

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 131

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 131

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Tuesday
26 November 2019

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Mardi
26 novembre 2019

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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



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

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 November 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 novembre 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 138, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 138:

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Monday, December 2, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.; and

That the deadline for requests to appear be 2 p.m. on Thursday, November 28, 2019; and

That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designate following the deadline for requests to appear by 3 p.m. on Thursday, November 28, 2019; and

That each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk by 4 p.m. on Thursday, November 28, 2019; and

That each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation followed by 10 minutes divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning; and

That the deadline for filing written submissions be Monday, December 2, 2019, at 6 p.m.; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be Tuesday, December 3, 2019, at 12 p.m.; and

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs shall be authorized to meet on Wednesday, December 4, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m., and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.; and Thursday, December 5, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m., and 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

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

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, December 9, 2019. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

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

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

That in the event of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 20 minutes; and

That third reading debate be limited to two hours with 50 minutes for the government, 50 minutes for the official opposition, and 20 minutes for the independents.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 72. Does the minister wish to lead off the debate? Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: As always, c'est un grand plaisir, it's always a privilege and a pleasure to stand up on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin and talk to the, once again, common theme of this government of time allocation. If I'm correct on my dates, which I think I am, we are Tuesday the 26th; we are looking at submissions by November 28. That's two days. This is a common theme and a common pattern for this government: to really rush things forward, take away the opportunity of individuals to express themselves and bring the concerns of their constituents forward, and it's something that I wish this government would seriously consider looking at. If they are so proud of what they've developed in this fall economic statement, take it out to the public, give them the days and the opportunity, and the weeks that are required to prepare, have the debate, and let's move forward with it. There's nothing wrong with good, robust debate, especially to a bill like this where there are lots of changes that are going to be happening.

So I'm just going to jump in and have a discussion.

Every time we have a new government, something that I always say when I sit down and have a discussion with constituents back in my riding is that every government comes in and has ideas—good, bad or whatever. But it's when they start breaking what is working well, or not investing in what needs investment—I've always told people back home that governments are notorious for breaking something that is working well in order for them to claim they fixed it. That's something that they do. The worst part of this is that they're actually breaking even more stuff. Forward thinking really isn't about breaking more; it's about trying to repair what has been broken.

However, once again, this government is imposing time allocation, cutting debate short. It's getting to be a habit for them, and this is really eroding our democracy. This is really taking away from the public bringing their issues forward and bringing their voices forward.

Members of this government have a lot of power due to our parliamentary system. In Westminster fashion, we trust that they will use this power carefully and wisely. After all, many other countries in the world have decided that a government that gets 40% of the vote probably shouldn't get 100% of the power, but such is our system that we have right now. We've just gone through the federal election and people want electoral reform. People want to have a greater say and people want to have proper representation.

However, having 100% of the power doesn't mean the government should be doing anything they want, and it especially doesn't mean that they should rush into it. Now, I know this government just enjoys it and welcomes every time we stand in this House and we talk about the flaws that they are putting forward in their bills. We take our position seriously. We not only oppose but we also propose, and it's up to this government to take those propositions forward and consider them and add them to the legislation that they're bringing forward. Sometimes things are important that often affect the lives of many Ontarians in ways we don't always foresee. We point out the flaws because we shouldn't pass legislation without fully understanding what we are doing.

So why are we rushing this piece of legislation, big or small, with a time allocation motion? It's a fairly dangerous and irresponsible thing to do. We use it in times of emergency or when the House as a whole has a full agreement on it. It's not a measure to skip the democratic debates we have, just so the government can move faster on their agenda.

The House has a democratic right and a duty to study and debate the legislation that is introduced. When this government chooses to time-allocate debate on something as big and important as this update to the budget, which amends many laws at the same time, they show a clear disrespect for our democratic institution of this province and they completely disregard the best interests of Ontarians. I truly believe this budget update is not in the best interests of Ontarians.

0910

In the government's budget, they took things from bad to worse for everyday families, and in the fall economic

statement, they're sticking with their cuts. It doesn't matter how many times they change the finance minister; nothing in this budget shows that the government has heard the concerns of Ontarians. Teachers and education workers are still worried about losing their jobs. Hospital and health care workers are still trying their best while emergency rooms are filling, the waiting times are extended and people are being treated in hallways. Our children continue to worry about their future on this planet because the full-out Conservative government is still somehow regressing on the fight to protect the environment and tackle the real climate issues that we have. The 2019 budget was full of terrible cuts, but this fall economic statement is just adding insult to injury: more cuts to Indigenous affairs, more cuts to the environment and more cuts to legal aid.

This government keeps repeating that they're doing it to balance the budget, and they're not getting anywhere closer with it. That argument can only go so far when you are wasting \$230 million on the cancellation of green energy projects or wasting a billion dollars cancelling a contract with the Beer Store.

