed to the Premier, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day motion number 3. We turn now to the member for Hamilton Centre, the leader of Her Majesty’s loyal opposition, Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you so much, Speaker. I appreciate that.

I want to start by thanking once again the kind folks who attended a press conference this morning as we made public the intention to debate this motion this afternoon. With me in the press gallery media studio were Omar Khamissa from the National Council of Canadian Muslims; Dr. Jaspreet Kaur, Ontario director of the World Sikh Organization of Canada; and Rabbi Julia Appel, secretary of the Toronto Board of Rabbis. They were all with me as I gave my remarks. We also were joined by Sanaa Ali-Mohammed from the board of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations. I really did want to thank them once more for being there this morning, because we have a serious motion on the floor today, one that I’m hoping will be approved by all sitting members of this Legislature.

I have to say that some of the folks who joined us this morning at the press conference are also here with us in the legislative chamber today, and I appreciate that. I want to thank all of them, and everybody else in Ontario who works hard—people have worked for decades here in this province on protecting the human rights and charter rights of Ontarians—as I said, for many, many years. It’s extremely important work, and it’s unfortunate that it is work that continues to need to be done in our province.

Something different is happening in Quebec than what’s happening here in Ontario. Quebec’s ban on religious symbols, Bill 21, is, frankly, bad legislation. It’s discriminatory and it undermines religious and cultural freedoms in Canada.

I believe that we in Ontario have to continue to stand up and speak out as Canadians against any form of discrimination, prejudice, racism and intolerance. Silence is never an option. Silence on these kinds of things allows them to continue. Unless we commit to standing up against these kinds of activities and these kinds of prejudices, we will continue to experience them in our province. So, silence isn’t an option.

Our vision for Ontario is a province where all people’s talents and abilities are recognized, are welcomed, are

celebrated regardless of where people were born, what they believe in, and how or if they worship.

We believe in a Canada where every child can grow up knowing that they can pursue their ambitions and achieve their dreams, free from fear and discrimination, in a country where their rights and freedoms will always, always be protected.

1400

I believe we must send a clear and direct message that this legislation was wrong—and it is wrong—and that it really has no place whatsoever in our democracy. If this bill and its undermining of human rights and religious freedoms goes unchecked, it sets a dangerous precedent that puts the rights and freedoms of Ontarians and all Canadians at risk, which is why we're debating this motion this afternoon. No one should have to choose between their faith and their career. We all need to work together to fight Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and xenophobia wherever it happens and whenever and wherever we see it.

Affirming that Ontario values diversity and will protect the rights of people within this province, as the motion introduced by the member for Don Valley East did, is a good thing. It's obviously a good thing. But it falls far short of what is ultimately needed. I believe we must have the courage to go further. That's why I'm calling on the Premier to uphold the values of our province in his words and in his actions. His continued silence on this issue is indefensible. Now is the time to show leadership. Our words and our actions must reflect the values that unite us as Canadians. Let's decide together to be a part of the solution, not a part of the silence.

I understand that there was a ministerial statement but a few moments ago that speaks to some of these issues, and I would only hope that as we go through this debate this afternoon we hear members of this Legislative Assembly not only support the motion but then turn to their Premier and ensure that the sentiment is not only one that is spoken about but the action is actually taken. There will be opportunities very shortly for the Premier to have this discussion, I believe, with the Premier of the province of Quebec. If the members of this assembly pass this motion asking the Premier to act, I would hope that they would see to it, particularly on the government side, that that action does take place.

The motion, in a nutshell, explicitly and unequivocally condemns the passage of the legislation in Quebec, Bill 21. It formally requests that the Premier of Quebec immediately repeal this discriminatory law. And it commits to intervene on behalf of Ontarians if this goes to the Supreme Court. Again, it's not just about words and sentiment. It is about action. It is about true leadership. These things are definitely difficult issues—easy to talk about, but I think some find it hard to stand up and call out these kinds of discriminatory pieces of legislation and other acts of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and anti-Black racism. These things plague our province, and they have for many years. Unfortunately, our current body that was supposed to be

proactively dealing with some of these things in our province has been watered down by the current government. That's the Anti-Racism Directorate. Not to say that the Liberals had done a great job in making sure that organization was able to fulfill its mandate, but nonetheless, watering it down was a step backwards.

Today, I think we have an opportunity to move forward. So I urge all members to stand in support of this motion, and if that happens, of course I urge the Premier also to act on the will of this House. This is an important opportunity to stand up for the rights and freedoms of our neighbours in Quebec and to speak out on behalf of all Ontarians and, frankly, Speaker, Canadians.

Thank you for your kind attention. I appreciate it, and I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I rise to speak today about a subject I care deeply about. I'm a proud representative of hard-working families in Brampton, and I am honoured to serve the people of Ontario as the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. Serving my community, a community made up of people from all walks of life and virtually every part of the world, has been a humbling experience. When we talk about Ontario's diversity and Canada's diversity, we are talking about Brampton.

Mr. Speaker, my family's story is a reflection of an open and welcoming nation. My mother and father immigrated to this country in the late 1970s. My mother worked hard—three jobs, two jobs at a time, lifting boxes in a factory. My father drove a taxi and worked two jobs on the weekends just to give us enough to get by and his family a chance to achieve their dreams. Never was faith an obstacle in his success or my success. This is what makes Canada the greatest country in the world.

Mr. Speaker, each day this story is being written and rewritten in communities across Canada. We are fortunate to live in a country that affords people of all walks of life the opportunity to succeed, and my standing here in the House is a testament to that truth. Our country and province have afforded me opportunities right here that would only have been a dream anywhere else in the world. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'm the first turban-wearing member of Ontario's cabinet in Ontario's history.

I think about the kids in my riding who look like me, who grew up like I did and who wear turbans just like I do. I have had the opportunity to talk to a countless number of youth in Brampton who have similar aspirations, goals and dreams, and I'm humbled that they look up to me as a source of inspiration. But the sad reality is that I would not have had the same opportunity to serve my country as an elected representative, teacher, police officer or public servant if laws prohibiting my right to religious expression existed here in the province of Ontario.

Our friends in Quebec have built a strong, distinct, enduring society within the framework of Canada. It is one built on a shared history, a common language and a unique culture. But our deepest-held values as Canadians are the

ones that should be shared from coast to coast to coast across this great land. These are values that transcend provincial borders. They apply to new Canadians as much as they do to those who trace their heritage to before Confederation, and we must continue to draw on these shared values—freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law—because that is who we are.

We are fortunate to live in a nation that values these ideals, but freedom of religion is not simply a Canadian or Western value; it is a fundamental human right, and the free expression of this right is a hallmark of who we are as Canadians. The reality is that these values will always be stronger than anything that divides us.

One of the most wonderful things about our province and our country is that it is incredibly diverse. Here in Canada, we don't tolerate differences; we celebrate them. We recognize and celebrate that our diversity is one of the greatest sources of our strength, that no matter the colour of your skin, which part of the world you came from or what language you speak, whether you attend mosque on a Friday, synagogue on a Saturday or church on a Sunday, every distinct element of who we are as a people comes together to form the mosaic of Canada. Religion and religious expression are not a source of conflict, but rather a point of unity in our country. In the times of tragedy and crisis, we see people of all faiths and walks of life uniting in sorrow, coming together to offer comfort to the hurt and grieving.

I will never forget the images and stories of the people united following the tragic events of January 29, where 17 innocent worshippers had their lives stolen and a community was robbed of its peace. The violence that took place that day wasn't a reflection of Canada or who we are as a people. The days that followed showed us who we truly are. Faith communities joined together in remarkable expressions of love and care, drawing strength from each other's beliefs, being inspired by acts of kindness to others.

Mr. Speaker, for many Canadians, religion is a central facet of their life. The very reason its free expression is guaranteed for all Canadians and is protected as a human right across the world is because it relates to the deepest and most personal essence of who we are as a people. No Canadian should be denied the right of full participation in our society on account of their beliefs. No Canadian should be asked to hide, turn off or change a central part of who they are in order to enjoy the full rights of their citizenship—which itself is a contradiction in terms.

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Instead, Mr. Speaker, we must continue to draw on our shared values in defence of religious expression in Canada. We must not lose sight of the fact that a threat to freedom anywhere in Canada is a threat to freedom everywhere in Canada. We must keep faith with the principles and traditions that set us apart from the rest of the world. We don't build a more tolerant and pluralistic society by removing or denying the elements of ourselves that distinguish us. We do so in maintaining those distinctions within a framework of equality and respect for all people.

Mr. Speaker, it was an honour to speak in support of this motion, and I encourage all members to do the same.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I too am honoured to stand in the chamber and speak in support of this motion, but I want to take a step back and just make a couple of things clear. What we are speaking about and what we are debating today is not diversity; what we are speaking about is discrimination. When we start to collapse notions of multiculturalism and diversity, that's what leads us into that place where people think the solution is to hug it out.

When we talk about discrimination, we're looking at the tools that are being used to ensure that some people succeed and others don't. That's the reason why this motion is so powerful, because what is being made very clear today is that Bill 21 in Quebec is an attempt to use law—which is the tool—to discriminate and to make sure that certain people who practise certain faiths are no longer allowed to represent the broader public. That is discrimination. That does not have the same kind of explanation as a desire for diverse populations to join hands and come together when discriminatory policies have allowed a route for hate to take place.

With that as the backdrop, I want to stand today and acknowledge some other communities that have also come together to speak out and speak up against the discriminatory use of the law to stop religious expression within this public service.

I am so proud of Kitchener Centre and the Kitchener city council, who, on August 26, also tabled a motion to denounce Bill 21. Ms. Fauzia Mazhar, Ms. Ghazala Fauzia and Ms. Meena Waseem were in attendance on August 26, 2019, at the city council meeting for Kitchener to speak in support of the motion. That motion was tabled by Councillor Margaret Johnston, it was seconded by Councillor Deb Chapman, and it was passed unanimously. What's important, though, again, is to not fall into the trap of thinking that what we're talking about is a diverse community coming together. No, what we're talking about is putting language forward that will not allow this to happen again:

“Whereas hate crimes against religious minorities are growing in Canada; and,

“Whereas the city of Kitchener fully supports every citizen's right to choose what they wear and condemns the province of Quebec's legislation to limit that choice; and,

“Whereas the city values religious freedom for Sikhs, Jews, Muslims, Christians and people of all faiths, and acknowledges the harm the province of Quebec's Bill 21 can inflict on those who sincerely seek to follow the practices of their faith and dictates of their conscience....”

That was the resolution that was tabled. That language, just like the opposition motion that we are debating today, Mr. Speaker, talks about the impact of using the law to actually discriminate—again, very different from talking about diversity and talking about people who have been able to succeed in spite of laws, practices and norms that would not see people like me and like the member before

me being able to do the job that we're doing today. That motion was passed and was also followed by Waterloo city council. Wilmot township also joined in this call to denounce Bill 21, and again, the language is very specific.

I just want to end by saying one very simple thing: When you legislate hate, you get what you paid for. When you legislate hate, you get exactly what you paid for.

I'm going to quote my good friend Fauzia Mazhar in a CBC article following the passing of the Kitchener city council's motion, "When there is legislated hate and discrimination, people who have even a little bit of a tendency to hate or discriminate against people who are different ... are emboldened."

I think it's really important for us to think about that because everybody can stand up today and say they support this motion with their words, but the real question is, will they make sure the Premier is held to account, that the Premier makes a phone call and that the Premier says, "It is not okay for you to do this. I don't agree"? That's what we like to call "gathering your people." You gather your people. When the people around you do things that are problematic and you have their ear, you stand up and speak out, you gather them and you surround them with the love they need so that they know to do better.

What I hope is that, today, we see everybody in this House gather their people and support this motion, not in words but in action.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Bill 21, An Act respecting the laicity of the State, which passed into law in June 2019, prohibits many who work in the public sector from wearing religious symbols or garments while they are working, such as teachers, judges and police officers. Since some religions require the wearing of certain garments and symbols, and others encourage it, this law, in effect, forces some people to choose between their religious convictions and their careers.

I understand that the word "religion" comes from the Latin word "religare," which means "to tie or to bind" someone to their community. Not always, but perhaps most often, our religion, like the place that we are born and the family we are born into, is given to us.

I read an essay recently that persuasively argued that it is the commitments that choose us—my family, my country, my God—and not the ones that we choose, that give us the strength to be free.

I get to lead only one life, not many lives, so far as I know, which is one reason why my freedom is so precious to me, as yours is to you. It is how I honour what has been given to me, the one course in life that is mine to run.

Freedom understood as a capacity for significant or meaningful action thrives amid these binding loves and commitments, much more than in a universe of limitless options.

As the example of Thomas More teaches, it is what we love and will not betray that liberates us.

Because religion is often given to us and is usually in many ways intertwined with our family and community, it

is deeply integrated into who we are, our self-definition, our relationships, our sense of meaning and place and our web of obligations. It is part of the context in which our life is embedded. Anything that challenges someone's religion, in a sense, challenges that context, challenges their family and their community. This is why it seems even harsher to use a law that requires someone to separate themselves from those obligations in any way.

These fundamental freedoms of religion, conscience and expression are not the gifts of a state. They are part of our fundamental liberty as autonomous human beings, and the state cannot unjustly limit such freedoms. These are activities which are the basic forms of human liberty. These freedoms are integral to our understanding of human dignity and personhood, what we do and what we become, self-expression, self-actualization and personal responsibility.

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Canadians have both the freedom from conformity to religious dogma as well as the freedom to manifest their own religious beliefs. In Canada, religious belief cannot be preferred by governments over non-belief, and non-belief, likewise, cannot be preferred over belief. All individuals should be treated equally by the state and particularly before the law, regardless of religious belief or affiliation or any non-belief. This means there is a fundamental equality of believers and non-believers. All possess the same rights and cannot be favoured or discriminated against, and this requires sometimes significant forbearance by political authorities. By virtue of these freedoms, the state is precluded from the kind of dominance that many states have exercised historically and, unfortunately, some still do. Given our peaceful recent history, we may forget how important it is that the state does not try to make people renounce their beliefs. But we do not have to look too hard to remind ourselves of the horrible nature of such state actions.

Canadians have the freedom to manifest their non-belief or, more often, their belief and to observe the tenets of their religion. As the great Canadian jurist and then-Chief Justice Dickson wrote in the *Videoflicks* case, "The essence of the concept of freedom of religion is the right to entertain such religious beliefs as a person chooses, the right to declare religious beliefs openly and without fear of hindrance or reprisal, and the right to manifest belief by worship and practice or by teaching and dissemination." All forms of coercion, direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional, foreseeable or unforeseeable, are prohibited under section 2(a), according to the Supreme Court decision in *Edwards Books*.

Whether you have a religion, practise a religion, or you do not, protecting freedom of religion is an important part of ensuring that all people are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their beliefs or practice. Your religion and your conscience are part of you. The state should not intrude in that domain, because it cannot do so without doing violence to your core identity.

These rights and freedoms are considered essential to the functioning of a democracy. It is almost impossible to

imagine how a democracy could function without these most basic rights and freedoms. And yet in Canada, they are sometimes under attack, even here. As a result of Bill 21, only some people—those whose religion or conscience requires them to dress in a certain way and with a certain garment or symbol which is religious—will have to choose between what they believe and the garment or symbol that goes with that, or a public sector job. In our culture, what we choose to wear is widely understood as a means of self-expression, of saying who we are. As the Canadian institute for Jewish affairs, or CIJA, in Quebec pointed out in its arguments against Bill 21, the secularism of the state does not rest on the appearance of any of its workers, and if it did, the state must be neutral as to how its workers dress or risk favouring non-belief, or non-demonstrative belief, over some faith that prescribes certain attire. CIJA Quebec also pointed out that there are no examples in Canada of this even being a problem.

In any event, it's a principle of legal interpretation that if there are any infringements on any rights, which sometimes happens when rights collide or conflict, the infringement should only happen if it is necessary, and any infringement should be as minimally intrusive as possible. In this case, the infringement by the law does not appear to result from any conflict with another right, and it's not necessary and not minimally intrusive.

Dr. Andrew Bennett, director of Cardus, pointed out on the passage of Bill 21 into law: "A state that closes off the public square to citizens who choose to openly express their religious faith is not neutral; it asserts a secular ideology with secularist principles. A genuinely neutral state facilitates open expression of both religious and non-religious belief in the public square inasmuch as such expression is respectful of others and of the legitimate rule of law."

Religious freedom is not just about protecting what's in your head; it protects the practice of that religion through observance, action and even dress, both inside and outside a place of worship.

Many diverse groups and communities are concerned that Bill 21 will suggest that religious discrimination is sanctioned by the state, which may lead to further instances of hate speech, discrimination or aggression. I'm not going to dwell on the serious consequences of such a rise in hate speech, discrimination or aggression, or on the importance of doing everything we can to prevent such a rise, because I think we've all, unfortunately, lived through many samples of such incidents and the horrific consequences for those targeted and generally for our sense of collective safety and security.

Several years ago, my daughter took a course called World Religions. Learning about the religion of another community is a way to promote understanding and tolerance. A religious garment or symbol can be an invitation to dialogue about our shared or different beliefs and practices. As long as the dialogue is respectful, I believe society is strengthened by educating ourselves about others and our differences. Indeed, I would say that in doing so we often find that despite outward differences, there are a lot of commonalities.

A few years ago I read *Not in God's Name*, a book written by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, which argues that very point and illustrates this by outlining the common foundational stories of Jewish, Muslim and Christian religions. I believe that the very nature of human understanding is limited, that we must have not only humility but also reverence in the face of the great unknowns that lie before us and that we will never completely understand.

That is why we need to act with caution and care, particularly where dignity and respect for other human beings are implicated. Our fundamental freedoms are meant to protect the dignity of each citizen in their interactions with the state by limiting where the state can act.

Thucydides said that the secret of happiness is freedom and the secret of freedom, courage. It takes courage to live, to put ourselves out there, to declare who we are and what we believe. In Canada, most of us have—at least in the modern era—felt secure enough to manifest our differences publicly. Let's defend the fundamental freedoms of our fellow citizens by standing up against this law. When the state threatens the rights of some, the right of all are in peril.

I urge my colleagues to support this important motion.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: I am very proud to rise today to support this opposition day motion. As a very proud Sikh woman, I think it's important that we stand up and we call this what it is. It is a racist piece of legislation and we need to condemn it, and that's what this motion seeks to do.

But it seeks to do more than just that. As a Sikh woman, I wear articles of faith. If this type of legislation was passed here, I actually wouldn't be able to serve in our provincial Legislature.

It's unbelievable to me that in 2019 we have governments here in the country of Canada that are enacting legislation that is so discriminatory, that is embedded in hatred and discrimination, and still we have people who refuse to speak up and stand up and call it what it is.

We have legislation that is violating our fundamental charter rights and limiting our right to practise our faith and wear our articles of faith. To our sisters and brothers in Quebec, we stand with you in solidarity to ensure that you will have that right, and we encourage this government to vote in favour with us today and to encourage the Premier to use all the time that he spends connecting at a federal level and inviting unity to take action on this issue and actually stand up and condemn this piece of legislation.

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While we understand that this is going to disproportionately impact visible minorities—those from the Sikh community, the Muslim community and the Jewish community—the member from Kiiwetinoong and I were discussing earlier today that we don't understand yet what the implications to First Nations or Indigenous communities may be, as they also have articles of faith that they wear and practise while they practise their faith.

We really do need this government to stand up and take a stand. We heard from members here today who spoke at great length about the articles of faith they wear, and the privileges they've been able to enjoy here in this province. They spoke about the need to stand up and call out injustice anywhere, understanding, as Dr. King Jr. did, that injustice anywhere was a threat to justice everywhere.

But yet, we haven't seen the Premier stand up and take a stand. He has engaged in legal battles on a number of other issues—yet, silence on this one. So, we encourage this government to do more than just say nice words on international days of recognition and stand up and make ministerial statements. We encourage them to do something, because we have an opportunity to do so, and this opposition motion calls on this government to actually take the action.

Today as we look out, we see members of the Sikh faith, those that are Jewish, and Islamic brothers and sisters here with us today, wearing their articles of faith proudly here in the Legislature of Ontario. But we need to remember that our brothers and sisters in Quebec will not have that opportunity. So it is our responsibility to stand up and speak out, show leadership as a provincial Legislature here in Ontario, condemn Bill 21 and demand that it is repealed.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: As some of my colleagues know, I was born and lived in the Soviet Union until I was almost nine. My first encounter with any religious symbol was in St. Petersburg when I was four or five. It was a siddur, a Jewish prayer book belonging to my grandfather.

In the Soviet Union, the only religion allowed was communism. Had the police searched our apartment and discovered the book, my grandfather would have been imprisoned or sent to a labour camp, all for the crime of personal religious expression.

Thankfully, my family and I were able to leave the Soviet Union in search of a better and freer life, in search of a country that knows right from wrong, that protects religious freedom, that believes in free speech, and one that knows that protecting civil liberties is what separates us from places like the Soviet Union. My family found that home in Canada, and I'm proud to be Canadian.

On that note, imagine for a moment a Canadian boy, raised in Canada. He plays hockey. Imagine that this boy wants to serve his country. He wants to be a police officer and keep his community safe. But he can't, because he fulfills a religious duty and wears a turban. Bill 21 bans him from being a police officer unless he abandons his religious duty. His turban affects no one else. It impacts no one else's space, safety or liberty. He is Canadian, he is Sikh, but Bill 21 cuts him out of Quebec society solely for his faith.

Imagine a young woman. She and her family came to Canada, like mine, in search of freedom. She's an A student. She has a remarkable resumé, and she dreams of becoming a pediatric nurse. But she can't. She fulfills her religious duty and wears a hijab. She always loved and

admired our diverse, integrated, multicultural and multi-faith society, but she can't be a nurse.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that makes Canada great is that we champion women's rights, but Bill 21 makes it legal and mandatory to push Canadian women out of mainstream society and out of a job.

My executive assistant is an observant Hindu. My legislative assistant is a proud Catholic who wears the crucifix every day to Queen's Park. They too would be women banned under Bill 21.

Speaker, I think of myself, being a Canadian boy of Jewish faith who wears a kippah, who dreams of becoming a member of the Legislature to serve the public, to give back to the province. Well, in Quebec, I would not be able to stand here, as I am in front of you today, for wearing my kippah. I would not be able to serve my constituents or my province. I would not be here.

Looking around this great room, I know that these Canadian experiences will resonate with many of you, because we are the most diverse Parliament in the history of our province. My friends on all sides of the House, our cultural and religious mosaic is beautiful, and the people of Ontario are served better by it.

The question I want to ask all the members of the House today is this: Who are we, as a country, under Bill 21? Are we still a beacon of hope for those fleeing religious persecution? Are we still a home for families like mine, who come to Canada for freedom and opportunity? We talk about national unity. Well, what does it mean? National unity is to count on Canadians coast to coast, province to province, to unite and speak against Bill 21.

Those of us who swore an oath to defend Canada's values have a responsibility to speak out against this anti-Canadian law. This is bigger than any political party. This is bigger than any religious differences. This is bigger than any one province. This is an issue of Canadians banding together to stand up for Canada.

Bill 21 is more than just discrimination in law. It's about the atmosphere that gives rise to the law. Bill 21 gives legitimacy to an environment where Canadians may not feel comfortable in everyday life. If government can discriminate against a Canadian because of their faith, then why not the private sector as well, with crucifix-wearing Christians, kippah-wearing Jews, turban-wearing Sikhs, and Muslim women who wear the hijab being cut out of mainstream society? When we cut people out of mainstream society, as Bill 21 does, we cut them out of everyday life.

Children in our schools are taught the principle of "live and let live" every day. They are taught that freedom and tolerance for people are what make Canada the best country in the world. It is why my family is here. It is why all of us are here. It is why millions of immigrants risk it all to come to Canada for the freedom that our nation is known for.

We're all welcome in this country, and I'm not speaking for Muslims or Jews or Catholics or Sikhs. I'm speaking for Canadians, and I know that you will too. That's why we'll be voting in favour of the motion before the House today.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: I have been in committee all day with Bill 132, but due to the incredible importance of this motion, I wanted to come up to the Legislature and contribute to the debate.

I struggle, Speaker, to understand how, in 2019, in Canada, we must debate a person's right to freedom of expression or religion. These are rights enshrined in our charter and unassailable, at least in theory.

Yet Bill 21 is a reminder of the constant vigilance that is needed to protect these rights, especially when so many across the world are facing increased hatred and discrimination.

We must come together as Canadians, from every party and every corner of this land, to fight Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

It is shameful that this attack on individual rights comes not from some fringe group but, instead, from a Legislature similar to the one in which I now stand. It is unjust, and it should have no place in any part of Canada.

Let me be very clear: While the stated intention of this bill is secularism, its impact is racist, and it discriminates against people, in particular visible minorities and women.

The bill bans public servants, as has been said already in the House, be they police officers, judges or school-teachers, from wearing or displaying any religious clothing, headgear or jewellery. That's an expansive description, Speaker, and I wonder how it would even be enforced. And no one should have to choose between their career and their faith.

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I'd like to read a few of the headlines and bylines that have come out since the introduction of this bill so we can better understand some of the impacts that this has on individuals in Quebec.

"The English Montreal School Board says four prospective teachers withdrew their job applications in recent weeks because they would have had to remove their religious garb."

Another one states, "Sikh Teacher Moves From Quebec to BC After" it was "Implemented." They had to move their home, Speaker, because of this bill.

Yet another one begins with "Teacher Says She Feels 'Betrayed' as Classes Start Under Quebec's Religious Symbols Law." Nadia Naqvi says she gets "chills" just thinking about how it will be enforced. Now because of a grandfather clause, Nadia would be allowed to continue wearing her hijab, unless she takes on a new position. Think about that, Speaker: If she is offered a promotion or wants to move into administration, she would have to turn down those opportunities if she wants to continue wearing her hijab. That is wrong, Speaker.

Even the enforcement of this bill is discriminatory. You can still wear it if you were wearing it before, but not if you are promoted? If you're a young adult entering the workforce and display any form of religious wear, well, you'd better not plan on being a police officer, a teacher or a judge—I really want to stress this point, because it is

landing on the judiciary to decide whether this bill is legal under the charter. It would prevent someone from entering the very institution that will decide the fate of this bill, Speaker.

I cannot fathom how the government of Quebec has arrived at the conclusion that wearing a hijab affects a person's ability to teach a subject, or a turban a person's qualifications to be a police officer. And I even wonder whether Indigenous communities would be allowed to bring sacred eagle feathers into their offices if they held public office, like our own representative from Kiiwetinoong.

Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to speak. I urge the government, both as an MPP and a representative of those who live in my riding, to support this motion and take the strongest possible stand against Bill 21.

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, I was drawn to public service because I was curious about how the use, and the abuse, of power interacts and impacts ordinary people.

Ours is a blessed society. We live in a society in which power is ordered through the free and democratic expression of our people, upon the indelible concept of the individual and upon the liberties that are bestowed upon each and every citizen by their creator. We live in a society in which our rights and our responsible exercise of said rights is a sacred inheritance, an inheritance paid by those who came before us, in blood and treasure, through wars, through hard times and throughout global change.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, our country is an unabashed miracle in the midst of history. Our laws are drawn from both the English Magna Carta and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. Our legacy draws from both reform and revolution.

We chose a federation to reconcile the tensions between regions and people, religions and languages. We chose the sanctity of the ballot so that the reach and power of government could be limited by the people, so that power in Canada is granted to temporary leaders by the governed and not concentrated in the permanent ambitions of unaccountable government.

Today, 150 years later, our federation remains a miracle in the midst of our history. We draw from these tensions of our legacy, aged and tempered through the experience of one and a half centuries, and joined by generations of people who came to these shores to abandon places where power was abused. Our geography has been an enduring gift. Surrounded by oceans and ice and a powerful democratic neighbour to the south, we have prospered.

But today, we are not immune to global disruption. Technology is changing every aspect of our lives: how we heal our sick, how our young and young-at-heart learn, how we communicate and do commerce, and how we harness and heal the earth. It is also providing platforms for viral hate, in which social media mobs manifest in mobs on the street: mobs that act as judge, as jury, as executioner in our emerging cancel culture; mobs fuelled

by emotion, dispensing with democratic logic; mobs that diminish our democracy, our Legislatures, our courts and our constitutional character. It is in this context that Bill 21 is our test.

Today's populism, on the left and on the right, is made even more disruptive by technological change. As a friend of mine has said, "Today's populism on the left is characterized by condescension, and on the right by anger." We talk past each other and into our own ecosystems rather than engage each other with respect and empathy.

In Quebec, Bill 21 is a manifestation of the powerful tensions between a nation and its religions, in which a national identity feels besieged by sectarian infiltration and in which curtailing religious freedoms are offered up as a means to address those concerns. As we wrestle with who we are as a nation, as a federation, we turn to the institutions shaped by our 150-year-old democracy. Bill 21 is the modern representation of the eternal dialogue in which societies order power.

This bill will see its way through our courts, our due process, and be afforded appropriate reflection before final consideration. But I rise today to represent the view that we do not, as a country, as a federation and as a society, reconcile those kinds of tensions with laws like Bill 21, with court cases or hollow apologies.

I think of Inspector Singh Dhillon, the first RCMP officer to wear a turban and to have a beard. A trailblazer for Sikh Canadians, Inspector Dhillon knew that Sikh women and men before him faced hate and outright racism. He explained that his forefathers endured the diluting of identity, where boys were taken straight from their place of landing to remove their turbans and shave their beards. That undermined their identity and their inherent dignity. He said, "That was just so they wouldn't be confronted by the shame and the bias and racism."

This proud Canadian fought to uphold his right to his faith and heritage by practising his faith while concurrently defending his country, never wavering from his duty to country and his oath to Her Majesty the Queen. Faith and duty need not be incongruous from each other. *La foi et le devoir ne devraient pas être incompatibles*. They should coexist, complementing the strengths of our country, a nation that upholds religious freedom and stands up for the rule of law.

Speaker, I think of Jews who wear the kippah, where Orthodox men would be denied their customary requirement that their head be covered. The irony, of course, is that Quebec Jews would recall so vividly that the first Jewish parliamentarian in the British Empire was elected in Quebec in 1808 and that the Jewish community has roots of over 250 years in Quebec.

Speaker, I think of Muslim women. They too have a customary and solemn duty of religious requirement to cover their head. I worked for former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who in 2014 decided to bestow honorary citizenship on Malala Yousafzai. I intended to meet her that day; however, it was regrettably cancelled due to the terrorist attack on Parliament Hill that day that was felt and reverberated across the land. We planned on honouring

this innocent girl, who was targeted by the Taliban simply because of her interest in women's empowerment and because of her objective to enrich minds through education. This heroic woman, now a citizen of this country, the youngest Nobel Prize recipient and a Muslim who wears a hijab, would be, under this bill, not able to teach in this country—an honorary citizen, a Nobel Prize laureate, a defender of human rights. Under this bill, even Malala would be denied her right to pursue her dreams of education and inspiring the next generation. For them, we unite more deeply as a country, by building a civil society, not a society of silos.

In this, Mr. Speaker, I stand as Ontario's Minister of Education, with those voices that insist that our society is best ordered by embracing pluralism—not pluralism being used as a guise for more relativism but true pluralism in which we argue, we debate and we do so energetically; true pluralism that allows for religious freedom in the hearts of all Canadians, all Quebecers, to turn away or to turn to God, whether at home or at work; true pluralism that draws upon the benefits of our Indigenous history and the histories that our new Canadians bring with them; true pluralism that does the hard work of reconciliation in the heartbreak of Holocaust and Holodomor, genocides and pogroms, persecution and suppression; true pluralism in which Canadian schoolteachers are measured by the quality of their capacity to teach, not singled out for their faith or how they choose to express their faith; true pluralism that, when a perilous world forsakes the security of our people, our Canadian Sikhs, our Canadian Jews and our Canadian Muslims stand united to fight for our country and die for our nation; true pluralism that in our schools we bestow upon the next generation the inheritance of this history, an inheritance of an ordered liberty in which power rests with every citizen, in which government is limited by the people and not the other way around, and in which our social cohesion, ever improved by our democratic dynamism, is strengthened by the very freedoms that animate them. Because as Prime Minister Diefenbaker said many decades ago, "I am a Canadian ... free to speak without fear, free to worship ... in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom, I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind." So let us speak with one voice to uphold the promise of this country, a nation of freedom, a land of opportunity and a people of diversity. This is our country: strong, united, prosperous and free.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

1450

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to rise on behalf of my residents of Windsor West to talk about the motion before us, the opposition day motion brought forward by our leader of the NDP regarding Bill 21, a bill that was introduced in Quebec. Just to be very clear what Bill 21 is, it is a discriminatory piece of legislation. We need to be quite frank and up front about what it is. It's also a human

rights issue, and Ontario has an obligation—the people who live in this province, but more importantly, those as legislators have a very important obligation—to firmly oppose it.

This bill, Bill 21, singles out people of certain faiths, limiting opportunities and ostracizing them from public spaces. It discriminates against visible minorities and women, people who are often already marginalized. It limits career opportunities and makes public spaces unwelcoming, and we should not be making our public spaces unwelcoming. We should make everybody feel that they are welcome to come to this place here in Ontario. This is the public's Legislature. This is their House. We don't own it as legislators ourselves, and we should be doing everything to make them feel welcome. The same applies in every single province across the country.

There's no question that Bill 21 discriminates against certain faiths, more so than others. It singles out people that are considered to be different. Rather than celebrating the differences, it's discriminating against them and trying to exclude them from fully participating in society. So people who wear turbans, hijabs, kippahs, who wear these visible, important signs of their faith—even crucifixes, and we should point that out. People who wear crucifixes, those of Christian faith, fall under this bill. However, there are groups within this bill who are more adversely affected and are more strongly discriminated against under this bill.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it today because I want to point out that Windsor is the fourth most diverse city in all of Canada—the fourth most diverse. In Windsor, we welcome, encourage and celebrate diversity. I had the opportunity to speak to many of the faith groups within my community, and they all feel very, very strongly against Bill 21. It doesn't matter which faith group you talk to; they all feel strongly against Bill 21. I'm thankful that it's not Ontario law, but it's a very slippery slope. When you have one province that has brought in this discriminatory legislation, then it's much easier, unfortunately—I hate to be able to say that, but it's much easier—for other provinces to bring it in.

In Windsor—and I know it's across the province and the country, but I'm going to speak specifically to Windsor—we've seen increases in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. I appreciate the position that I'm in, as an elected official who represents people of all different faiths, to have the ability to stand up and speak out when such horrific acts take place. People are experiencing racism and xenophobia daily, right across all of our ridings in the province of Ontario and across Canada. Bill 21 just adds to the environment of hostility towards marginalized people. It emboldens people to engage in hate crimes. It emboldens people to engage in hate speech and to exclude people from our communities.

Something like this, this bill, should never, never have happened. They shouldn't have even thought about it. We must send a strong message that we fully oppose this division and that our public spaces are open to everyone. Bill 21 claims to be about secularism, but its impacts are divisive and discriminatory.