La vérité, c'est que le gouvernement ne se préoccupe pas du monde ordinaire. Il ne se préoccupe pas des enseignants ni des travailleurs en éducation ou bien des travailleurs en santé. Cette mise à jour économique n'offre rien de véritable ou de concret pour aider les Ontariennes et Ontariens; ça part dans tous les sens.

Notre province vit de véritables problèmes auxquels on peut offrir des solutions concrètes, mais le gouvernement préfère créer de faux problèmes et passer tout son temps à essayer de les régler. Je le répète souvent aux gens qui ne travaillent pas ici à Queen's Park, et puis dans mon comté, parce que c'est plutôt contre-intuitif, mais le gouvernement ne fait que passer des coupures et casser de bonnes fonctions pour réclamer qu'ils les aient construites ou qu'ils les aient réparées. C'est un peu comme ça qu'on s'est retrouvé avec le système d'hydro qu'on a toujours aujourd'hui. Le gouvernement conservateur préfère ne pas écouter l'opposition pour comprendre ce qui ne marche pas dans notre province et passe simplement ses projets de loi le plus rapidement possible.

In my opinion, Speaker, the use of this time allocation on such an important bill is not the right thing to do. That's why I will use my time to make sure that this government understands what is missing, on behalf of the people in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin and across northern Ontario. Because trying to keep cutting essential services in the hopes of probably balancing the budget before the next recession, so that we can pay off all our debts and maybe have a few years of government that will be interested in re-investing in programs that have been decimated and left for dead for years, is a big gamble. Why can't we look at investing in smarter ways instead, trying to address chronic problems in our system by being creative and shifting the money around to make sure the government continues to serve its main purpose, which is helping people, helping Ontarians?

For one, this bill isn't addressing the growing problem that we have in northern Ontario. We've been very

generous with the government by making it pretty clear where the gaps are in the standards of access for people in northern Ontario. It's not a secret that northern Ontario depends on many government services. We're creative and resourceful, but the reality is we rely on government to support our communities, to support our municipalities. There are just different challenges in northern Ontario—not better, not good, not bad, just different. Our communities are smaller. Our distances to services are much greater. Here we are in November, and one of our biggest challenges is accessing those services. Now, the good people that are there in those services—the nurses and the doctors—are there waiting for us; however, the challenge is for us getting there.

What I mean by “getting there” is transportation. Now, not all of my communities have buses or the availability of using different options. We have our roads. We don't have a choice, Mr. Speaker; we have to use those roads. We have to get into our vehicle, if we have a vehicle, and our distances are quite far in between. To give you an example, there's a couple in Manitouwadge. It's the furthest community on Highway 614, going into the furthest part of my riding. For them to see a specialist, it's a four-hour ride either going to Thunder Bay or Sault Ste. Marie.

Now, I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but sometimes we wait a very long time to get that appointment with a specialist. Myself, personally, I had an appointment with a specialist last week, and guess what? It got cancelled. It's been rescheduled. So now it's rescheduled for March.

These are the things that are really challenging for us. When we do have that specialist appointment, we don't have a choice. We have to take the road. It's not because we're irresponsible and it's not because we're reckless, but we have to get to the destination of the hospital.

Well, first I want to say, this government last week voted against the motion the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay brought forward in regard to improving the highway classification. Where we have an easy fix, where we have opportunities that we can fix issues quickly—and I know we have a lot of complex problems that we have to deal with; I'll be touching a little bit later on the hydro issue that we have and the complexity of that. But this one, I think, shouldn't have been contested. What the member was asking for was to raise the classification of the Trans-Canada Highway—the artery that connects us from coast to coast to coast—to raise it to the same classification level as the 400 series. I think that was a very easy ask.

But here's the challenge: It was refused. The Conservatives stood in their place. There were three northern MPPs who were at the cabinet table. If anybody knew anything about northern highways—like, I don't know if there's a bubble around Kenora—Rainy River or North Bay or Sault Ste. Marie and, for some reason, those roads are magically safer than the rest of them across northern Ontario.

I remember the member from North Bay when he was on this side, in opposition, how he just, in frustration,

demanded that the highways' conditions and classifications should be raised. I was sure that we were going to get some type of movement on this, but we didn't. What we received in return was, “The roads are good enough.” Well, I'm sorry.

Let me to go back to that lady who leaves from Manitouwadge and travels on the highway, coming out 614 to hit Highway 17 to either go to Sault Ste. Marie or Thunder Bay. There's no plow that is stationed in Manitouwadge. So if a storm happens during the evening or the event, she's stranded and she's missed out on that specialist appointment. Or let's say there is no storm and she goes out. Because the standards are so low and the equipment is not there—and let me just make this clear, Mr. Speaker: My issue is not with the men and women who go on the trucks, who go on the plows, who go on the sanders, who take our roads and make them safer. My issue is not with the contractors. They're living up to their contracts. Some of them still need to be monitored. Actually, no, I'm going to rephrase that: Definitely, some of them need to be monitored, because I'm fully aware that there have been issues in regard to how certain providers are making those services for our highways.