I want to point out that on November 7 the Liberal member for Don Valley East proposed a motion that condemned any law that would restrict or limit religious freedoms, but he did not mention Bill 21, so, frankly, that motion was not good enough. It needs to name it for what it is, and call it out as discrimination and racism and xenophobia. They need to call it out for what it is.

We also need to oppose it in the courts, and intervene in any Supreme Court challenge of Bill 21 that might come forward.

I just want to take a moment to point out that the National Council of Canadian Muslims and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association have filed a legal challenge arguing that the law is unconstitutional, irreparably harms religious minorities, and constitutes state-sanctioned second-class citizenship.

I'd like to point out some of the other people who have joined in opposing it. We have national civil rights groups including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the National Council of Canadian Muslims, B'nai Brith Canada, the World Sikh Organization, the Canadian Bar Association, Amnesty International and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. They have all opposed Bill 21.

Before I wrap up, Speaker, I just want to say something. I grew up in a European family. My dad's side was European. He was from Yugoslavia—he was Slovenian—and many of my aunts wore head coverings; they wore scarves. In the Polish family down the street, the mom wore a scarf. In the Ukrainian family just on the other side of them, the mom wore a scarf. In their culture, it was called a babushka. They wore scarves, and nobody questioned it. There were no laws that said they couldn't wear those in public spaces.

So why is it that we have a government in Quebec who believes that it's appropriate to discriminate against Muslim women because they wear scarves, because they wear hijabs, and that that means that they are not good enough to be in our schools and to work in our public spaces?

Speaker, I'm hoping this motion passes today, but more importantly, I hope the Premier will take this to his meeting with all of the Premiers on December 2 and bring them together to strongly oppose Bill 21.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I stand here today in solidarity with my colleagues on both sides of the House to speak on the motion in front of this Legislature this afternoon.

Canada and Ontario are being built on our diversity. It is what makes us stronger and united.

Mr. Speaker, I am a proud Canadian Muslim, and Ontario is my home. I'm deeply concerned that here in Ontario and in parts of Canada, we have seen an increase in Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, or any hatred playing a role in our country.

My family came to Canada in search of a better future, a safer community, and the opportunity that living in a free and democratic country provides its people. Many of us share similar stories.

I want to thank our Premier for his work in building a stronger and more prosperous Ontario, and for acting quickly to recognize the divisions in our country and working hard to unify people.

Premier Ford has already reached out to other Premiers and will be hosting an important meeting with Premiers from across Canada in Toronto next week. Last week, he met with Prime Minister Trudeau and pledged to work hard across party lines to protect what matters most to the people of Ontario by growing our economy, transforming our health care system, building important transportation links and giving our students the tools they need to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a member of this caucus, and honoured to serve the people of Ontario under the strong leadership of our Premier—indeed, to work with all members of this Legislature.

The Premier, my colleagues and I have been very clear, and we will continue to be forceful in our stance that all Ontarians have the right to wear a turban, a hijab, a kippah or a crucifix and the right to worship peacefully as fully equal members of our community and with all the same rights and responsibilities of any other Canadian or Ontario resident.

1500

If you wear a turban in Ontario, you can be a teacher. If you wear a hijab, you can be a judge. If you wear a kippah, you can be a police officer, and wearing a crucifix will not stop you from being a firefighter.

My grandfather came to this great province in the late 1960s in the hopes of a new beginning, in the hopes of finding a great land where everyone is respected regardless of their race or religion or the colour of their skin. I'm always horrified by the hate-motivated acts of violence and terror against faith-based groups or any group in our homeland and across the world. The memories of these heinous crimes are what motivate me each day and compel me to rise today in this House. All people who wear religious symbols, including turbans, hijabs, kippahs, crucifixes and other articles of clothing that represent expression of their faith, are welcome to serve this great province. Our Premier and this government have always stood up for the religious rights and freedoms of all Ontarians across this province. Ontario is a place that celebrates people—all people—and we respect all individuals regardless of their faith.

My grandfather would be proud of me and what I, as a Muslim Canadian, have accomplished. I am proud of my family and honoured to serve my constituents as an elected member of this Legislature. I do not hide who I am, what I believe or the values that are important to me. I am living the dream that my grandfather hoped for when he came to Canada, or, as my colleagues say, the Canadian dream.

My colleagues and I on both sides of the Legislature remain united in our opposition to any form of legislation that would restrict or deny anyone's right to religious freedom and equality. We know that in Ontario, it is our shared responsibility to stand up for those who cannot do it on their own. We will continue to do just that.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: It is always an honour to rise in this house on behalf of the decent and hard-working people of York South–Weston.

Bill 21 is discriminatory because it will make it more difficult for religious minorities to integrate into Quebec society and it unfairly targets Muslim women. What this bill, Bill 21, is saying to all of us is, “You are not Canadian.” You are disqualified from doing a job, your job, a profession that you dearly love. It denies you a promotion and a job opportunity because of your religion—nothing else but your faith. This is discrimination. What it does is it divides and isolates people. This is wrong.

We are here and now debating this: Bill 21. We must speak with one voice and send a strong message to the Quebec government that Canada is against discrimination in any form. Freedom of expression and of religion is a basic human right. That is being violated here in Bill 21.

The people of Quebec also oppose Bill 21 and have demonstrated against it in mass anti-racism rallies. They don't support it because it is against their fundamental rights.

When a government denies its own people job opportunities because of their religion, because of who they are, it is wrong, Mr. Speaker. We must speak out.

When the Quebec government denies opportunities for employment, not because they cannot perform the job or not because they do not meet the job requirements but, rather, because of who they are, like their religious beliefs and their identity, we must speak out loud and clear. This Bill 21 violates the human rights charter. It is unfair.

To me, Mr. Speaker, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. What we are witnessing in Quebec is a very dangerous precedent because it violates the rights of the people of Quebec. With this law, they cannot pursue their dream job or serve the public as civil servants in the province of Quebec because of who they are or because of their religion, and this is wrong, Mr. Speaker. We have an obligation to stand up for those Canadians who are denied those opportunities to have decent employment, to raise a family and make a living.

I welcome today this government, on both sides of the aisle, to support the opposition motion and vote for this motion today.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: It's always an honour and a pleasure anytime to stand up and represent my constituents in the great riding of Milton, and I appreciate the opportunity.

I'm sure each one of us has a unique story that we can share in terms of where we came from and the challenges we, our parents or grandparents might have had to face along the way. I can tell you, I came to this great country and province at a young age with my mother, two older brothers and a sister. We were raised by a single mother, as unfortunately my father passed away when I was only five years old in a car accident.

There were definitely many, many challenges along the way that the family faced, mainly my mother being a single mother. Like millions of immigrant parents, she knew it was the best decision for our future. She felt Canada was the only country that could provide us with the opportunity to work hard and have a good life.

It is a reflection of the best of Canada and Ontario that today I'm standing in this House. Who would have thought that a young boy who immigrated to this great country from a small village in Punjab, India, would today be standing here as a member of provincial Parliament representing the great people of Milton?

There are countless stories like mine, and that's what makes Canada the best country in the world. My wife and I are blessed with three beautiful children: a daughter and two sons. Like every parent, we want the best for our children. We do our best to ensure that they're happy, healthy and are able to achieve their full potential. My two sons stopped wearing turbans at the ages of seven and 10. This was a difficult and emotional decision for our entire family. This was especially difficult for their devout grandparents. This decision was purely a family decision. Such a decision should never be one forced upon anyone by any level of government.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the fact that our government believes that individuals and families are in the best position to make such personal decisions, and that governments must stay out of such a deeply personal decision.

I'm also proud to be part of a PC government led by Premier Ford. Our government is more concerned about shattering the ceiling above your head, not dictating what is on or covers your head.

1510

The Premier is someone who values and respects everyone's views, culture and religion, regardless of where they come from. I've witnessed first-hand the tremendous respect the cultural communities have for the Premier. He represents probably one of the most diverse ridings in our great province.

I'm proud of our caucus, which is one of the most diverse in the history of our province. The diversity of this great chamber is inspiring to us all.

Quebec is a great neighbour and a good friend to our province of Ontario. Good friends can and deserve to be frank with each other, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're saying clearly today that we do not agree with Quebec's Bill 21. Such a bill has no place in a country like Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a gesture to meddle in the affairs of another province. We are speaking today in opposition to Bill 21, as it opposes fundamental Canadian values that have built this great country.

This is not the first time that Canada has observed this kind of action from Quebec. In 2013, the Quebec Soccer Federation said that turbans were not allowed to be worn by kids during soccer matches. In fact, they told Sikh kids that they could play soccer but only in their backyards, not with official referees or on public fields in Quebec.

Let me read a quote from a letter that an MP wrote to the Quebec and Canadian soccer federations at the time:

"It is incredibly unfortunate and insulting that, in a nation that prides itself on diversity, such discriminatory regulations are allowed to stand. There is no valid reason for a ban on the wearing of turbans or other religious symbols during athletic competitions...."

Speaker, the MP who wrote the letter was me. I stand here again speaking out against discrimination in Quebec, now as the MPP for Milton. I will keep standing up for religious freedom in this province and in this country.

Many feel that politics in Canada has never been as divisive as it is at the moment. In response to this disturbing trend, it is more important than ever that our leaders, our provincial Legislatures and our fellow Canadians stand up for inclusivity.

I am proud of our Premier for showing leadership on the national level and making it his priority to bring our country together by working with the other Premiers and the Prime Minister. Premier Ford understands that a strong Canada is a strong Ontario, and a strong Ontario is a strong Canada.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: It is always an honour to rise and speak on behalf of my constituents of Brampton North, and of course, in this matter here, to speak in acceptance of the opposition motion on Bill 21.

Bill 21 is a step backwards and has repercussions right across this great nation of ours. No province, no municipality, no jurisdiction in Canada should have laws where people's religious rights and freedoms are taken away.

This piece of legislation is very serious, and the people of Brampton have told me so. A recent report from the Peel Police Service Board says that hate-motivated crimes are on the rise in Brampton and Mississauga, two cities where visible minorities make up more than 50% of the population.

We need to make sure it is very clear to the Quebec government that Ontarians condemn this legislation. Ontarians will not stand by and watch our neighbours lose their religious freedoms. This bill needs to be withdrawn immediately.

Bill 21 affects all new hires in Quebec's public sector, as we've heard earlier, such as provincial judges, teachers and prison guards, to name a few. While the current workers wearing religious symbols are allowed to keep wearing them, they will lose those protections if they want a promotion or to change a job. A Muslim woman who wears a head scarf can never be considered for a promotion. This, Mr. Speaker, is crazy. To think that anyone would have to give up their beliefs in order to pursue their career or get promoted is unjust. People who have invested in their education and worked so hard to get the job of their dreams in Quebec are being turned away because of their religious beliefs, and that should never happen. Freedom of religion is a fundamental tenet in this country. It's protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Bill 21 flies in the face of the basic rights of all Canadians. We are entitled to our rights and freedoms regardless of our faith.

Let's be honest, Mr. Speaker: This bill has nothing to do with separation of church and state. We have this—I'm going to say it—very barbaric law that says you have to choose between your job and your faith. Justice has no jurisdiction. You can't say that one province has the absolute right to subjugate people.

What we have here is a law that was written specifically to target three groups of people: (1) Muslim women who wear the hijab; (2) Sikhs who wear a turban; and (3) Jewish men who wear a kippah or yarmulke. It is deliberately discriminatory by design. We have to stand up against that. I've met many Sikhs, Jews and Muslims in my community, and they agree with that as well.

Now, defenders of Bill 21 don't want the federal government to interfere because it's a popularity contest there, and they say it is popular in Quebec. But they don't seem to understand the underlying responsibility of government: to ensure that the rights of its entire—entire—society are protected. Modern democracies like Canada already have legislation in place to protect minorities in situations precisely like this one. Quebec needs to respect every Canadian's charter rights.

There are things the federal government can do, as we're all aware. It has the constitutional power to disallow provincial legislation. They also can withhold federal funding in addition to supporting the court challenges. It is not good enough to say, "We will never enact these policies at the federal level." It's time to take a moral stand against this.

All I really have to do is look back into the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, where they had segregation laws. Certain states had segregation; other states didn't have segregation. They divided states and they divided people and they isolated people. It is no different than what is happening here in Quebec.

Already we are seeing the impacts of this bill. We've heard the stories of teachers in Montreal who have chosen to comply with the rules and remove their religious garb in order to keep their jobs. Otherwise, they would be out of a job. We've also heard the story of people who didn't comply and they have lost their jobs, or they have had to go out-of-province.

This government needs to affirm that they value diversity, that they value our religious minorities and the need to protect their rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Staying silent, Mr. Speaker, is not an option. This government needs to condemn Bill 21 and formally call on the Quebec government to abandon it.

We need to be in solidarity with the National Council of Canadian Muslims and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, which are fighting this case in court. We need to ensure that Ontario will never pursue a law such as Bill 21, a law that has no place in Ontario or anywhere in Canada.

1520

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: Last night, I lit one of six candles to commemorate the over six million Jews who were

murdered by the Nazis and their supporters. The educational event at Aish Thornhill included 99-year-old Leah Hoffman, whose daughter Sheila went to high school with me. Leah has always been a force of nature, with a great wit and a sense of humour to match. One of her famous lines to Sheila and her college friends when they were talking about their boyfriends was, "Why would he buy the cow if he can get the milk for free?" This is her sense of humour and this is her way of conveying her message.

Leah reminds me of the power of humour and of how, for millennia, Jews have used humour and wit as a weapon against hate, to the point that we can be somewhat ridiculous and actually laugh while we're crying. Seinfeld shied away from some of the more egregious topics that face the civilized world, while Sacha Baron Cohen did the complete opposite: He went in search of the hate and made it a bit of a contest: Who's more ridiculous, the hater or Baron Cohen's character?

In fact, Sacha Baron Cohen gave the keynote speech at the Anti-Defamation League's Never Is Now conference last week. He criticized some social media platforms for allowing hate-filled propaganda to purchase ads. He's not alone, since lately we've seen blame directed at social media for the proliferation of hate across the world.

But let's face it: Lies and propaganda have been a problem for humanity since the early days of civilization. Mark Twain said it best: "A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to put its pants on."

Turbans, hijabs, kippahs, yarmulkes: These are all expressions of the wearers' commitment to their religion and culture. It's part of their identity.

This morning, I think that many of my colleagues here may have noticed there was a school up in the gallery, just as there often is. They were there for quite a while and were very quiet and very well behaved—I would say, about grade 5. There were several boys wearing the small turban buns—they were young—and a few girls wearing hijabs. What would they be thinking if they were listening to this debate today discussing Bill 21 in Quebec, which would prohibit the wearing of religious symbols while serving the public? What would our pages think? What would the legislative staff think if they were wearing a hijab or a turban?

We have colleagues here; we have friends; we have neighbours. It's heartbreaking, Mr. Speaker. It's demoralizing to expect people to choose between their job and their faith, as we've just so clearly heard from the member opposite.

We are here today debating the actual idea that in a developed country—Canada—any elected official at any level of government would even contemplate not allowing a Canadian resident—in all probability, someone who was even born here—to wear their identified religious cultural clothing proudly. It's shocking. Unfortunately, for those who have studied history and understand the depths of fear and hatred of anyone who is different, it is unremarkable.

Today's discussion leads us to question: What exactly is our role as legislators? Certainly, it shouldn't be to sit quietly at events where negative stereotypes might be

espoused or to politely nod if our constituents visit or email us with hateful messages full of dangerous conspiracy theories.

I would hope that collectively we all try to educate Ontarians and work with the thousands of community organizations who are desperate to have our help to build bridges.

Just last week, I spoke to Abdulatif from the Muslim Association of Canada and Olive Grove Muslim school about his desire to build bridges with the Jewish community. I invited him to a Hanukkah event next month.

Mr. Speaker, it is our collective responsibility to engage in meaningful dialogue to help build those bridges and demonstrate that our colourful mosaic of differing religions and cultural practices have so much more in common than some of us may even realize.

Many of us are still reeling from the hate that was demonstrated just this past week at York University, where police and security had to escort about 100 Jews and their supporters to and from an event to support dialogue for peace. Video footage shows an angry mob of over 1,000 people, some with their faces covered, screaming, “Go back to the ovens.”

In stark contrast is the viral video, also from last week, of a man harassing a Jewish family wearing kippot, with a young child on a British subway. In the video, a woman in a hijab interjects and chastises the harassers. Two separate events, both videotaped by bystanders; two vastly differing tones and messages. It forces us to question what we can do to create better public awareness, and support—yes, even encourage—positive expressions of religion.

Experts continuously tell us that a strong sense of community, family and identity are the best indicator of a future successful, well-integrated and contributing member of society.

The reason I bring this up, Mr. Speaker, is that when this Legislature debated my anti-BDS motion to bring awareness of the hate that seeks to destroy Israel and Jewish communities around the world, a visitor was given a pass to sit in the prestigious members’ gallery to watch the procedure. This visitor laughed out loud when the slaughter of Jews during the Holocaust was mentioned. This visitor continued to be disruptive, to the point that he was escorted out of the gallery by security.

I don’t even recall any other instance of somebody being escorted out of the members’ gallery by security—just the public gallery.

Who gave this person the pass to the members’ gallery? A member from the very party that is today bringing forward this motion to support our religious minorities. Ironic, isn’t it?

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

M^{me} Rima Berns-McGown: J’ai grandi au Québec, et je comprends très bien l’histoire de la Révolution tranquille et le désir des Québécois pour une société sans l’influence de l’Église. Quand j’ai enseigné à l’Université de Toronto, on discutait souvent du livre *Le chandail de*

hockey, de l’auteur Roch Carrier, en discutant l’histoire de l’Église catholique au Québec.

But a society that is not controlled by the church is not the same thing as a society that prevents individuals from living full lives and making individual decisions about how they choose to dress. No individual should have to choose between her clothing and her ability to work in her chosen field, whether that is as an educator or a police officer or a judge or any other public servant.

As a child in Montreal, I experienced a great deal of both anti-Black racism and anti-Semitism, and I know first-hand the alienating sensation of being told over and over again that you don’t belong and can’t belong.

As an academic, I have interviewed thousands of Muslim women about their decisions—and they were always their decisions—to wear the hijab. These women do not need to be saved. They have made their own decisions, and when government tells them that they cannot wear their hijab, they become all the more determined to do so.

Women who wear a hijab, as well as men and women who choose to wear turbans or kippot or any other conspicuous symbol of their faith, are not trying to coerce others into following their individual choices. That is the beauty of Canada when Canada is allowed to be Canada: that all of us can make our individual choices without coercion, and that we can feel equally that we belong.

But when a government breaks that social contract and uses the law to coerce people into acting one way or another, it destroys social trust and ultimately has the opposite effect than the one it intends. It makes it harder for the people thus marginalized to integrate and to be able to give and to receive the gifts of a productive, harmonious society.

Bill 21 discriminates against people who are already marginalized and often racialized. It serves to send them an unequivocal message that they do not belong in Quebec and are second-class citizens.

Bill 21 is an outright attack on vulnerable people. It is an official rebuke, an official “you’re not welcome here.” And worst of all, Bill 21 will further enable hate, and this in a province that saw six worshippers gunned down while they prayed in their mosque in January 2017. Surely no one in Quebec’s government wants that.

Please understand: This motion, our motion, is not about wanting to celebrate diversity. It is about acting and standing up against discrimination, bigotry and hate.

Le Québec doit reconsidérer le projet de loi 21 et son effet sur les populations déjà marginales.

1530

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I’m proud today to rise in the House to speak in support of our call to the Quebec government to dismantle Bill 21.

The passage of Bill 21 in Quebec represents a shameful moment in our nation’s history. Bill 21 is a detrimental bill and its impact is to discriminate against people, particularly visibly racialized communities and women from said

communities. Bill 21, make no mistake, breeds Islamophobia, xenophobia and anti-Semitism; it breeds anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism. Bill 21 therefore is explicitly racist, and it infringes on our human rights. This is unacceptable. Families in Ontario are impacted by the environment and hostility fostered by its discriminatory principles. We cannot allow a slippery slope of this type of legislation as it will continue to erode the hard-fought-for rights of Canadians.

The law overwhelmingly affects members of religious communities, and I cannot stress enough the way that it has an impact on women from said religious communities. Women are already struggling in the workplace, making 73 cents or less per dollar, if we consider racialized women, than their male counterparts. This is yet another systemic barrier, another burden to their success in the careers of their choice.

People who observe in various faiths, including varieties of Judaism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism, must have the right and the choice to observe their faith through articles of faith of their choosing. Looking around this room, there are people on both sides of our House who would no longer be able to hold a government job in Quebec under this legislation. But beyond this House, every one of us represents constituents who would be affected by this bill, who would lose their livelihoods because of this draconian legislation. In my riding of St. Paul's alone, there are many people who would lose their jobs under Bill 21. In fact, over a quarter of my constituents are visibly racialized, including immigrants from over 70 countries speaking more than 100 languages.

It's important for the province of Ontario to step up and demand action from Quebec on this issue. No government, provincial or federal, should be allowed to violate fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Before all the Premiers gather here in Toronto, Ontario on December 2, it would be great for Ontario and for this Premier to make it loud and clear that he "opposes Bill 21." Say it like it is. Call out the purple elephant in the room.

I stand firmly behind our leader's opposition motion calling on Quebec to dismantle Bill 21. I oppose Bill 21 wholeheartedly. We need to be leaders and not bystanders. I just want to say that I truly believe the world is watching our example and is watching what the NDP's official opposition is doing here, standing for the rights and freedoms of Ontarians, for Canadians and for everyone. Thank you.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's a real honour to rise today and to speak in support of our opposition day motion to reverse the hurtful and discriminatory Bill 21.

I'm grateful to be able to represent one of the most diverse ridings in the province. Toronto Centre is home to many vibrant neighbourhoods, including Regent Park and St. James Town. Many of my constituents are Muslim and many of them are visible minorities. Some folks have been settled in Canada for generations while others are newer

immigrants from Somalia, from Bangladesh, from Iraq and from so many other places across the world.

Almost daily, Muslim women come into my office wearing hijabs or niqabs. As a woman with mixed settler and Indigenous heritage, I know how much representation matters. Whether it's here in this Legislature or across our public service, in our schools, in our public institutions. Everywhere that our children see and interact with the public service and with our leaders in our communities, they deserve to see themselves reflected because our children cannot be what they cannot see.

Ontario is not just wealthy, it's not just white and it's not just straight. It's queer, it's trans, it's working class, it's Black, it's Indigenous, it's South Asian, it's young and it's living with a disability.

Quebec's Bill 21 is a direct affront to the ability of our children and of all our constituents to see themselves represented in their public institutions, to see themselves represented in the experiences and the values of our province and to see themselves represented in the public service. We get nowhere in this country if we are unable to join forces and fight Islamophobia, racism and xenophobia together.

Speaker, I want to tell this House about a constituent of mine who's very near and dear to my heart: Fatouma. Fatouma is one of the kindest people I know. She works at the Neighbourhood Group, which is a fantastic organization in my riding. Fatouma's specialty is making everyone feel welcome. She consistently strives to build up our community, and she does it all with so much love and joy and kindness in her heart for everyone she comes across. So many times Fatouma has brought new people into my office and helped them to find their voices in addressing the cuts that this government has made over the last year and a bit. I know that many youth in my community look up to her. She's one of the many, many Muslim women in Regent Park who's doing the tireless work of supporting our community and who always leads by example.

Fatouma is a Muslim woman. She wears a hijab, and while she doesn't hold a position in the public service, she's a role model and a true inspiration. I simply cannot imagine telling her or any other Muslim woman in my community that they would be unable to be a public servant, have a public-facing role or serve in public office like in this very Legislature.

I'm tired of witnessing the hostile environment that Quebec's Bill 21 has created. I know that it has contributed to a hurtful discourse across this country that makes many of our constituents feel unwelcome and unsafe in our country. Now is the time to say something.

Our motion, if passed, will require this government to take a principled stand by requesting the Quebec government to immediately repeal Bill 21 and by offering to intervene at the Supreme Court in opposition to it. I urge my colleagues across the aisle to do the right thing. This province is counting on us to stand on the right side of history to challenge hate, to challenge xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

Again, Speaker, I'm so grateful to be able to speak in support of this motion, and I hope I can count on the support of all of our colleagues in this House today.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: When I think about Bill 21, I think about Amrit Kaur. She's a young woman of colour. The day that Bill 21 passed was the same day that she graduated from teachers' school. That day, she learned that she wouldn't be able to teach in the city that she was from, Montreal, because she was a Sikh who chooses to wear a turban, and because of Bill 21 she has now moved to British Columbia so she can pursue her dream of being a teacher.

I think about her mom, who described how painful it was for her to watch her daughter go through so much racism and discrimination, and how sad she was to see her daughter leave home. It's wrong that Amrit can't be a teacher and wear her turban, and it is outrageous to me that, in 2019, we have a bill in Canada that legislates and legitimizes discrimination.

If I choose to wear a turban, if you choose to wear a kippah or a cross or someone chooses to wear a hijab, does that mean that we should be prevented from giving back to our communities, from pursuing our dreams purely because we choose to practise our faith? Bill 21 is wrong because it judges us based on what's on our heads and not what's inside our hearts.

There are thousands of people like Amrit who are now being forced to choose between their faith and their dreams because of Bill 21, a bill that hurts those who are most vulnerable. It disproportionately targets religious minorities like Sikhs, Muslims and Jewish people. It disproportionately targets women, because it is women who wear hijabs. This bill divides us when we should be coming together.

1540

Now, I can tell you with first-hand experience that we are seeing a rise of hatred across the world, in Islamophobia, in anti-Semitism, in anti-Sikh racism and other forms of racism. We are seeing a rise in rhetoric that wants to tear us apart. Bill 21 emboldens those voices. It gives a space to those who would spread hate, and that's why it is so important that we denounce Bill 21: to send a clear message to Canada and to the world that we don't just accept you for being different; we don't just tolerate differences—to tolerate and to accept is a poverty of ambition. In Canada, we celebrate our differences; we honour them. We understand that our diversity does not divide us—it does not weaken us; it strengthens us—and, more than anything that our differences—your differences, your diversity—is welcome and wanted here.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: It is an honour, as always, to rise on behalf of my constituents of Scarborough Southwest. My riding includes a diverse group of people, including Muslims, Jews, Christians and Hindus, amongst many other religions. And yet, as I rise today, I am saddened,

because we are facing a time where it is necessary to pass this motion in order to combat the hate and discrimination we're facing.

As a Muslim Canadian, I am proud of our Canadian Constitution and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Bill 21 is not only an attack on all Canadians with religious beliefs; it is an attack on our Constitution. In the name of secularism, Bill 21 infringes on the religious beliefs and freedoms of all Canadians. That is not secularism. Discriminating against Canadians and forcing individuals to choose between one's religious beliefs, such as wearing something that is part of one's faith, and their ability to earn an income through their job is not secularism. How can Legislatures decide that an educator must put aside their faith in order to teach in classrooms?

Mr. Speaker, in 1807, Quebec was the first to elect an observant Jew, who kept his head covered in the legislative assembly. Quebec was also the first to grant equal rights to Jewish people. Bill 21 is a betrayal to Quebec's own commitment to equality and an attack on all minority groups.

Every morning before proceedings, we here begin with a prayer in this House, this Ontario Legislature. As a Muslim Canadian and a member of this assembly, I am proud that we are able to do that and embrace our faith.

Today I am proud to be a part of the Ontario NDP, because we are bringing this motion forward to make sure that this never happens in Ontario, as people are facing in Quebec. Upholding our religious freedom is enshrined in our Constitution. I cannot imagine a time when people in Ontario will have to make a choice like they are facing right now in Quebec, and I hope that we never do that in Ontario. That is why it is important that we must pass this motion. I hope the government will join us in this motion.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Aujourd'hui, ma chef a mis de l'avant une proposition qui demande à l'Assemblée législative et au gouvernement de l'Ontario d'agir face à la Loi sur la laïcité de l'État, mieux connue sous le nom de loi 21 du Québec.

Ici, ce que l'on fait en Ontario—c'est vraiment au travers de la motion de ma chef—c'est de montrer le côté positif de la diversité, de démontrer qu'on peut vivre dans une communauté laïque, dans son ensemble, tout en respectant le fait que les gens partout au Canada et partout dans les pays libres ont non seulement le droit d'expression, mais ont également le droit de religion. Donc, si quelqu'un veut pratiquer une foi, quelle que soit la foi en question, nous sommes tous libres de le faire, et ça n'empêche pas le gouvernement du Québec de gérer comme un gouvernement laïc.

Il y a une différence entre ce que le gouvernement fait et le type de politiques qu'il veut mettre de l'avant et la liberté des gens, des Québécois et des Québécoises, d'exprimer leur foi par des vêtements—par un bijou, par un couvre-chef, par un voile ou un crucifix, ou de n'importe quelle autre façon. De penser que quelqu'un qui a travaillé fort, qui est allé à l'université et qui a voulu

devenir soit un enseignant, une enseignante, un policier ou quoi que ce soit, se retrouve tout d'un coup avec tous ses rêves qui s'envolent à cause d'un projet de loi qui n'est pas inclusif, qui n'est pas positif envers la diversité.

Bien, nous, comme néo-démocrates, on veut envoyer un message de positivité, un message que tu peux porter un turban, un voile, une kippa ou un crucifix et être excellent dans n'importe quoi : être le meilleur pompier, être la meilleure policière, être la meilleure infirmière ou éducatrice de la petite enfance ou professeure. Que les deux ne sont pas reliés—bien au contraire, que par la diversité, on a beaucoup à apprendre, et beaucoup de positif dans la communauté va sortir de ça.

Donc, ma chef, M^{me} Andrea Horwath, la chef néo-démocrate de l'Ontario, veut vraiment lancer l'appel à la force qui sort de ça et demander au gouvernement de M. Ford, le gouvernement conservateur, d'utiliser toutes les opportunités qui vont se présenter, que ce soit un appel à la cour ou dans les réunions qui s'en viennent, pour vraiment démontrer tout le positif que l'Ontario est capable d'avoir parce que les gens, qu'ils soient policiers ou pompiers ou autres, portent des signes religieux et que ça, ça peut ajouter. Tout en étant respectueux que, oui, le gouvernement du Québec est un gouvernement—et nous aussi, en Ontario, mais on veut quand-même être capable de faire passer notre message que tu peux être respectueux des gouvernements, mais en même temps, être respectueux des gens qui décident qu'ils veulent porter des articles de foi.

Moi, je peux vous dire que j'ai été élevée par des soeurs. Je suis allée au Séminaire Sainte-Marie, où mes professeurs—c'étaient la soeur Alice et l'abbé Paul, puis bien d'autres. Ça n'a pas fait une soeur de moi, monsieur le Président; je peux vous garantir ça. Mais je crois que j'ai quand même reçu une éducation de qualité, que ces gens-là qui m'ont enseigné étaient des bons professeurs. Oui, c'étaient des soeurs, et plusieurs portaient non seulement le crucifix mais tout l'habit, incluant le voile et tout ça. Même chose : les abbés souvent portaient l'habit au complet. Mais ça ne les a jamais empêchés d'offrir de bons services d'enseignement, vraiment.

Donc, un message positif que j'espère que nos voisins de l'est vont accueillir positivement.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise again briefly just to congratulate all of my colleagues on both sides of the House who have taken the opportunity to speak to this today, and also to specifically point out the members on our side of the House who have talked very passionately about this topic today.

Mr. Speaker, I think what you saw in today's debate, or what you've seen so far today, is that although the House is in full agreement on this—let me again be very clear: We are in agreement with this motion and will obviously be voting in favour of it, as you've heard.

But even though we, as a House, agree on that, in the speeches that we've heard today there have been disagreements in certain areas, although we agree in principle on

what we're debating here today. I think that is actually a good thing for this House. The debate that we've had today has been a positive one, based on something that all of us would agree is not something that we would want to be debating right now in the province of Ontario. So again, I just want to congratulate all of my colleagues for that.

1550

At the same time, Premier Ford has been equally clear that a law like this would have no place in the province of Ontario. He has said that on the record multiple times, and we will continue to make sure that that is the case here in the province of Ontario.

In a ministerial statement earlier today, I talked about the importance of learning lessons from the last federal election, and I've talked about it before in other speeches in the House. There are a lot of lessons that we can take from the last federal election. One of the lessons we learned, especially in a minority Parliament, is that the province of Ontario and all of us on both sides of the House have an important role to play in debates—not only in this one, but in a number of debates coming forward. We have to reach out to those members of Parliament we share responsibilities with federally.

Our caucus has made a point that we will, of course, reach out to our Conservative counterparts in Ottawa about this topic, and I expect that the members opposite would do the same thing—reach out to those members of the NDP caucus, reach out to the leader of the NDP and talk about what we debated here today so that they can come forward with a similar type of appreciation on this topic that we have debated today.

Again, just to congratulate all members of the House for what I think was a debate that highlights some of the small differences that we share on policies, but overwhelmingly highlights what is best about a parliamentary democracy and our particular form of democracy—and all the members of this House, that we can completely agree on a topic such as this, and that we will all stand in unison to make sure that we support those who sometimes have not had a voice.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour to stand and speak to this motion. I wanted to speak to this because of a little bit of family history—and I won't speak for a long time because I know we have only a few minutes left.

My great-grandfather was a member of the Resistance in the Netherlands in the Second World War. He was also a Calvinist, Dutch Reformed, a proud member of one of his local churches. During the war, as a member of the Resistance, he was captured by the Nazis, by the Gestapo, in the spring of 1945. They asked him why he was so determined to aid British airmen who had bailed out over the Netherlands, why he was so determined to assist Jews who were fleeing from Nazi Germany, why he was so determined to put, frankly, his own life in danger and the lives of his kids—he had almost a dozen kids and a big Dutch family. It was because, as a strong Dutch Calvinist, my great-grandfather had a real desire to see a place where

his children would be able to worship without fear, where they'd be able to express themselves, where they'd be able to speak their minds. It was because of his belief in the innate human dignity and value of each and every individual that he fought for freedom.

He was captured at the jailhouse in Assen in April 1945, and he was going to be executed on the 13th of April, 1945, but the Resistance broke him and 30 other members of the Resistance who were locked up by the Gestapo—they broke them out that night, the night before they were going to be executed.

His story is part of my history, because when the Canadians came and liberated the Netherlands, my grandfather—my grandparents on both sides—decided to move to Canada because they believed in freedom, and they believed in the freedom to express themselves, and they believed in the freedom to worship.

So, it's because of the sacrifice that armed forces across the world and that the Canadian Armed Forces in the Netherlands made that my family is here.

My family's history is one that has been informed by our faith. In my inaugural address, I spoke about the impact that my faith has had on my desire to serve. There are so few places in the world, even today, where people have the freedom to speak their mind without fear, where they have the freedom to worship the god of their choosing openly, and where they have the freedom to share their deeply held beliefs as well as their ethical values, in a free and democratic society.