What needs to happen is that we need to increase the classifications of those roads. These are our arteries. This is having a negative impact on our economy. It's having a negative impact when our kids can't get to school, when our family members and loved ones can't get to their activities or their health care appointments. So this is one thing that this government could have fixed—it was an easy fix—but they chose not to.

0920

Another one: Again, let's go on to the transportation issue. At one time we used to have the Northlander passenger train. We also used to have Greyhound. Many of the communities relied—students relied—on these services. Now, once again, this government, when they were in opposition, was singing to the same tune we were, which is, bring back the Northlander passenger train, bring back passenger rail service in northern Ontario, bring back those opportunities in order to get people to and from their destinations. What's changed? Well, probably the same argument that changed from when they were in opposition with our highway conditions: “Northern Ontario? It's good enough. It's good enough.”

It's not bad enough that we don't have those transportation options available to us—safer transportation where we could get the congestion off of our highways. “No, we're also going to make it harder for you by not raising the classifications of your highways in northern Ontario.”

This government recently announced that they're looking at moving the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission from the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines to the MTO. Good or bad, I'm not sure yet. The one thing that I am concerned about is, I'm seeing what is happening right now within the Ministry of Transportation and the transit systems that are in southern Ontario. My big concern, Speaker, is, what the heck is going to happen and where is the focus going to

be, and are we in northern Ontario going to get lost in the unending world of the Ministry of Transportation? That's my concern. I want to make sure, and I'm going to be making sure, that these issues are going to be dealt with.

Here's another issue that wasn't part of their fall economic statement. We all have doctors in our communities, right? We are all proud of our doctors when they come to our community, regardless of where you are. Well, here's a funny story. Actually, it's not a funny story. It's a frustrating story, Mr. Speaker.

Imagine you're in a small community in northern Ontario, so you're in Blind River. And while you're in Blind River, you not only recruit one doctor, but you recruit two doctors, and you were informed by the ministry that to bring those doctors to your community, you're looking at about a six- to eight-week process. Doctors pick up their practice—and they were practising. These are not new doctors. These are doctors that were licensed, ready to practise here in Ontario, and they pick up their practice and come to the community along with their families. They get to the community and find out once they get there—they've uplifted and moved and settled in, anchored in the community of Blind River to provide services and to deal with the wait times. People are excited about having a doctor, because in many communities across northern Ontario, you're looking at about 1,500 to 2,200 people that are orphan patients. So people are excited about having a doctor finally available in their community. And what happens is that the doctors get there and they're told, "Well, wait a second. Due to the bureaucracy within the ministry, it may take up to 20 weeks before you start practising." Twenty weeks. These are not new doctors.

Again, these are things, easy fixes that the government could be fixing within their own bureaucracy. It's not happening.

Oh, boy, there's lots, Mr. Speaker. There's lots. Let's talk about hydro. We have proposed some suggestions to this government that they can consider. And here's another easy fix: Why don't you look at doing a flat line on the delivery charges? Do the calculation. Look at what that will mean for people in northern Ontario. It will mean a very good decrease on their hydro bills for them. That's an easy fix.

There are some complex issues that we need to deal with in hydro. Let's face the facts: This whole issue started with the deregulation of the hydro system under the Harris government. Then fast-forward to what the McGuinty government did and what the Kathleen Wynne government did. It's a mess. I understand that it's complex.

But where you can fix things in order to make it more efficient for Ontarians, you should be able to do that. These are suggestions. This is stuff you could do quickly, as with the roads, as with the transit system. Again, these are easy fixes that this government can do, but for whatever reason, you're not doing them; you're not listening to Ontarians.

Here's another one. I just received this from a constituent yesterday. She is concerned not only with her hydro bill but the rent for her home.

Here, I just did that for a second time. I think Claire Prashaw will enjoy that. I just had to chuck another piece of ice in there. Hi, Claire. How are you doing? I miss you.

This is from Christine Marien. She lives in Elliot Lake. Here's her message:

"Hi, Michael,

"I'm just very concerned with the cost of living and the rent's outrageously high and hydro not being any better. What's going to happen to us all on monthly benefits? I was up last night worrying about this. We are going to be homeless. I wanted to move back to Wasaga Beach. After seeing the rent online, I thought, 'Jeez, I can't even go back.' Rent control has to come in. People can't live in a thousand-and-something-dollar amount. Shouldn't we have a right to live? I'm very worried what's going to happen to all of us."

Again, we didn't see any of these changes that were going to be provided under this economic statement.

Speaker, I could go on and on in regard to what needs to happen, what needs to change.

Broadband Internet: Did we see anything in the economic statement? No. Northern Ontarians keep hearing time and time again in regard to how great it is for people across southern Ontario. There is a huge need and a focus on eastern Ontario. I don't take away anything from eastern Ontario. They need it, but so does northern Ontario. I don't hear these announcements coming forward for northern Ontario.

Oh, Speaker, there are so many things.

Here's the frustrating part: Where this government had the opportunity to hear all these concerns, they've chosen once again to put in time allocation. They're taking away every democratic right of all of these MPPs—your MPPs, as well—to bring those issues forward.

Again, I'm disappointed in this government for bringing time allocation on such a huge change, and I would hope that they would reconsider, in looking at making the opportunity available for all Ontarians in order to bring just some of these issues from my constituents—but I'm sure there are a lot more across this province.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: It's always a pleasure to rise in the House, and I'm happy to do so this morning, to speak to the time allocation of the fall economic statement and to reiterate the importance of passing this bill in a timely manner.

I do want to talk about time for a little bit. Why is it so important that we pass the FES, Bill 138, quickly? Well, 17 days, if we wait—that would be the entire budget for the Ministry of the Environment. I think we can all agree in this House that fighting climate change and reducing our carbon footprint on this earth is crucial. If we waited for 48 days of interest payments on our debt, that would be the entire spend of all of the Ministries of the Environment across our entire country. That's 48 days.

The urgency of getting our finances under control cannot be understated in this Legislature. Madam Speaker, every second that we don't act to address our crippling

debt, left behind by the last government, we are paying \$400 in interest. That's \$1.4 million every hour. We know on the government side that that is money that we must be investing back into our central programs and services that we rely on. Of course, I'm talking about our investments into health care, our investments into education, infrastructure, transit. This is where money should be going. It shouldn't be going to service a debt from reckless spending, a lack of transparency and scandal after scandal. This money should be better spent.

0930

I think everybody in this House can agree that when you run your household at home, your household finances, you must be fiscally responsible. If interest on your credit cards at home was your fourth-largest expense after your mortgage or your car payments or your insurance, you would know that there's something you must change. Well, Madam Speaker, that's exactly the situation we face here in government. We cannot have our fourth-largest expense be interest on our debt.

And so, I urge all members of this House to consider the time urgency of getting our finances under control. It's not just about the money that should be going to our programs and services; it's also signalling to the credit rating agencies our plan and an update on our plan, to say that our plan is working. We need foreign investment. We need investment into Ontario. We need local investment. We need local job creation. This is an urgent matter. This is a matter that—really, every second that passes, we are putting more money into servicing that debt.

I am proud to say that on this side of the House, on the government side of the House, we understand that urgency. That's why we are acting to right the wrongs of the past. We've got that optimistic lens as we look forward into the future, so that we understand—Madam Speaker, on the current path, if we were to continue with our debt situation and our deficit the way it was, by the time these pages here in the Legislature were of age to run for an election, we would at that point be spending more on interest payments than we do on health care. Our debt would grow to half a trillion dollars by that point.

This is an urgent matter, so I urge all members of this House to consider this when you are voting on Bill 138, when you are considering time allocation. The urgency of getting our finances under control cannot be understated.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have to say that I'm saddened to be participating in today's debate on a time allocation motion on Bill 138. I'm saddened because I was hopeful that there was going to be a new era in this Legislature when we got called back following a five-month recess during the federal election.

Unfortunately, the new era has yet to materialize. We were here just last week, in fact, debating time allocation on another bill. It appears that this government has decided that time allocation motions have become routine. This is the way that they are managing their House schedule. They can't contemplate any other means of working

across the aisle to discuss how to move legislation through the process.

We know, for example, when we look at the bills that have been passed by this government since the election in 2018—21 government bills have passed, almost all of them omnibus bills, I might add, Speaker, and every single one of those bills has been time-allocated. This government is so uncreative that they can't even come up with any method of getting their legislation through other than the heavy hammer of time allocation.

Time allocation was never, ever intended to be used on a regular basis as a means of closing debate and ramming legislation through. Certainly it was never intended to be used to close off debate prematurely. Yet what we have seen is that of those 21 bills that have been passed, all of them with time allocation, in nine of those bills—almost half—the time allocation motion was moved before there had even been seven hours of debate.

What that means from our side, from the official opposition side—we have 40 caucus members. Seven hours of debate represents maybe five, sometimes six caucus members being able to participate in the debate. That is not helpful to democracy. That does not enable us as MPPs to be the voice of our constituents and participate in debates about legislation that is fundamental to the way the people that we represent live their lives.

The other troubling aspect of the way this government operates is that five of those bills that have been time-allocated didn't go to committee at all. Debate was cut off. The government moved a time allocation motion that sent the bill directly from second reading to third reading, with no public input, no opportunity for the public to come to committee and raise concerns, make suggestions, or offer support for what this government was going to do—no opportunity like that whatsoever.

In fact, one of the bills that this government has passed—this will go down in the annals of the history books—had the cloud of the “notwithstanding” clause hanging over it. This government made very clear that if the Legislature did not pass the bill on cutting the size of Toronto city council in half, it was prepared to introduce the “notwithstanding” clause, a completely unprecedented use of a mechanism that was written into the Constitution only to be used in the rarest of circumstances, circumstances that would be so much out of the ordinary that only in those cases would the “notwithstanding” clause justify being implemented.