Those values are ones that my great-grandfather was willing to die for. They're ones that each and every one of us as legislators in this House and in every House of Parliament and every Legislature in the country, should be willing to stand and, yes, even die for.

It's because of that, because of that legacy, and because of the importance of making sure that every single new Canadian who comes to this land is able to celebrate and practise their faith freely, without fear of their government or fellow man, that I will be supporting this motion, and I will be proud to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There being no further time for debate, we'll return to the member for Hamilton Centre for her conclusion on what she heard this afternoon.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thanks very much, Speaker. I'm going to be brief because I don't have very much time. I do want to say thank you to the members of the Legislative Assembly today. It was a very thoughtful and dignified debate. We only had one member who decided to go low. I think it shows that all of us really are very concerned about this particular initiative that's coming out of Quebec.

I do have to say that I don't believe this is just about not allowing a bill like Bill 21 to ever come into this chamber for debate or discussion; I think it goes further than that. I think the passionate speeches that were heard from members from both sides of the House speak to the fact that we need to do more than just have a discussion here.

We need to now ask our Premier to move forward. He has a couple of opportunities coming in the next number of days. He talks about wanting to be the unifier of our country. He talks about the fact that he's going to be meeting with all Premiers very shortly. He will be meeting with Premier Legault on December 2.

What I would ask is that the members, particularly on the government side, go back and, as our member from Kitchener Centre said, gather your people. Talk to your Premier, and make sure that he takes this historic opportunity, in the discussions that he's going to be having, to ask Premier Legault to withdraw Bill 21, to make sure that the rights and freedoms that are enshrined in our charter are not only enshrined in our charter for people in Ontario and the other provinces and territories but also in the province of Quebec.

That's what needs to happen. That's the leadership that needs to take place, and I would look to the Premier to take that leadership, as the Premier of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 21, 2019, on the motion for allocation of time on 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? Further debate? The member for London West—no?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The member for Nickel Belt is standing, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Oh, I'm sorry. I was told Ms. Sattler had it. That being the case, I will go to the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I know that the clock is not right, but I'm sure my time will come up eventually.

I know that we are debating a time allocation on the bill, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act. The time allocation is like every other time allocation. The time allocation means that they don't want to hear from us anymore. They want to move this bill forward no matter what people have to say.

1600

The sad part of time allocation is that a lot of people have a lot of things to say about animal welfare services.

We all remember that we had the Ontario SPCA, the society for the protection of animals. This doesn't exist. We've had, since June of this year, an interim measure, and now the government has brought forward what will be the new system to protect animals.

I know that I have the support of everybody in this House. We all want to protect animals. Nobody stands for cruelty to animals; it's quite obvious. But it is in how you do this. How do you make sure that not only do you have your end goal, that you want to protect animals, but that the road to bring you there will be a road that will bring you to success? This is where this thing sort of falls short. If you look at the bill, there is very little detail as to what this road will look like. How many people will be there to enforce this bill? How do I make sure that where I live, in northern Ontario, the service will be available no matter where you are? How do we make sure that the resources will be in place to achieve this end goal that we all agree to, that animals should be protected?

There are lots of good ideas out there, and I would like to highlight one of them. It is called the Wild at Heart Wildlife Refuge Centre. It is in my riding, in a little community called Lively. Basically, it is the only facility of its kind in northern Ontario, and it treats over 900 animals annually. The number of animals goes up continuously. The animals will go from songbirds to raptors to small and large mammals to reptiles to amphibians, but those are all wild animals. The system that they have put in place is equal to none. They have ideas in there that I wish the government would take into account as to how you bring best practice in the protection of animals. Those people have been able to do this for the protection of wildlife, but a lot of what they do in there would also apply to the protection of pets, our cats and dogs and birds and everybody else.

The mission of Wild at Heart says it's "a charitable non-profit, volunteer-based organization that promotes wildlife conservation by providing veterinary care and rehabilitation to injured, sick, or orphaned wildlife in northern Ontario with the goal of releasing rehabilitated animals back into the wild. In addition, we have a strong focus on community education, volunteers, student interns," and they do a lot of media work to increase our understanding of wildlife issues.

Why is this important? Well, because once you know, you're in a way better position to help the wildlife. When a moose gives birth to her calf, she will often leave the calf there all by itself, but it is safe to do so—the calf doesn't have an odour; it doesn't attract predators or anything—while the mom goes and eats and drinks and all of this. But it used to be that if a northerner came across a calf and saw this baby moose all by itself, well, you'd feel like, "Let's pick this up and bring it somewhere. It needs help. It cannot be left that way." No, don't do that. Leave it there. The mom is not far. She will come back. She will look after her baby. But that comes from education.

I'm just giving you this example, but they have many, many more. Some of the workshops that they offer are workshops on birds, so learning more about waterfowl,

corvids, songbirds and raptors. They have a special concern for bald eagles.

They have a workshop on turtles. They teach about the identification of different turtles, their hibernation, their medical care, and they have a special spotlight on the Blanding's turtle, which is a turtle listed under the threatened species at risk.

Then they have workshops on mammals, with a different focus to reduce negative human-wildlife interaction. Same thing: They have teachings and workshops on ecosystem management, on care, on pollinators—they have this huge garden for honey bees, and here again the people get to learn and not to fear bees—and basically general animal care.

I wanted to talk a little bit about them because they would have a lot of best practices to bring to this bill, but the government has decided to do time allocation, so that means not only do they not want to hear from us in this House; they've also decided that after second reading, the bill goes to committee, and then allow for deputations from people. But they have limited the deputations to one day and the deputations will only take place here at Queen's Park in Toronto.

I'm sorry, Speaker, but the province is bigger than Toronto, as big and beautiful as Toronto can be, and for a lot of people who have interactions with animals and who care to make sure that we have a strong and robust animal protection bill coming forward and a new protection agency and a new way of doing things, they would like to be heard. Whether you talk about the farmers in rural Ontario or you talk about some of the smaller backyard farmers, they all want their animals to be cared for properly. They all want to make sure that we have the proper systems in place so that every animal is cared for in a way that is good for all, that is good for the human interaction, that is good for the animal itself. But none of that is possible, Speaker, when we look at a bill where, after my 12 minutes today, that will be it. The members of this House won't have an opportunity to share good ideas, to point in directions where best practices toward animal care should be looked at. They're not interested in this.

And then, once it passes—it will pass second reading; we know that—it would have been good to travel this bill. I mean, you travelled the red tape bill. Why can you not travel a bill where in every part of this province there are people who love animals? There are people who have seen bad treatment of animals and have learned from it. There are entire veterinary practices, like the one I just talked about, the Wild at Heart Wildlife Refuge Centre in my riding, that have so many best practices, like how do you make sure that your workshops are interactive, that people learn? How do you connect with the media so that you teach people about the proper care and health of animals? Those things exist. Those things should be part of the bill.

Sure, there is everything about the enforcement. When somebody does something wrong, we want protection to step in and to help. But the best protection is what never happens because people know better and people know how to care for their animals and know that if they cannot

look after their dog, their cat, their pets of any kind, that there is a place where they can bring them. We have a huge Pet Save in Sudbury. My niece, Stephanie, and her daughter, Izabella, go and do volunteer work there and they learn how to care for animals that sometimes have been abused pretty badly. But by being involved, by learning—this is how you end up with something good. You end up with something good when you take the time to listen to people.

1610

A bill where so many people have so many emotional ties to their animals—we've all gone door-knocking. In my riding, at least nine houses out of 10 have a pet—I would say it's two-thirds dogs and one-third cats, and then you have everything from turtles to birds to everything else in between. Everybody just loves their pets. They're proud of them. They want to introduce it to you. They want you to pet it, etc. Give them a chance to be heard. Give them a chance to show that best practices about animal care exist outside of Toronto, that sometimes small farms that want to do good just don't know all of the rules and regulations that have to do with different farm animals. Usually, the bigger farmers have memorandums of understanding. They know how to do good. They will be the first ones to report if somebody is not looking after their animal properly. Give them a chance to be heard.

A bill is not an incremental thing where, "We'll get most of it done, and we'll finish off next year." No, no, no. A bill, when it's passed—chances are, we're not going to talk about this again for the next 25 years, and if you're the Mining Act, make that 100 years.

So let's get this done right, and that means giving every MPP who wants to have a chance to talk on behalf of their constituency the time to be heard. Once it passes second reading, let's make sure that we give every Ontarian a chance to be heard, because there are a lot of best practices out there that should be included in this bill. But if we don't have a chance to hear about it and learn about it, we will miss those opportunities.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, I had hesitated to rise, but I think that I'll take a few moments just to chat a bit about some of the things that we heard in the speech before us with respect to time allocation.

Madam Speaker, I have no doubt that this bill will pass this House. We've heard in speech after speech, obviously on our side and from the members opposite, that they are in support of this bill and that this bill will pass the House.

The members opposite also know that we are under a timing issue with respect to a court order that forces us to make sure that we have a new program in place before the end of the year. I would have preferred, as the House leader, to have come to an agreement with the opposition, the members opposite, to collapse debate on this earlier so that the bill could actually travel in communities across the province, especially when we have a bill that is agreed upon by all members of the House. I think it would be natural, when we have a bill that everybody agrees upon,

that we also have an agreement to collapse debate and to move it around the province, to go to other parts of the province where people might want to have comment on this.

If you can't get consent from the opposition to collapse debate on a bill that we agree upon, imagine how difficult it is to get consent on anything in this place. So when the member opposite talks about listening to people and going across the province, I say directly to the member, through you, Madam Speaker: Then work with us. Work with us when we have our meetings and we talk about the progress and the status of bills and we come to you and ask you to collapse debate on a bill that we all agree upon so that we can travel across the province and hear from northerners and hear from people in southwestern Ontario. Work with us so that we can get that done, so that we don't have to bring in time allocation, so that we don't have to bring in time allocation to meet a court order.

This is a good bill. That's why the members opposite are voting in favour of this bill. To suggest that we haven't reached out and talked to other people I think is completely—not "I think"; I know it's completely inaccurate, because I know that the minister and her team and the parliamentary assistants have been working very, very hard for a number of months to reach out to stakeholders, to talk with them and to see what it is that's important to them—to commodity groups, to farmers. They've done that work.

But I agree with the member. I agree with the member. It would have been nice to take this legislation out of this place, like we did with red tape, and hear what people across the province had to say. But the opposition would rather talk it out. They would rather us not get to the point. They would rather put us in a position where we have to bring in time allocation, where we can't go across the province.

I think that speaks more to the opposition and their inability to work with us, to work with all members, whether it's the Liberal members or the Green members—who are in agreement that we could have collapsed debate on this and moved around the province. But there was one holdout: the NDP. So to come in this chamber today and every day when the government is forced to bring in time allocation and suggest that if only we would have listened—well, I say to them very clearly: We are listening. Come to us with some type of an agreement where we can do the work that the people of Ontario expect. That's why the red tape reduction bill is travelling the province of Ontario. That's why, when the NDP brought forward recommendations, we said, "Yes, we will go to the places that you want, because it's important to the people that we do that," and we were prepared to do it on this bill. For the opposition to get up and suggest that we weren't prepared to do that is simply a distraction. It is a distraction to what has become a way of operating for the official opposition.

They don't want Parliament to work better. I think we've all come here with a spirit of making sure that what we heard in the federal election—to make sure that we actually make this place work better; because Ontarians

aren't going to care one way or another that we spend an extra two minutes, or what community we may have gone to or may have missed, but they want us to work better together. I say again to all my colleagues: When the opposition gets up because the government has been forced to bring in time allocation on a bill, it's not because the government wasn't prepared to hear debate; it's because we were unable to secure consent from the members opposite on how long debate should be. That's the way a Parliament should work. We should be able to go to our House leaders' meetings and say, "Look, let's talk about animal welfare. Which members want to talk to it? Who is it important to?" We go into communities where there are commodity groups that have to be listened to, where farmers have to be listened to. Let those members speak. It might not be as high in importance in a riding like Markham–Stouffville, but in other ridings it is very important. Let them have an opportunity to speak. Then, once they've had that opportunity to speak, let's move it to committee and let's travel the province. But we couldn't do it. We couldn't do it.

So I say very directly to all Ontarians who are watching this particular debate and who are frustrated that they have to come to Toronto for committee hearings: We tried, and we will continue to try. I know that the government, the Green Party and the Liberal Party have been very productive in helping us reach more Ontarians. I say very openly and honestly to the members opposite, to the opposition: Work with us. Give us the opportunity to hear more. Don't always make it difficult, because in the final analysis, people want this place to work. We will give and take because that's what's in the interests of the people of the province of Ontario, Madam Speaker. I thank you for the opportunity to address you.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to have this opportunity again to get a few thoughts on the record about Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, abbreviated to PAWS, which, as I have said before, is clever, and I give full marks for having a clever title for the bill.

As we have heard throughout the debate from both sides of the House, we do have agreement that this is an important piece of legislation, that the meat and potatoes of it, so to speak, are there. But as I said in my previous remarks—I had 20 minutes' opportunity to speak to this—there are things that we wanted to flag for this government that we do hope, despite the truncated turnaround time from when it goes to committee and comes out the other side—we do hope that those who have been paying attention to this debate have taken some of those suggestions not just to heart, but to those who can perhaps put them into the regulations or put the suggestions forward when it comes to clause-by-clause in committee. There are opportunities in this specific piece of legislation where we can put our money where our mouth is, so to speak, specifically about funding, or where we can ensure that the priorities that we see before us in this bill about training

and the training of inspectors—that we actually flesh out what that means and we don't leave it quite so loosey-goosey, that we actually make sure it is prescribed that the training is what it needs to be to not only keep our animals safe and protected but to ensure that when charges are laid and matters come before the courts, they aren't then thrown out because there isn't enough to go on because there was a problem during the investigations, as we've seen time and time again with the OSPCA.

1620

I'll bring it back that this particular piece of legislation is replacing the OSPCA Amendment Act, which was the interim act implemented in June 2019. That was after the courts had decided in January that the OSPCA, which is a private charity exercising police-like powers but without the important required layer of accountability—that was deemed to be unconstitutional.

So we have talked about the history of how we got here, and how unfortunately we have had a time where animals didn't have the level of protection that they needed and deserved. But we stand here continuing to debate this legislation, which will eventually become the law of the land and hopefully is going to be more than the framework legislation and is going to be effective legislation.

We know why this is important. This has been part warm-and-fuzzy debate. It has been kind and gentle in some ways. It has been very nice, and folks have shared about their pets. That is a nice opportunity for us, as legislators, to get to know a little bit more about each other. I could tell you about Casey, my first family dog that ran through our backyard. My mother said, "Ooh, I want to have that dog. What a beautiful dog." The dog came back and was just doing laps around the neighbourhood, and when my mother went out to greet this rambunctious mutt, he had a little tag around his neck that said, "If you want me, call this number." There was a phone number, and she called. It was a construction site dog, one that had been hanging around the construction site and was being fed by the construction workers. When this job was over, nobody knew what to do with this hang-around dog.

Well, we took him. We called the number, and they showed up with a bag of dog food and a leash and Casey, with all of his bad, bad habits. He didn't just eat construction site food; he ate, really, everything that was none of his business, I'll tell you. But Casey was my very first dog, and I didn't get to share about Casey before, so I'm glad to do that. We had Casey and Smudge, a little cat, when I was a little girl. There are lots of stories about Smudge. Smudge didn't like me at all, and that was totally undeserved, but Smudge liked my brother, who sat still and wasn't rambunctious, so there you have it. That was the start of my pet journey.

But we have shared those stories. People across the province are very passionate about their pets, about their family members that can't write us letters, can't pick up the phone and call, can't run for office but still deserve representation, so we are here on behalf of the animals across the province—not only pets, of course, but all animals.

We know why we care. We've heard horrible stories, as well. We've had the warm-and-fuzzy connecting moments and we've had the very hard-to-handle, hard-to-listen-to stories: details of court cases and of abuse around the province. It just guts you to imagine how anyone can do harm in the ways that we have heard in this Legislature.

Having all of this information, the need to protect and the need to hold people to account if bad things happen to good animals, we really need to make sure that this legislation does what it needs to do, because if you're going to do it, you need to do it right.

I actually had a side conversation with the Attorney General after debate. I said, "Hey, what I was trying to get across about the need for prohibition or restitution to be language in regulation? This is what I meant by that." Because I am hopeful that we will see that in regulations after the final version of this bill, that people who do bad things to animals shouldn't be allowed to have them anymore. Why can't we have prohibitions that must be considered above and beyond the penalty or the fines, and also restitution, paying for damages?

As I said in my last debate, it almost offends to think of a pet as property, but in the eyes of the law they are. If someone were to break my window, they'd have to pay me damages. But if someone were to hurt my animal and I have to take my pet to the vet, it isn't in regulations. That restitution doesn't have to be paid; that isn't necessarily a consideration. So that's one piece for the government, I hope, to consider.

When we talk about training and the chief animal welfare inspector, as laid out, "The duties of the chief animal welfare inspector are ... to ensure that animal welfare inspectors receive appropriate training respecting their powers and duties." What the heck is "appropriate" and who gets to define it? I asked that question before, and I want to make sure that they get real training. Speaker, we see the police get constant, ongoing training. They are out in our communities, when they have to, they lay charges, and more often than not—well, I think more often than not—those charges stick. The courts have what they need because the investigations were done appropriately.

But what we had seen with the OSPCA, whether they will admit this or not—we've seen time and time and time again that those charges have to be basically thrown out because they don't hold water, maybe because there had been a human rights violation along the way, that there had been something improper or incorrect or problematic during the investigation. So I think the level of training for inspectors has to—I've said "hold water" a couple of times; I can't think of a better expression, but that's what I'm trying to say.