The time allocation motion that we have before us today just repeats the trend that we have seen throughout the term of this government. This motion provides two days' notice for the public to get their requests to present to a committee in to the Clerks. So they have to file a notice that they would like to present by this Thursday at 2 o'clock. Exactly two days from now, people have to be ready to notify the Clerk that they want to present. The time allocation provides one day of public input, with 15 minutes per presenter. And when we talk about “one day,” we're not talking about an eight-hour day; we're talking about a day within the standing orders of this Legislature,

which means that when you have 15 minutes per presenter, we will enable 21 deputations in total to come to this Legislature to express concerns about this bill.

Now, 21 might seem like a reasonable number, but the reality is, there are 40 schedules in this bill. There are 40 schedules that cover a wide range of issues and concerns and priorities that groups across this province, individuals, people in communities across Ontario might have something to say about, and 21 of those organizations or individuals will have an opportunity to come to committee to share what they think about what this government is doing.

Written submissions: The deadline to receive written submissions is Monday, December 2, at 6 p.m. So, I guess, to their credit, there is a little bit more time for people to gather their thoughts, if they have something in writing that they would like to submit about this bill. But the problem is that after the 6 p.m. deadline on Monday, December 2, there is exactly half a day for MPPs who have listened to the public input that's provided to review any written submissions. There is exactly half a day to turn around, to analyze, to interpret, to process the information that has been received and try to fashion it into amendments to strengthen the legislation, to improve the legislation, which is the whole point of public input.

0940

How, Speaker, can you realistically take in the content of the 21 deputations that will be made to the public committee? How can you take in potentially hundreds of written submissions that might be received by this committee? How can you analyze it and interpret it and process all that, and then also craft amendments to be brought forward the next day by noon?

The deadline for written submissions is 6 p.m. on Monday, December 2, and amendments have to be filed by noon on Tuesday, December 3. That is not a democratic process, Speaker. That does not support the process of crafting good legislation, legislation that addresses some of the gaps that people might have identified, some of the red flags that might have been identified. Surely that is why we're here. We're not here just to rubber-stamp whatever this government thinks is in the best interests of the people of this province. We're here to do the best job that we can as the representatives of the people who sent us here. Time allocation motions, especially time allocation motions that are so limited as this one, undermine our ability to represent the people that we serve.

I mentioned the fact that this bill has 40 schedules. Each of those schedules addresses more than 40 pieces of legislation that currently exist. There is a lot of content in this bill that has to be interpreted through the lens of whatever sector people are involved with, whatever experiences they have had, what expertise they might bring to an issue. It is very difficult to apply that kind of analysis to omnibus legislation, because it takes people in so many different directions that it's challenging to try to fully understand what the implications of this legislation might be.

Speaker, I went through the 40 schedules. I was a researcher before I was elected, so I like to do this. I tried

to group those 40 schedules into some kind of thematic grouping so we can see all the places that this legislation touches in the lives of people in this province.

Seven schedules deal with alcohol or beer or cannabis or tobacco. I guess it's not surprising that seven of those schedules would address alcohol, beer and cannabis. This is a government that doesn't seem to be able to introduce legislation without something to do with alcohol. We've seen that almost everything they have brought forward has something to do with making it easier for people to drink alcohol 24 hours at airports, to drink alcohol at tailgating parties, to take their dogs onto patios so they can drink alcohol in the company of their pets. Many of the pieces of legislation that this government has introduced have some kind of alcohol-related measure in them, so seven of the schedules of Bill 138 deal with either alcohol, beer, cannabis or tobacco, as I said. I'm sure that there will be a lot of people who will want to come and comment on some of those schedules, and they will have to be lined up pretty quickly in order to get that request to present to the committee in to the Clerks.

Now, four of the schedules in Bill 138 deal with tax rates—revenue generation for the government. There's a schedule that deals with tax rates for beer, a schedule that deals with the gasoline tax in northern Ontario, a schedule that deals with small business tax rates and, again, a schedule that deals with tobacco tax rates. As I said before, there may be a lot of people who want to come and comment on those schedules about taxes.

Four of the schedules deal with municipal matters. There is a schedule that is specific to the City of Toronto Act, a schedule about the Development Charges Act, a schedule about the Municipal Act and a schedule about the Planning Act.

The interesting thing about the Planning Act schedule—that's schedule 31 of this bill—is that it is related to community benefit charges. This was an initiative that was brought in by this government in Bill 108, a bill that was time-allocated and rushed through this Legislature. This is exactly one of the consequences of time-allocating bills, of rushing bills through the process, of limiting public input: You make mistakes. You make mistakes, and that's why schedule 31 has to be included in Bill 138: Because this government has acknowledged that there was a problem with what they had included in Bill 108 on community benefit charges.

We know that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario is quite concerned about what this government is doing with community benefit charges. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario issued a statement saying that they remain concerned that development charge and community benefit charge revenue will be inadequate to support growth without additional support from existing property taxpayers. They repeat the same cautions that they had expressed around Bill 108: that the methodology for calculating the community benefit charge is of vital importance to the successful financing of local growth-related infrastructure. This bill does nothing to address the fundamental concerns that were raised by AMO during the

debate on Bill 108 about the ability of municipalities to levy community benefit charges that will ensure that growth includes access to recreational facilities, green space and all of those things that our communities need to be healthy and livable places for citizens.

The Planning Act amendments that are in schedule 31 also include new measures around appeals to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, the LPAT. So now, with Bill 138, developers can appeal community benefit charges to the LPAT. When they make those appeals, Bill 138 is very specific that a ruling by the LPAT in response to an appeal—the LPAT is not allowed to raise the amount of a community benefit charge, but it can lower it, which is something that I think developers would be quite interested in. Similarly, the LPAT cannot shorten the time that community benefit charges can be deferred, but it can extend the time before developers have to pay the community benefit charge.

It's interesting that the measure that's included in schedule 31 is something that we have seen many times on the part of this government in terms of responding to the lobbying efforts, the advocacy efforts, of the development community, which certainly would stand to benefit from this new process of appealing community benefit charges.

0950

There are six schedules in Bill 138 that deal with electronic records. Certainly, we live in a digital age, and we recognize that electronic sharing of information and accessing forms electronically makes sense from a government service delivery perspective. But those six schedules deal with a very diverse set of government services.

Schedule 5 enables electronic records for services that are provided under child, family and youth services.

Schedule 9 deals with the Dangerous Goods Transportation Act.

Schedule 18 deals with the Highway Traffic Act.

Schedule 24 deals with the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act.

Schedule 26 deals with the Off-Road Vehicles Act.

Schedule 35 deals with the Shortline Railways Act.

I mention those because I think, again, it reinforces the fact that there are numerous stakeholders who might have very specific concerns related to how the implementation of electronic records is going to work in their sector. Again, we have a limit of 21 deputants who will be able to appear before the committee. That's not going to make it easy for some of these stakeholders to come and express their concerns.

There are five schedules in this legislation that deal with financial services. Schedule 7 deals with the Commodity Futures Act and the Ontario Securities Commission. Schedule 12 is the Financial Professionals Title Protection Act. Schedule 29 is the Pension Benefits Act. Schedule 34 is the Securities Act. Schedule 40 repeals the Toronto Stock Exchange Act.

Once again, Speaker, a lot of organizations, industry associations and professionals who are involved in the financial services sector may have something to say, may have an interest in these particular schedules. They will

have to act fast to figure out what the implications are of these proposed amendments on the work they do, and then to try to get something ready to take to the committee.

There are two schedules in Bill 138 that deal with courts. Schedule 3 makes changes to the way that the courts deal with youth who are convicted of cannabis offences. Schedule 33 deals with amendments to the Provincial Offences Act.

We know that we see young people, racialized young people, who go through the court system and are failed dismally by the justice system in this province. I am sure that there are many citizens who have had that experience of being failed by the justice system, and many youth who end up in the justice system who should be supported by community supports to prevent their entering the justice system, and they might have something to say about these schedules in Bill 138.

I now want to talk about the biggest concern, I would say, within Bill 138, and that is around the four or five schedules that deal with health care.

Schedule 15 deals with the Health Insurance Act. This schedule of the bill allows the minister to share personal information about OHIP billing. Certainly, we know that the privacy of personal health information is sacrosanct. It is the foundation on which an effective health care system relies, because if people don't have trust that their personal health information will be protected, they may be reluctant to disclose certain health concerns to their physician, if they believe that their information is at risk of being made public.

Schedule 15, the changes to the Health Insurance Act, is one of the concerning schedules, but I think the most troubling schedule in this bill is schedule 30, and that deals with the Personal Health Information Protection Act. That allows the use of de-identified data to actually identify someone. It also allows cabinet and Ontario health teams to be able to collect, use and disclose personal health info.

That, Speaker, is extremely concerning, and that is why we had the current privacy commissioner, Brian Beamish, raise serious concerns about these changes to the Personal Health Information Protection Act. He said in a *Globe* article that they were consulted in advance and that they put those concerns right out there.

But I guess this government wasn't interested in what the Ontario privacy commissioner had to say, just like they're not interested in the French Language Services Commissioner, which is why they eliminated that office, and they weren't interested in what the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth had to say, which is why they eliminated that position. They certainly weren't interested in the Environmental Commissioner's perspective, which is why they eliminated her office almost immediately after being elected. This government doesn't really have much use for the kind of independent advice that the legislative watchdog offices are able to provide.

It's not only privacy commissioner Brian Beamish who has flagged concerns about these changes to the Personal Health Information Protection Act. Teresa Scassa, the

Canada Research Chair in information law and policy at the University of Ottawa, says that these changes came as a complete surprise. She says, “These are big things, and they need to be open and transparent, with more public input.” She also cautioned that there would be a need for much more nuanced controls around how this de-identified data is able to be used, because, she says, when combined with other population data available to groups such as marketers or insurers, the data sets could be used to profile individuals and communities.