I want to read something from Lynn Perrier, who is with Reform Advocates for Animal Welfare, abbreviated RAAW. She says this: "The biggest problem we are going to face is with the new investigators all being ex-OSPCA dog catchers. They will bring the same mindset to the job as before. Ignoring animals at risk and terrorizing innocent owners. Their abuse of power seems to go with the job." Speaker, I'll say that that's fairly strong language, but the

sentiment is even stronger. The view of the animal rights community and the advocacy community is that they have many examples of reasons that they do not and have not trusted the OSPCA, and they feel very, very nervous to see the same leadership steering at the helm of this new ship.

I don't want to defame anyone, so I won't. I won't talk about or read all of the emails and examples that I have been given, but there have been a number of cases brought against the OSPCA. I challenge the government, who has talked extensively about certain individuals who were involved with the OSPCA and are making that transition, to make sure that they have the training that is appropriate for this piece of legislation and these goals, because otherwise I don't know how the direction can be that different. So I do challenge the government to make sure that the training happens, that everyone knows what it is that they are responsible for.

There's a level of training for crown attorneys that will be required, I think, that goes with this. Again, with regulations, we still don't know what this is going to look like or whether the regulations will be in place in less than a month and a half for that January 1 rollout. How will we be sure that inspectors will be trained and ready for this rollout? Again, these are some reassurances that we would like to see.

1630

Time allocation: We've had that conversation in this room. It's seven hours for folks to come and speak. That's seven hours in 10-minute presentations, with time for questions and comments. But by my math, according to the time allocation, it allows for 14 deputations. If it's seven hours, and you've got 30 minutes per deputation, the quick math on that is 14 folks.

So, I hope that we're not forced to turn people away at committee, because I think that really is the time, as we know, to gather those opinions. You've allowed for it here. It's limited; we talked about that. There's a bit of he-said-he-said with the House leaders; I wasn't in that room. But I do hope that this legislation comes out the other side with the time and attention that it deserves, because our animals deserve no less.

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

Ms. Jones has moved government notice of motion number 70 relating to allocation of time on Bill 136, An Act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 and make consequential amendments with respect to animal protection. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? That's carried.

Motion agreed to.

PLAN TO BUILD ONTARIO
TOGETHER ACT, 2019

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 21, 2019, on the motion for second 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 Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to rise today and have a few words to say about Bill 138.

I think that it's important that we go into a bit of history and we look back at last year's fall economic statement.

What was very clear this year, as it relates to last year's fall economic statement, is that there was never a \$15-billion deficit. The Auditor General has now told us that. The FAO has told us that. The public accounts have told us that. That's a very important piece of information as we debate Bill 138, because that deficit, that number, that \$15 billion, was used as a context for cuts—cuts that hurt people, cuts that hurt families.

If we look back to last year's fall economic statement—I said earlier this year, and I'm going to say it again: If there was only one thing you needed to know about the last year of this government, it's that they axed the child advocate but were able to hire a \$1,000-a-day special adviser for alcohol. That just doesn't add up.

The child advocate is the protector, the advocate, of the most vulnerable children in this province—those children in care, those children who don't have a parent, those children who don't have another person to advocate for them. There was no need to do that. There was no need, no reason in austerity, to do that, just like there wasn't a reason to do that with the environment commissioner or the French Language Services Commissioner.

So, last year's fall economic statement heralded the disruption that happened in Ontario politics, and I've just listed a few of those things.

We got buck-a-beer in the beginning of the obsession with alcohol that culminated in the budget. Buck-a-beer has gone the way of the dodo bird and the hula hoop, and what are we left with?

Interjection: Hey, I like hula hoops.

Mr. John Fraser: I like hula hoops too.

What we're left with is a series of things that hurt families.

We actually know that the deficit this year—because of public accounts and the FAO and the Auditor General—was \$7.4 billion, just about what we said it was. If you actually look inside that number, there is about \$2.7 billion of pension assets that the government is currently negotiating to treat as assets, but they're treating it as a deficit, to pump up that number. They're negotiating right now; I know they are. Even the commission of inquiry said, "You know, they're treating these assets the right way. Yes, you can put them on this side of the equation, but they really should be over here, and you can negotiate that." Well, the government knows that. They're negotiating that, and that number is just going to move right out, so all of a sudden you're down to about \$5.7 billion. I think that's what it is—about \$5.7 billion.

Then you take \$4.2 billion in the Fair Hydro Plan and, of course, the money for the cancelled contracts that is buried in there, which we say is around \$250 million. Should that be on the rate base or the tax base? We say it should be on the rate base. So if you take those two things into account, it becomes a rounding error. Here's what the problem is: The government is going to be spending less on post-secondary education in real dollars if you look at their three-year projections. In health care, the average rate of growth over the last five years has been 3.3%. The projected rate of growth for the next five years is 2.3%. It's not going to keep up.

I know that the Minister of Long-Term Care wants to build more beds and wants to make long-term care better, but there has to be money there. We're not even talking right now, when you look in the budget, about four hours of care—that we all agreed to; that there should be an average of four hours of hands-on care for people in long-term care. Well, the money is not there.

The government is still creating that context. They put this year's deficit at \$9 billion. Let's take a look at that number. Actually, the revenue forecast for tax revenue is about 2%. The average growth in the last five years has been 6.4%. That number is being deliberately underestimated to create a context for cuts. If you actually took the nominal GDP growth, which was about 3.5%, which would be a very modest and conservative assumption, and then take \$1.5 billion off of that—again, you have those pension assets that are still hidden inside there.

The government no longer puts in year-end savings—we've done it for decades—which are between \$1 billion and \$1.4 billion a year. It's funny because last year the commission of inquiry said that those year-end savings of \$1.4 billion should be in there. So they took it out and pumped up the number. What did the government do in the fall economic statement? They took that \$1.4 billion and stuck it back in. It made their number look better. What did they do in this year's budget? They pulled it out again. What are they doing?

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: They're getting a little sensitive over there. The numbers don't lie.

Most bank economists are saying that they're overstating the deficit. Here's what happens—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, we can joke about it here, and we could talk about the back-and-forth of trying to mark up another party. It hurts families.

Right now, in the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, they have hired a consulting firm for \$1 million a year—or not even \$1 million a year but \$1 million over the next six months—to find \$500 million in developmental services in that budget. Who are the people who are served by that? Those are families with children who have a developmental disability, whether it's a child who is maybe graduating now from elementary school, or the school system, at age 21. That's where the ministry steps in. That's also the cliff that families fall off of once they don't have the support of the education system.

They don't get a lot. It's a life of wait-lists and precarious programs. Or on the other side, it's a 76-year-old man who was in my office this week, saying, "I have a 40-year-old son. I'm talking to DSO. I don't know who's going to take care of him. I don't know how we're going to make sure he's okay." They've never asked for anything, and we can't be there for them.

The government is trying to find savings there. If you want to find savings, go and take on another party inside the government that's tougher. Don't pick on people who can't advocate for themselves. Don't pick on people who can't get on the front lawn or in the hallway here and say, "What you're doing is wrong."

That's the problem with the fall economic statement. The problem is creating a context for cuts, cuts that are unnecessary, cuts that are going to hurt families.

1640

The last point I want to make—I'm not going to use my full 15; maybe I'll end up using my full 15—is that the government needs a plan. I look at the education investments here, and what's clear to me in education is that the government doesn't have a plan. There's no plan. The public school boards were downstairs today. They had Nik Nanos here. What he said was, "Here's how the public feels about education and the investments. They don't believe in larger class sizes. They don't think that's a good thing."

But he said that the most striking thing about that was that across the board, whether you had a child in the system or not, you believed that public education was an important investment, not just because we're nice people, but because it was the smart thing to do. What he described it as was that people have common purpose, and that's why we're here.

What the problem is is that the government hasn't decided what it wants to do in education: "Class sizes are going to go to 28—no, they're going to go to 25. We're going to cut local priorities—no, we're not. We're going to cut special education—no, we're not. We had a bargaining team at the table; now they're not there. We're going to get a new one." There is no plan. There is no coherent plan, and it's evident in the numbers here. The government doesn't know where it wants to go, and they're creating a context for cuts.

The last year has been the most disruptive one in Ontario politics. I think we'd all agree. I feel very good about the fact that we have a new tone in this Legislature and that the path and pace of destruction has slowed down, but let's not forget: The tone may change, but the song remains the same.

Speaker, I want to thank you for your time.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank the member across for his speech. It's really funny listening to a member who represented the previous government for 15 years and put us in the state that we're in right now giving us lessons on how we should do things better.

When we took office, this was a province that had lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs that the previous government just simply gave up on. Our small businesses were struggling. We were no longer an attractive region to job creators. We had the highest hydro prices anywhere. We have the highest subnational debt in the world, something that the previous government did nothing about but to contribute to, continuously.

That's the record of the previous government. When we took office, we told people coming in that we were going to fight for those manufacturing jobs. We're not going to give up on them. We're going to go back and say, "What is it going to take for you to come in and to create those well-paying jobs again in this province?" We're going to make sure that this province is always going to—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Windsor. Oshawa.

Mr. Michael Parsa: We'll fight for every region of this province, every single region, including Oshawa. I'm glad that the honourable member brought that in, because whenever something happens, our government swiftly goes in to come up with a solution for the problem that quite frankly is a result of neglect for 15 years. We can't turn it around overnight, but we're going to.

You know what's an example of that, Madam Speaker? Two hundred and fifty thousand jobs created as a result of this Premier. That's not an accident. That's a result of prudent decision-making and great leadership by the Premier and our cabinet, and I'm very proud of them.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm adding my two cents to the remarks from the member for Ottawa South on Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act.

There's a lot that isn't in this bill, and a lot of ways that we could actually do things together on behalf of people—real people, the kind of people that live in communities, the folks who do struggle. The way that the member had outlined some of the folks who he serves, the parents of adult children with special needs, who seem to knock on every door in this government, and there are no answers—there isn't a path forward, and we, as a Legislature, don't seem to be able to be there for them.

I know some of those folks personally in my community, and there isn't space for them. Some of the parents who have come to see me have adult children with significant special needs who are being kept in acute psychiatric care spaces in the hospital, which is not the appropriate spot for them, but there's nowhere else for them to live. Well, there is something that we could take a look at.

The member also said the government doesn't have a coherent plan when it comes to public education. As a former educator—and by the way, once a teacher, always a teacher—I am just blown away by the mess that is before us with what we're facing in public education right now. The broader community does want what's best for their children, whether or not they have children in the school system now or in the future. This government talks all the time about the future workforce. When you're talking to

parents of children in grade 2, and that child needs resources to be able to read or to be able to socialize, and you're talking about jobs at the end, let's remember that that level of confidence and skills is developed throughout their journey and we have to invest in that. Maybe that's how we can build Ontario together.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I was listening very intently to my colleague the member for Ottawa South. He's actually one of my favourite members of the independent Liberal Party. But I have to say, the reason I got involved in politics in the first place is because of what his party has done to Ontario.

As a young person, somebody who's currently 30 years old, I was so concerned that the interest payments on our provincial debt are \$12.9 billion. That's the fourth-largest expenditure that we currently have in the government of Ontario. We should create a ministry of interest payments. That's how much we are spending on our interest, instead of building schools or hospitals. This money could be going towards our priorities and protecting what matters the most. That is why I got involved in politics. I was really concerned that the previous government has mortgaged my future and the future of other generations to come.

Let's talk about what we are doing together. Since we got elected last year, our government has made improving Ontario's fiscal sustainability one of our key priorities. The work that our government has done on improving the province's financial position has started to pay off. Since June 2018, more than 272,000 new net jobs have been created, and the unemployment rate is near historical lows, as per the—Ontario economic health is recovering and is much stronger than it was under the previous government and their years of reckless spending.

As a nurse, I was very concerned about the way our health care system was being governed and the reckless spending there, as well. With our new transformation of our health care system, we are on the right path, but we need to work together to make sure that our patients and health care providers have the health care system that they need and deserve.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise to participate in the debate on Bill 138, what the government calls the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. The government is not putting people together; it's actually trying not to listen to people. In this regard, it is not listening, not consulting. Schedule 15, for example—the doctors have not been consulted. If you talk about, also, how we protect our privacy in schedule 30—it does not really have a mechanism and systems in place to protect it.

For example, in schedule 15, bureaucrats can order a doctor to repay money they think a doctor has mistakenly billed out—a hearing before an independent panel. The doctor can appeal to the review board after the money has been repaid. However, non-physicians will be the majority on the review board. So it is also taking away the consultation process and not trying to make sure that physicians

are consulted. For instance, not all physicians understand why the service was provided and how it was billed. It says that it's the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act, but this is a plan really to create a problem for the folks in this profession, and also it's not strengthening and protecting our data system in schedule 30.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the members from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, Oshawa, Mississauga Centre and York South–Weston.

To the member from Mississauga Centre: You're one of my favourite MPPs over there as well, too, 100%.

Here's the reality: Ontario, before the last election, led the G7 in jobs and growth for five years. We were one of the top three places for foreign direct investment for five years. So 800,000 jobs since 2003—

Hon. Bill Walker: Off the charts.

Mr. John Fraser: But it's not about measuring things; it's not about us. Here's the point: Ontario's economic engine has been fully primed for some time, and my point here is, there's a number being used that is wrong, and it's being used in a way that's not good for families. That's my point. It's not about the politics of who was good and who was bad and who did 15 years of neglect. People don't want to hear that. What they want is their schools to be there for their children when they need them so they have the kind of support they need. They want to know that their health care is going to be there for them when they need it.

I'm going to make a bit of a distinction here. It's in the fall economic statement, so I encourage all of you to look at it. When you look at our debt number, governments report it in a different way. We reported our whole debt number, both our capital and operating. If you look at the operating debt number, it has been steady at 23% of GDP forever. It hasn't changed. Where our debt comes from is building things, like subways, like hospitals, like schools, the things that people need. Your government is starting to talk about that right now because you're understanding that distinction and not every jurisdiction reports it that way. So don't use that debt number the same way you're using this deficit number, because it's not going to be good for families.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I'm proud to rise in the House today to speak to second reading of Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. I'd like to touch on why this bill is so important for Ontario and link the steps we're taking here to our goal of improving the quality of life for all Ontarians.

I'm excited to discuss how Bill 138 fits into our overall plan and how it would have a tangible, positive impact on the day-to-day lives of the people of this province. After all, that is why we're here.

Speaker, allow me to provide some context for the proposed act. On November 6, our finance minister, the

Honourable Rod Phillips, released the government's annual fall economic statement. This year, it was titled 2019 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review: A Plan to Build Ontario Together. In short, the purpose of this fall economic statement was to provide Ontarians with an update on the provincial government's finances. It also set out our commitment for the upcoming 2020 budget, which I can tell you our government is already hard at work in making a reality.

The 2019 fall economic statement was a good-news story and it has generated excitement across our province. Our government is beating fiscal targets, and we are beating expectations. It all comes back to these goals: better health care and services; stronger, safer communities; more jobs; and a sustainable public sector. The fall economic statement went into detail in each of these key areas, and that's why it's important for this House to pass Bill 138 so we can continue to make real progress for the people of Ontario.

On the topic of sustainability, I'm pleased to say that shrewd decision-making, long-term planning and finding smart solutions to tough problems has allowed our government to reduce the deficit while still investing in health care, education and services that Ontarians rely on. We beat our deficit target for this fiscal year by \$1.3 billion, and we're on track to balance the budget by 2023. We're tackling duplication and waste, streamlining and modernizing processes, improving service delivery and focusing on outcomes for those in need.

This is not a government balancing precariously on outlandish promises and big-spending boondoggles. This is a government set out on a strong foundation of responsibility, practicality and respect for taxpayers' time and money. We pay close attention to detail because we understand that dimes add up to dollars and dollars add up to millions of dollars. We carefully evaluate and scrutinize every spending initiative because, one way or another, every dollar comes out of the pocket of an Ontario family. We have a plan to balance the budget responsibly because borrowing from future generations and burying them in debt is just wrong, plain and simple. Fifteen years of Liberal carelessness and waste left Ontario in a very tough spot, with congested transit, inefficient services, hallway medicine and the largest subnational debt on the planet. Our government doesn't just talk about the problems and challenges faced by Ontario; we confront them head on and find innovative ways to overcome them.

Ontarians are some of the most diverse, bright and hard-working people in the world. They deserve a government that will put in the effort to do what's right, not what's easy. They want a chance to succeed without government getting in their way, so they can provide a better life for themselves and their children. With every action we take, we're cutting red tape and building a stronger economy that works for Ontarians. The results speak for themselves. We have already seen over 250,000 net new jobs created in Ontario since we took office last year, and the unemployment rate is near a historic low. Confidence is up, and investment is finally returning to Ontario. But we still have much more work to do.

As Minister Phillips announced in the fall economic statement, our government is proposing to reduce the small business corporate income tax rate to 3.2% from 3.5%, beginning in the new year. This will provide up to \$1,500 in tax relief annually to 275,000 Ontario businesses, from family-owned stores to cutting-edge start-ups. Thanks to the actions that our government has taken up until now, we project that Ontario small businesses will save \$2.3 billion in 2020 alone. That's money that can be used to grow, reinvest and hire new employees.

We're also providing tax relief to the people who need it most. For example, child care expenses can be a heavy financial burden for parents and a barrier to working or pursuing further education. That's why we're helping families through the Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses, or CARE, Tax Credit, starting in the 2019 tax year. This credit enables access to a broad range of child care options and will provide about \$1,250 on average in child care support to about 300,000 families. This is in addition to the child care expense deduction.