We’ve seen this. We’ve seen this, Speaker. Earlier we saw this government float the idea about the possibility of administrative health data representing what they called a high-value data set that would boost Ontario’s digital economy if that high-value data set could be made available to marketers, to—you can imagine. You can imagine all of the business opportunities that might open up to people if they could access this high-value data set of people’s personal health information. But you can also, Speaker, recognize how concerning this would be, how alarming this would be, the possibility that people’s personal health information could be collected, sold potentially for profit, but in particular used to identify the person whose data is represented.

I mentioned initially schedule 15, which deals with the Health Insurance Act. The interesting thing about that schedule is that it came as a total surprise to the Ontario Medical Association. There was no consultation done with doctors, with physicians, prior to the development of these changes. There was no heads-up that this is what this government is proposing to do.

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As a result, the medical community is scrambling to put together a response to Bill 138 and to prepare to participate in the public input meetings, which, as we have noted, are going to be happening very, very quickly. There’s a lot of work going on behind the scenes to provide meaningful input into these schedules of Bill 138, to propose changes that would improve it and avoid some of the very negative consequences that could be the fallout of hastily developed legislation that didn’t take into account the perspective of the people who are on the front lines and who can think through what these changes might do in the sector in which they work.

I want to share an email I received from a family physician in London. She’s a new family physician who recently opened up her practice in the community, and someone who is absolutely committed to the patients she serves. She writes, “The transition to practice has been overwhelming and challenging intellectually, emotionally, and professionally.” I want to preface this: We have a shortage of family physicians in London. We have a major shortage of family physicians, so we are so grateful that physicians like this physician who contacted me—we’re very grateful that she has opened up a practice in the community.

But she goes on to say that on top of the challenges of opening up this practice, “the financial burden of starting a family practice is immense.” She says she’s doing her

“best to build a family practice from scratch to provide what I believe is good-quality and empathetic health care to the patients I am rostering.”

She says, “Like every one of my colleagues, my first priority is the health and safety of my patients. My hope is that my patients and I will be working together for the next 20 to 30 years. But actions by current (and past) government give me significant worry, and make me question how I will sustain myself for the career I hope to have.”

She says, “As a new graduate, I am quickly learning that one of the most stressful parts of my job is our relationship with government/MOHLTC, the idea of a constant threat that any new announcement or proposal from the government can negatively impact my ability to keep my office running.”

She emphasizes that “doctors can only work with government when there is a foundation of trust.” Bringing forward legislation that was developed without that open consultative process is not the way to build trust. Bringing in a time allocation motion that cuts off debate and moves very quickly to a very limited period of public input is not the way to build a foundation of trust.

I have another email that I received from a psychiatrist in my community. People in this House will have heard me, on numerous occasions, talking about the crisis of mental health in my communities. It’s a crisis that MPPs are experiencing across the province. We hear the desperate stories of patients, often mental health patients, who are lined up on stretchers in the hallway—no dignity, no privacy. The hospital is the only place where they can get treatment, because there is such a shortage of community-based mental health services.

This psychiatrist writes to me to say, “London has struggled to retain psychiatrists in particular due to huge demand and limited resources outside of the hospital...”

“London lost three psychiatrists in May and another one through death, and speaking to a patient who drove up from Windsor—the wait-list to see psychiatrists is only growing every day. I would like to focus on my patients and patient care and” be preoccupied “with what decisions I need to make on their behalf, not live in fear that someone is going to knock on my door and accuse me of things, and I would be found guilty before I could even show the facts. My psychiatry colleagues are overworked across the province, working up to 12 hours a day in clinic seeing patients...”

Then she goes on to say, “I am quite concerned about the impact of Bill 138 on the mental health of physicians, which means that physicians will either leave the province or have serious mental health concerns, including suicide....”

She says, “I would hope that you strongly consider the impact of Bill 138 on patients and physicians in Ontario—physicians will leave and London will be much worse off than it is now.”

These are very troubling concerns, Speaker. This government claims to be entrusted with ending hallway health care. The schedules that they have brought forward in Bill

138 could actually be compromising health care. It could make the crisis in our hospital system even worse.

Last week, I met with a pharmacist who provides pharmacy services in long-term-care facilities. That's another schedule that's included in Bill 138, schedule 28, which makes changes to the Ontario Drug Benefit Act related to reimbursement for long-term-care pharmacies. She writes, "The cuts that are being proposed are extremely short-sighted and are based off misinformation. I cannot comprehend how someone can propose ending hallway medicine and in the same breath make cuts to a profession that reduces the frequency and number of elderly that are sent to the ER and admitted to the hospital."

If this government is concerned about the amounts that are being spent on pharmaceuticals, there is an option. We could look at a universal pharmacare program that would harness the collective purchasing power of every Ontarian and lower prescription drug costs. But instead, we heard the Premier say point-blank, "Ontario is not interested in a national pharmacare program." Instead, they're going to try to reduce drug costs by compromising the health and well-being of seniors who are living in long-term-care facilities by making these huge cuts to long-term-care pharmaceutical services.