We're also helping Ontarians keep more of their hard-earned money through the Low-income Individuals and Families Tax Credit, or LIFT credit. A full-time minimum-wage worker with no other income could receive the maximum of \$850 in tax relief. That's a great deal of money for working Ontarians, and it rightfully belongs to the people who earned it.

Prudent fiscal management in the public sector means reducing taxes on job creators, families and low-income workers while at the same time being able to invest in infrastructure, transit and health care.

We understand that a person's health is the most important thing in their life. When you have your health, anything is possible. That's why, in October, we announced a \$68-million investment in small, medium and multi-site hospitals to help maintain capacity and respond to increasing demand. That's on top of the \$384-million increase that we announced in the 2019 budget—great to see you on that chair, Speaker.

1700

We're building new and upgrading existing long-term and transitional-care beds across the province, and we're increasing funding for land ambulance services by almost 4% this year. We're making health care more convenient with the Digital First for Health Strategy, which could allow patients to see doctors virtually and allow doctors to provide more options to access services.

We also have a plan to support Ontario's most vulnerable and their families. We're helping children with autism by investing \$278.5 million more in the province's autism program, bringing the total funding to \$600 million annually, Speaker. We're ensuring that low-income seniors have access to dental care by investing approximately \$90 million a year into the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program. This program will provide seniors with an annual income of \$19,300 or less, or couples with a combined income of less than \$32,300, who don't have dental benefits, with regular dental care. Our government is taking real steps to safeguard the health and well-being of all Ontarians and end hallway medicine in our province.

On transit, we're getting Ontario moving again and making commuting faster and easier in many ways. We're building new transit options like Viva bus rapid transit and the Hurontario line. We're working together with our municipal and federal partners to build more subways and subway extensions, including the Ontario Line and—Speaker, unbiasedly speaking, my personal favourite—the Yonge North subway extension right into Richmond Hill, because the people have been asking for it election after election, and they're finally getting one because of our government. Promise made, promise kept, Speaker.

We're increasing GO Transit rail service, while saving families money by making GO Transit and buses free for children 12 and under through the Kids GO Free initiative. We're expanding, repairing and improving highways and bridges, allowing people and goods to move more efficiently. These infrastructure projects are investments in the future of our province and would save Ontarians time and money.

On the issue of strengthening public safety, we're investing \$3.9 billion over 10 years into our justice system infrastructure, including building new courthouses. We're keeping Ontario communities secure by investing millions to support local police and the OPP as they target organized crime, gang operations and violent offenders.

We're also strengthening protection for consumers and new home buyers, including transforming Tarion to address conflict-of-interest issues, championed by two ministers, the current minister, Lisa Thompson, and, of course, the previous minister, the great Bill Walker.

Hon. Bill Walker: Hear, hear.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Yes, 100%.

We're working to get new homes built to address Ontario's housing crisis, Speaker. We're reforming the LPAT land use planning and appeals so that we can avoid the unnecessary delays slowing down the construction of new homes. By implementing Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan, we're making it easier to build more homes more quickly and in the right places. We believe that everyone in Ontario should be able to find a place to live that meets their needs and budget.

Affordability is a key part of our plan to make life better in Ontario. By cancelling the cap-and-trade carbon tax, we've enabled Ontario households to save an average of \$275 a year in fuel and other costs by 2020.

For students, making post-secondary education more affordable is part of our plan to ensure that Ontarians have the training and skills they need to get the jobs they want. We reduced tuition by an historic 10% across all funding-eligible post-secondary education programs in the 2019-20 academic year. We also froze tuition fees for the 2020-21 academic year to help Ontario students and families afford higher education. Students attending college will see an average tuition reduction of about \$340, and those enrolled in an undergraduate arts and science degree will see an average reduction of about \$660. We're taking steps to ensure that Ontario's future workforce will be among the best educated and most competitive in the world.

Our government also has a plan to make the public sector smarter by streamlining and digitizing processes

and finding ways to spend efficiently that will ensure value for every taxpayer dollar. We're making improvements that will make the government's services easier to get, more efficient and, over time, more sustainable and cheaper to deliver—all without compromising quality. Ontarians should be able to access the services they want when it's convenient for them. By delivering simpler and faster online transactions, we're making that happen. We're making chores like renewing your driver's licence or getting a health card, which used to be such a hassle, so much faster and easier. As the President of the Treasury Board, the Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, often says, one more person online is one less person in line.

By modernizing provincial procurement and supply chains, we're making it easier for companies to do business with the province and allowing the government to combine purchasing agreements across the public sector. In just a few short years, we'll be saving taxpayers \$1 billion annually thanks to supply chain centralization and the rest of our exciting smart government initiatives.

We're making government agencies more efficient by consolidating back offices, facilitating the use of digital tools and dissolving inactive or duplicative agencies.

We're exploring new ways to generate revenue without raising taxes, such as advertising and naming rights for GO stations.

We're on track to save \$115 million a year by pooling benefits across the broader public sector.

We saved \$153 million by ending March madness spending.

Between our Voluntary Exit Program and the Transition Exit Initiative, we will save about \$317 million by the end of 2021-22. The ongoing fiscal benefit of these programs is estimated at around \$215 million a year.

Speaker, listing off every great initiative and step we're taking to improve the public sector and life in Ontario would take longer than the time I have here today. But I will say this: Our plan is clearly working. Last year, our government received the Auditor General's first clean audit of public accounts in three years. As I mentioned, we've seen over 250,000 net new jobs created in Ontario thanks to our efforts to cut burdensome red tape and improve our province's business environment. We're increasing efficiency, streamlining administration, and eliminating waste and duplication because we respect tax dollars. We're modernizing and digitizing processes to increase access and make life more convenient for the people we serve. We're changing the culture of government to focus on outcomes and customer service for Ontarians after 15 long years of Liberal carelessness and disregard.

We are committed to bringing the Ontario government into the 21st century and ensuring that it is sustainable well into the future, a government that provides essential services of the highest quality and that can be relied on to deliver those services consistently. Ontarians expect nothing less, and they made that very clear when they gave us a resounding majority last year.

I'm proud to say that we're keeping our promises and delivering for them every single day in this House. When the previous Liberal government spent our province into a crushing, multi-generational debt, with no care for reality or regard for the future, they created a fiscal disaster which will take years to fix. Speaker, it won't be an easy task—there is no doubt about it—but it's certainly possible. Our government is taking action to get us there quickly and responsibly. We're up to the challenge and we will make Ontarians proud.

1710

After all, Speaker, we're working to protect the hospitals where our friends and family are cared for, the roads and bridges that we all need and the schools that our kids attend. These are issues that everyone in Ontario cares about, and that's why we're making sure that there is a dialogue around every decision we make, so everyone has their say. We're making a government that listens, and that means we engage. We ask questions. We work with our partners so we can build Ontario together.

This fall economic statement served as a window into our government's plan to ensure a higher standard of living and better quality of life for all Ontarians. As Minister Phillips has said, by implementing our plan, we are stimulating job creation, putting more money in people's pockets, making our streets safer, our commutes shorter and our government smarter. That's what the plan to build Ontario together is all about, and that's why it needs to pass. As we work to implement our plan for the people of Ontario, we will continue to communicate our message to them. We want Ontarians to know that we hear them, we're with them and we will be fighting for them every single day to make the positive changes that they require.

Madam Speaker, earlier I had an opportunity to speak to my colleague's remarks, and I reminded my colleague and perhaps everybody in the House of the state of our province just a year and a half ago. We had lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Ontario was no longer a destination that was attractive to job creators and those who wanted to bring in good jobs. We lost the title of being the engine of Canada's economy. That's the legacy of the previous government: 15 years, they left us with that.

Hon. Bill Walker: What government was that?

Mr. Michael Parsa: We all know the government. But that's fine, because the people chose. The people heard from every single one of us, and they gave us a resounding mandate to come here and to change that, and change we have made: 250,000 jobs created since we took office. Ontario is once again attractive to all job creators. We lowered taxes for all small businesses, and we're going to make sure that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm happy to add a couple of comments in response to the speech made by the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill. One of the things that kind of twigged for me was when he was

talking about how it's an aim of this government to modernize and digitize, and talking about wanting to get to better outcomes.

When I look to our classrooms and our schools and I look at public education and I think of the conversations we've been having in this space and that people are having across communities about e-learning and mandatory e-learning—we're not looking at better outcomes there. The government is looking at saving a couple of bucks, right? If you're really looking at better outcomes, then show us where that is any kind of advancement. We've asked for it in committee. We've asked for it in this House. Prove it, because we know that it isn't what's in the best interests of our students who are struggling, and it isn't in the best interests of those kids who—when this government talks about that strong future of good jobs, we're literally cutting kids out of that pathway.

Students in our schools, Speaker, who can't have access to trades courses or the different programs in the classrooms that they can't have because there will be fewer teachers and they can't offer it and the class sizes are creating a mess—if we're not giving them those courses, how on earth are we giving them, then, the pathway that those courses would lead them to?

Many of our children who don't choose that academic pathway and who choose that hands-on trades pathway—we should be ensuring that those classes are there, but more often than not, those are the courses that are getting cut, because they tend to be lower numbers, either because of fewer folks wanting to be enrolled or, for safety's sake, they're smaller courses. That balance of big class sizes and smaller class sizes means that they can't have that class at all, so, good job.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to stand this afternoon and make some comments with regard to the fall economic statement.

It's interesting; I've been sitting here all afternoon, and for weeks, you hear the opposition, and all they seem to do is—they want to rail on everything that this government is doing. I look at it and say that they're very adept at picking out the fly specks in pepper and bringing it forward. They need to change their tone as well. What they need to realize is that it's going to take time, and we've only been in government for a year and a half. We are making progress.

My colleague had made comments with regard to the number of jobs that we've created: over 250,000 new jobs in Ontario. That is incredible, considering the fact that the Liberal government took the debt, when they came into power in 2005 and when they left in 2018, from \$125 billion to over \$363 billion. They have mortgaged not just the next generation but future generations for sure, so I've got some real serious concerns about that. Talk about a fair energy act? Well, that was only fair for their cronies.

Come down to Chatham–Kent–Leamington. Speaker, I know you drive through that on the way to Windsor–Tecumseh. If you drive at nighttime, you're going to see a new red light district, because it's nothing but all of the red

lights that have been attached to those turbines. We have over 500 industrial wind turbines in the area. Talk about driving energy costs up. It's ridiculous, what it has done.

But I also want to focus on some positive things. We talk about eliminating red tape. That will allow private sector business to create the new jobs that my esteemed colleague spoke about earlier. Again, under the previous Liberals, all we were seeing were tail lights. Now, we're starting to see headlights. That's businesses coming back. I'm excited for Ontario. I'm excited for the people of this province.

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

M^{me} France G elinas: It was interesting to listen to the member talk about the new dental program for seniors. To the seniors out there—and I know that there are many, many of you on a wait-list to finally get to see a dentist—I would like you to know that the only thing that the government has rolled out for all of this year is a very complex process to get your name on the list so that you will be identified as someone who can see the dentist.

But will you be able to see the dentist? No, not yet, because there isn't one penny that has gone to one of the 25 CHCs or three AHACs that have dental suites. None of the money for the care has actually flown, just the bureaucratic process to get your name on a card so that eventually, in a future yet to be defined, you will be able to actually see a dentist. That's not what I thought was happening when they promised us that the dental care would be ready in 2019. Well, forget this. This is not happening. You may get your card before 2019, but this pain in your mouth is going to stay way longer, because access to the dentist has not started.

The other part I'm rather interested about—actually, very worried about—is schedule 30, which talks about the Personal Health Information Protection Act. You see, Speaker, when you talk about health care, the way to have quality care is that you are free to talk to the person in front of you, to the caregiver, to tell them things that you would not tell anybody else, because you can trust that this information is going to stay with them and nobody else. What this bill does is it does a whole bunch of peepholes for people at Ontario Health and Ontario health teams to look into. Nothing good comes of that.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: It's an honour to rise in the House today and talk about the fall economic statement, because our government is building Ontario together.

It was very interesting listening to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill talking about the investments that our government is making in the people of Ontario: \$1.9 billion of new money into health care and \$1.2 billion of new money into education. It was hard not to contrast that with some of the statements that were made by one of the independent members earlier, who called into question those things.

1720

I couldn't help but think about a story that my wife told me over the weekend. One of our patients was in, and she

had been taken by a contractor for a couple of hundred thousand dollars. Nothing was built correctly. The siding was peeling off and the place was falling apart—about how horrible that was for her now without any recourse in order to do that.

I couldn't help but think that that's similar to what we were left with in June 2018. I find it so difficult to understand that some of the independent members have difficulty with our numbers of a \$15-billion deficit that we were left with, because some quick math will tell you—you can Google those numbers and see on Wikipedia that over the 15 years that the Liberals were in power, they averaged deficits of \$14.5 billion a year. Why would it have been any different last year? I don't understand that.

When you think about the province as a construction project, a project that we are building for the workers in Ontario, a project that we are building for the small business owners in Ontario, for the students and for the moms and dads and for the hard-working people of Ontario, right now we've got a big hole in the ground. We're working hard to put in good foundations. I trust that with what we're doing, in a couple of years you'll be able to see a beautiful building come out of the ground on what we're doing today.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I want to start off first by thanking my honourable colleagues from both sides, from Oshawa, Chatham–Kent–Leamington, Brantford and—I did say Oshawa—from Nickel Belt. I apologize.

Hon. Bill Walker: France G elinas.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Yes, Madame G elinas. Thank you for your remarks.

Madam Speaker, I'm glad that my colleague from Nickel Belt brought up the point of support for seniors, because I want to share a couple of stats with you. We have invested \$1.75 billion over the next five years when it comes to long-term-care beds, and we're developing another 15,000 long-term-care beds.

Hon. Bill Walker: Hear, hear. Great minister.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you very much, Minister. That's about \$72 million more this year in spending over last year, Madam Speaker. Talk about investing in essential services and vital services for Ontarians.

Thanks to the champion in the Minister of Education, we have increased funding for education by \$1.2 billion this year compared to last year. Speaking of champions, Madam Speaker, we can't forget the Minister of Health increasing funding by \$1.9 billion this year in comparison to—

Hon. Bill Walker: Billion dollars.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Billion dollars, Madam Speaker.

While the previous government closed schools, we are opening and investing in our children's future. We're going to make sure that they have all the tools now to be able to get those jobs in the future. We're going to make sure, as I mentioned in my speech, that businesses flourish, and that once again Ontario becomes the envy of all the country and we earn that title once again where we become the engine of the Canadian economy.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 138, the government's fall economic statement. Speaker, what a bill this is. Some of my colleagues have already spoken today to—

Interjections.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Hey, I didn't mean it in a good way. Some of my colleagues today have spoken to all of the things that are not in this bill that are the real things that we need to be focusing on as priorities for our province, and some of the weird stuff that is in this bill. I mean, it's a bit of a kitchen sink bill, and at the same time doesn't have a whole lot of substance. We're seeing everything in this bill from amendments to the Planning Act to amendments to the Cannabis Act to amendments to the liquor control board to pensions—a whole bunch of different acts. At the same time, the government has chosen to scoop up a number of private members' bills into this legislation, which I find—

Interjection.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Only theirs, yes. None of our private members' bills. I find it particularly interesting. We've seen the Egyptian Heritage Month bill, the Hellenic Heritage Month bill, the Provincial Day of Action on Litter. I have nothing against any of these bills, but we have some fantastic private members' bills on this side of the House that you have completely ignored and are choosing not to scoop up into a government bill that can fly its way through this House. We've seen exactly how fast this government can move when it wants to pass legislation, and it's not a good thing.

We have bills on this side of the House that are looking at addressing the opioid crisis in our communities. We have bills on this side of the House to properly fund health care and to better protect tenants.

I have a bill that I'm trying to get pushed through this House called the St. James Town Act, where we're trying to better protect the tenants from a building in my riding, at 650 Parliament Street, who went through a disastrous fire a year ago because their landlord wasn't properly maintaining their building. Where is the St. James Town Act getting scooped up into your legislation?

These are the kinds of substantive bills that Ontarians are expecting us to prioritize. Again, I have nothing against these heritage days, Speaker, but there's a lot of really great work from this side of the House that, unfortunately, the government members don't seem to want to look at.

There are a number of schedules in this bill, but what I really want to dig into today is specifically schedule 31.

What's really interesting about schedule 31 is that it opens up the Planning Act, an act that we just went through the process of amending in this House mere months ago, through government Bill 108, which was—what did you guys call it? Better homes, more choices? I don't know who comes up with your names for your bills—

Interjection.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Guys, I'm really not complimenting you here.

Bill 108 basically ripped up development charges for the province. What was interesting about Bill 108 was the lightning speed at which it moved through this House. I've stood in this House before and really challenged you guys to think about how quickly you're passing legislation, how you skip the committee process entirely. You time-allocate almost every single government bill that comes through this House. Gone are the days of travelling bills.

In my time here, I've seen you guys travel exactly one bill, your red tape bill, and nothing else. I know that the member from Nickel Belt earlier was speaking to the animal welfare bill, and how much she wished that bill had been travelled up to the north so that we could understand the northern context of that, knowing that northern stakeholders don't often get to come down into Toronto to speak to these bills.

We have a bill that opened up the Planning Act and ripped up development charges, and you didn't travel that. You only let us have one day of committee hearings. And then, lo and behold, here we are six months later, going through your fall economic statement, and you're having to already—six months later—walk back and make interim measures for a bill that was hastily passed, with no consultation, because you didn't understand what you were doing when you put Bill 108 on the table, when you ripped up the way that the municipalities can collect development charges.

Now, through Bill 132, you're having to say, "Oh, oops, we made a mistake. We didn't do the consultation. We didn't give it time at committee," and you're having to address issues through amendments in schedule 31 that could have been dealt with in committee six months ago, the first time we were looking at this bill.

Speaker, there were hundreds of stakeholders and community members who wanted come in and give deputations on Bill 108. They had a whole list of complaints, many of them about the development charges as it relates to schedule 31; many about the changes to the Ontario Municipal Board, or, as it's known now, the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal; and many about how this government was just ripping up environmental protections, and all in the favour of rolling out the red carpet for their developer friends.

We didn't get to hear from all of those stakeholders who had so much to say about what this government was missing in Bill 108, and just how badly you missed the boat.

I don't want to say, "We told you so," but we told you so. I don't know how many times we have to stand in this House and say, "Guys, slow down." Don't rush your legislation and then come back to us six months later with interim measures tucked away in your budget updates because you didn't get the legislation right the first time, and it only took you six months to figure out that it was wrong right off the get-go. If you actually took the time to listen to all of the stakeholders who tried to come to committee, who tried to tell you that you were missing the boat, we wouldn't be here today.

1730

Speaker, I don't understand why this government insists on cutting the public out of decision-making. They insist on ramming bills through this House as quickly as possible with as little consultation as possible, and this government absolutely refuses to follow the motto of this House, which is carved into the walls: to hear the other side.

It's not just the official opposition that has been standing here, trying to help you help yourselves, as my colleague from Kitchener Centre said earlier, and warn you about the mistakes that you're making as you're making them. It's the public and the stakeholders that came to us and said, "You're missing the boat on a number of pieces in Bill 108 as they relate to development charges," and, "Listen to us."

What I actually want to do today is go through and read in some of what communities told us about where you were getting it wrong in the development charges but, more to the point, the process. We've developed a bad habit in this House of ramming bills through and not necessarily understanding the ramifications of them, which is inevitably going to happen when bills are only getting a single day at committee to hear from stakeholders. When Bill 108 came to committee, we only got 17 stakeholders that we were able to fit into the agenda in one day. We got one day to make amendments to the bill, to try to fix it—it was beyond salvaging, in my opinion—but at the same time, we had hundreds of submissions from folks and organizations. As a committee, we didn't even have enough time to read all of the written submissions that we had received. How can we understand the implications of bills if you're not even willing to give us enough time to read all the documentation that's coming through before everything just flies through this House?

We heard from municipality after municipality about how the changes to the development charges were going to negatively impact them, but worse, they didn't have the time to understand what the full implications were. They needed that time. We heard from Mayor Bonnie Crombie from Mississauga, "This is a sweeping piece of legislation that will have tremendous impacts on how we plan and grow as a city, and yet we have only had three weeks to read the legislation introduced on May 2, 2019, and provide formal, council-approved comments. I think you will agree this is not nearly enough time to provide meaningful feedback, consult with residents, and properly engage with your government on such an important piece of legislation." Then she goes on to say, "Delay the passage of this legislation until the fall session of the Legislature, and use this time to consult further with the municipal sector. Given the lack of details in the legislation, Mississauga believes it is imperative the comment period is extended."

My warning to the government members on the other side is, if you had listened to some of these stakeholders about the amount of time we needed to understand this, we wouldn't be walking back and having to make further provisions in the development act to a bill we just looked at mere months ago.

That was from the city of Mississauga. I have another one here. This is also from Mississauga. This is from their bureaucrats, not their political office. Their city staff here make a number of points. They weren't arguing that the premise was wrong—fine, they agree with you—but they want to be able to build more housing. No one's saying, "Let's build less housing in Ontario," but they said it was a bad plan and they didn't have time to fix it. There was no consultation and, in the end, they actually thought your plan was going to create more red tape, not less, which I thought was really interesting feedback, if you had time to go through this report.

These are the kinds of problems that we're now identifying six months down the road and retroactively trying to fix. It's not a good approach to legislation. As a legislator who has only been in this building for a little over a year, I shouldn't be the rookie in the room telling you guys what bad process is. It's absolutely wild.

We heard from Mississauga. I've got the city of Kitchener here. What did they have to say? They were talking about the development charges. They're asking the province to reconsider proposed changes to the Development Charges Act, which would reduce the ability for soft services to continue to be funded by new growth. The ultimate concern here is municipalities not being able to have access to the same level of development charges to fund the things that cities need to grow. They found a number of issues with the original bill, but you never had time to hear them. This is what happens.

I have a letter from the city of Brampton. This one was honestly fantastic. This one was from Patrick Brown. He said that unfortunately the bill was introduced following very little consultation with municipalities, suggesting that the proposed changes within the legislation are unlikely to achieve its intended outcomes.

Again, did you consult with the city of Brampton, with the city of Mississauga? No. Did you consult with the city of Toronto? No. The folks at the city of Brampton said the same thing: "Bill 108 is unlikely to achieve its stated goals. Extend the consultation period for Bill 108." That's the entire point I'm trying to make here: Almost every single stakeholder who came to us said, "Extend the consultation period. We need time to understand how these are going to affect our municipalities."

The region of Peel had similar comments. They say that the development charges "ensure that growth pays for growth. They are a dedicated revenue source for the municipal investments in growth capital infrastructure required before housing development can begin." If the bill is adopted, the proposed changes would reduce development charge revenue for municipalities. In Peel region, this could result in an estimated \$346 million to \$393 million in deferred and \$48 million in removed development charges, potentially impacting the region's debt capacity.

"Many of the proposed changes would add considerable administrative burden to development processes, causing higher planning and building permit fees. These outcomes could have implications for the region's AAA

credit rating and financial flexibility over the long term and could ultimately reduce housing supply as communities respond to financial challenges.”

So here you've got the region of Peel telling you not that only was it bad consultation; it's bad fiscal management and you could be putting the municipalities in this province at significant risk because of how you've amended the development charges.

When we go on to Durham region—it goes on and on. They said that development charges are a fiscal tool for municipalities to recover growth-related capital costs, and any restriction on the amount of development charges collected must be recovered by municipalities through higher water and sewage usage rates and property taxes. So by limiting the development charges that they can collect, we now are in a situation where we don't have growth paying for growth; we're just downloading the cost of that growth onto the taxpayer base through things like their water and sewage charges.

Again, the city of Toronto: Their summary report recommendations, in addition to all of the issues they had with the content of the changes to the development charges, were around process and how flawed the consultation process on this was. They initially requested an extension on the June 1 deadline. They requested that you release draft regulations so that they could consult on them further. They requested the province to provide a transparent and thorough stakeholder consultation process. They wanted an opportunity to participate. And now here we are, through the fall economic statement, having to fix the mistakes that were made in a bad process. That was the city of Toronto.

Speaker, I see I've only got a few minutes left here, so I'm going to try to move through some of this fairly quickly.

We heard from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO. They said, with regard to changes to the LPAT, that it was never given a fair chance to demonstrate that it could work. That's something that I think would have been really interesting to have come up in the committee process.

I have a few here from some financial consultants and economists. Even the economists are saying, “Slow down. Let us figure out how these changes in these development charges are going to play out on the ground in the municipalities.” They have concerns.

With regard to the development charges, one of the specific concerns raised by Watson and Associates Economists was the potential cost burden to the municipalities in terms of increasing administrative staffing needed to manage the development charges.

Speaker, I also wanted to read in a few comments made by not just organizations, but the people of Ontario and our constituents, who were so opposed to the changes that were put forward with regard to the Planning Act amendments, and specifically the development charges—but again, the process in which it happened.

1740

I have an email from a constituent named Hugh, who said, “It was not a well-thought-out piece of legislation

and, as it stands, can do a lot of damage to Ontario communities. It needs to be withdrawn or very seriously revised. The committee needs to slow down, allow more time for public input and allow enough days and time to address the serious issues raised by this legislation.”

Speaker, a government shouldn't have to be amending its own bills six months after the fact. If we'd gotten this right, if you'd let the committee process do its work, we wouldn't be here today; you'd be listening to someone else talk more eloquently about all of the other wondrous mistakes in your economic update.

I want to really get the point across that there has been a lot of bad process. You let almost no government bills go to committee. When they do get to committee, you don't let the public in for consultation. You time-allocate almost every single bill that comes through this House. When citizens are starting to notice how poorly run the inside baseball of Queen's Park is, if I were you, I would be very, very worried.

Another constituent, Rami, a long-time Toronto resident, said, “The tiny amount of time permitted for the public to respond to ... Bill 108 is a travesty and works against democracy.”

I have another email, from Susan, who said, “This is hastily presented and liable to cause great damage to the human and natural grounding for life in the province and, at the very least, a backlog of response to deal with the consequences of it.”

I have an email from Marilyn, who said, “This bill has been put forward with no community consultation or input from cities. The repercussions will be far-reaching and disastrous.”

My favourite is an email from Andrew, who said, “I voted Conservative in the last election and I'm seriously regretting my choice. What a disaster this government has become. This is not what I voted for, and you will not get my vote if you persist.”

This is the public. These are your communities, your constituents, the people of Ontario that you claim to be for, who are telling you, “Guys, slow down.”

Bring good process back into this building so you're not cleaning up your own mistakes mere months after proposing legislation. If you'd let this Legislature do its work, we wouldn't be here.

Speaker, I have a few more emails. Again, I only have a few minutes left, so I'm going to try to squeeze them in.

I have an email from Ewa, who says, “Toronto is the economic engine of Ontario and Canada, and it is shocking that the Toronto city council was not consulted on, or given appropriate notice of, the proposed changes to the Planning Act....”

Even when we were in committee that day, we had to group all of the city councillors together. They couldn't even have their own time on the agenda to speak to how these changes were going to impact their own ridings specifically. We had to ask all of city council for Toronto to come in as one delegation, and then we had to ask other municipalities to do the same. We only heard from a handful of municipalities, a handful of developers and almost no community members.

Overall, my message to this government is: I don't want to be here, with the next fall economic statement, revising next year's bad legislation. Let's let committees do the work so that we can start getting things right in this House. It's simply unacceptable.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'm actually thrilled to be able to—and I'm going to be speaking later on today about Bill 138, the fall economic statement, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act, 2019.

I'm sitting in here today—and I've probably taken three Tylenols in my whole life—and I actually popped a Tylenol a little earlier because I've got a headache listening to half of the conversation that's going back and forth.

I want to first start out by saying this: In the last 15 years, the past government created 600 long-term-care beds. Today, we've got the Minister of Long-Term Care sitting right here. It's not going to be a quick fix to change any of it, because we're so far behind because of the inadequacies and not doing what that government should have done for 15 years. It's heartbreaking to see. I think there are 42,000—don't quote me on that—seniors waiting for beds at this moment. It's unfortunate that we're in the situation that we're in.

The next thing that I want to say is, we sit here and we talk about the education system, but when this past government—

Hon. Bill Walker: The Liberals. Say it.

Ms. Jane McKenna: The Liberals—600 schools were shut down—600.

Hon. Bill Walker: Shameful.

Ms. Jane McKenna: It's absolutely shameful.

But I'll tell you a quick story about my son, Mac. Here's what I love about this government. Not only do we listen and we're making changes—we don't create jobs, but we create the environment for jobs, and there's 250,000 plus. I look at the high skills and apprenticeships. I've got four girls and one boy, and my son said to me, "Mom, I've decided I'm going to go and get into skilled trades and do what I want to do. Get in the car. We're going to go up to Georgian College."

But it was sad because there were lots of others of his buddies who didn't have that opportunity to force their mother to get in the car to go and do that. Those kids didn't know what they didn't know. Now these kids have an opportunity to see if they want to be a plumber, because one in five jobs in 2020 are going to be able to be skilled trades.

We need to make a difference. We have; we've listened. I'm thrilled to be on this side of the government.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I'm honoured to stand once again to speak to Bill 138. I would give this government a grade of—actually, I was going to say D minus, but I'll give them an F. The reason why—I'm going to talk a little bit about health care and the focus on health care.

My riding—in all of Brampton and most of Peel, we've been suffering from hallway medicine. This government has had the opportunity to listen to Ontarians who have pushed back against the deep and painful cuts that continue to hurt the people of this province, but they continue to be ignored.

This bill does nothing to reverse the firing of 10,000 teachers. It doesn't include a single dollar to restore classes that our kids need to graduate.

It doesn't stop the drastic spending cuts to legal aid or the brutal cuts to health care.

The Liberals, as we all know, put Ontario in a hallway medicine crisis. All that this government has done is continue their callous cuts, and refuse to commit to fixing this problem. This bill doesn't add a single dollar to adding long-term-care beds or improving mental health services.

As I stand here, representing the people of Brampton, Madam Speaker, I remind you that this government refused to support our motion to fund a new hospital the city so desperately needs. Brampton is the second-fastest-growing city in Canada, yet there's only one full-service hospital. Brampton Civic Hospital has one of the busiest emergency rooms in all of Canada. Brampton is the patient zero of hallway medicine in this province.

We must strive to provide high-quality health care for all Ontarians. I've heard stories of people spending days in hospitals on gurneys, without any privacy. There are over 5,000 patients who have experienced hallway medicine in the Brampton area.

In conclusion, I'd like to say that nothing in this bill addresses the immediate concerns of Ontarians, and we're here to hold this government to account.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's a pleasure for me to stand and talk to the fall economic statement. One of the things we are doing as a government is that we are in fact expanding, repairing and improving highways and bridges, allowing people and goods to move more efficiently. I'm kind of excited about this, and I'll tell you why.

Down in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington, basically from Lambeth—which is not in my riding—through to Tilbury, there's major, major expansion going on on Highway 401. People are saying, "How come you haven't got all the barriers up there yet?" It's going to take time, probably about five years, to get it all done, and to get it done, it takes money. Of course, one of the things that this previous Liberal government didn't leave us with was money.

So we are working very hard, very diligently to improve the economic engine that's right here in Ontario by eliminating a lot of the red tape, which will allow businesses to grow and to flourish. So I'm excited about that.

Also, Highway 3, which might be of interest to you as well, between Essex and Leamington—we've made a commitment. The Minister of Transportation and I were down there at an announcement several months ago in terms of twinning Highway 3, because it has been deemed

a bad stretch of highway where many accidents have in fact occurred.

In addition to that, Speaker, I want to talk about Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan.

We're making it easier to build more homes more quickly and in the right places, and I'm excited about that. I take a look at Chatham right now. We've worked with local builders and contractors. We have an area right now in the south part of Chatham where it has already been subdivided. We have lots, and they're building homes—in excess of about 250 brand new homes in that area. For Chatham, with a population of about 40,000, that's exciting news—I'm excited—because we have lost so many jobs under the former Liberal government—supported by the NDP, I might add.

1750

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to talk to the comments over on the other side. You talk about the jobs you created—no mention of the auto sector and their supply chain, the parts sector. Because do you know what's happened since you've taken over office? We've lost jobs in Windsor—taken the third shift out. It's been extended for a bit, but you're going to lose those jobs.

Let's talk about Oshawa, just up the road, where your Premier said, "That ship has sailed: Let 'em go. We don't need those good-paying jobs. We don't need those manufacturing jobs."

You never talk about that. It's not in the bill. It's not in the bill—the ship has left. You don't talk about the 10,000 teachers that you're going to fire. You don't talk about that—good-paying jobs in the province of Ontario.

But here's the one that—and I'm hoping to get my 20 minutes done if you guys don't cut off debate. Wait times in Niagara Falls in June: Do you know what they were? When we have 14 million visitors coming to Niagara Falls—37.5 hours. When I posted it on Facebook, people commented, "Gatesy, this isn't true. This isn't right." So guess what happens? I have a meeting with the NHS, with the acting president of the NHS. I said, "I read this report from CBC. It doesn't even make sense. Is it accurate?" Do you know what they said? "Probably." It's probably accurate that people are waiting that long to get health care.

And don't get me started on listening to you guys talk about affordable housing. Do you know, in Niagara, that affordable housing—do you know what it is? Anybody? Help me out there over there. Help me out; yell it out, whatever you like. We're not talking months. Do you know how many years affordable housing is in Niagara? Madam Speaker, do you know? I know you can't yell it out. It's 14 years. Do you hear that? It's 14 years. The

Liberals and the Conservatives should be ashamed of themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to thank the members from Burlington, Brampton North, Chatham-Kent–Leamington and Niagara Falls for their thoughtful replies.

I heard a number of pieces come up in the replies. I think connecting it back again to housing, as my colleague from Niagara Falls did—in Toronto, the housing crisis is out of control. I've said it a number of times in this House. Much like his wait-list for affordable housing, the wait-list here in Toronto is 15 years, at least. I grew up on that wait-list. My mom went on the wait-list for community housing when she became a single mom when I was nine years old. She wasn't placed in housing until I had grown up and moved in with my husband and was a university graduate starting my life with my partner. She was now no longer a single mom with two young kids; she was a senior with a disability, and her housing needs had completely changed.

It's not just on the social housing side. It's on the tenancy side. We've watched you guys come in and decimate development charges. We've watched you come in and axe rent control, which has been absolutely devastating. Just this week, we've heard of rent increases in the double digits, of landlords coming and saying, "You want to go to a month-to-month lease? That's fine. I'm going to raise your rent \$400 a month." Who can afford that? I can't. I don't know anyone in my community who can. It's absolutely outrageous.

What I don't see is any attempt to address that through Bill 138. It's entirely the wrong priorities for Ontario. If anything, all you've done in Bill 138 is try to walk back and un-muddy the few pieces you did do around development charges which were absolutely terrible. But you're not making any actual investments in community housing. You're not addressing the 15-year wait-list. You're not bringing back rent control, which is what we really need in Toronto Centre and across Ontario. Please, to the government members opposite, rethink your priorities.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Government House leader?

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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