All of these issues that I've raised really merit much more in-depth discussion, much more thorough review and the opportunity to hear from the public so that fixes can be made, so that the legislation can be improved before it actually makes people's lives worse. What we have seen right from the very day they took office—what this government has done is that things that were bad already have become worse. The legislation that they have introduced has taken things from—we had health care hanging by a thread under the Liberals, and now it is worse than it has ever been because, let's face it, the fall economic statement that this government introduced did nothing to reverse the cuts to health care. It actually made the cuts to health care much deeper than—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much. Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 72 relating to allocation of time on Bill 138, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It's not really an introduction, but what I would like to do is wish my

wingman, Jamie West, a very, very happy birthday. Happy birthday.

Mr. Norman Miller: I would like to welcome the family of today's page captain, Laura Foell. In the east members' gallery are her mother, Deanna Foell; her father, Dr. Blaine Foell; and her grandfather, Vern Foell, all from Huntsville, Muskoka. Welcome and have a great day today.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to welcome two dear friends to Queen's Park today: Noah Tepperman and Jay Katz, both of them from Windsor—not both of them from my riding, unfortunately. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I don't know if I can call him my wingman, but I would like to wish the Minister of Education a very happy birthday.

Mr. Jamie West: I want to welcome Jane Kovarikova and the entire group from Child Welfare PAC for coming to Queen's Park. I know there are many meetings with members today, and also that there will be a reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230. I appreciate everyone coming out.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Did you know that Sue Christiansen is here? She is a great worker in my riding. She works in my office and also campaigns for me. Welcome, Sue.

Mr. Ian Arthur: It is my absolute pleasure to welcome to the House again Kelly McGarry. She's a constituent of mine in Kingston, and it has been wonderful to work with her.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to welcome Paul Johnston, Teresa Johnston, Peter Johnston and Barb Pullen. They are winners of the "lunch with your MPP" from the Terry Fox Run.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to welcome everybody who is here from the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs for their annual advocacy day. They're here today with a delegation that includes Jewish community leaders, grassroots advocates and, of course, university students. Welcome to Queen's Park. I'm looking forward to speaking to many of you.

I see Ed Prutschi is here from Thornhill. Welcome, Ed.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to welcome members from the Canadian institute of Jewish affairs, who I look forward to speaking with at the reception during lunch today. Welcome to Queen's Park. I hope you enjoy your day here.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I'd like to specifically welcome Dr. Stephen Sinclair, who is a leader in this province and country in combatting anti-Semitism, and a great constituent from the riding of King-Vaughan. Thank you, Dr. Sinclair, for being here today.

Miss Monique Taylor: My daily introduction to autism parents and advocates: Today we have Amy Moledzki, Michau van Speyk and Kelly McGarry. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

From the Child Welfare PAC, as you've already heard, Jane Kovarikova is here with many of her colleagues, who are having a reception today. Hopefully, many will join us.

With them today was also Wendy Miller from the OACAS. It was fantastic to see her today.

I had breakfast with Christine Legree from Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition. Welcome, all, to Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'd like to introduce a slew of guests I have from Simcoe county. I have Claire Malcolmson, Paul Harpley, Laurie Wallace, Tim Clark, Ross Pityk, Margaret Prophet, Jennie Ucar, Wilma Bunnik, Angela Michieli, David Stinson, Christine Legree, Bob Bite, and members from the Shanty Bay Change Agents—Maija, Nari and Elsa—as well as members of the rescue Lake Simcoe group, south Lake Simcoe naturalization group, Ladies of the Lake, Innisfil District Association, Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition and the Lake Simcoe Coordinating Committee.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I would like to introduce my page from Simcoe North, Lennon Langstaff. Today, his mom, Carly Hawkins, and his stepmom, Brandy Langstaff, are here to welcome him.

I'd also like to introduce members of Child Welfare PAC: Jane Kovarikova, Meaghan Martin, Ingrid Palmer, Renée Ferguson, Rebekah Jacques, Amy Coté, Nadia George, Stéphane Duclos, Jeremy Muchmaker, Paul Berendson and Kemesha Alli. I also encourage all members to join us at the reception this evening.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome members of the White Ribbon campaign: the executive director is Humberto Carolo; Jeff Feiner is the board chair; Mona Mitchell is the incoming board chair; Kate Bojin is the director of programs; and Manoj Paul is the director of finance and operations. Since 1991, men have worn white ribbons as a pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls.

We will be having a picture on the main staircase after question period this morning to support this cause.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I, too, would like to welcome all the volunteers and supporters of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, or CIJA and in particular, our good friend and my good friend, Hartley Lefton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Ford government seemed to break their election promise of lowering hydro bills by 12%. The minister announced that bills will not be going down; they'll actually be going up a minimum of the cost of living annually. Will people ever actually see those promised savings on their bills?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: They sure will. We've been taking steps over the past year to deal with the hydro mess.

In fact, it started out with a piece of legislation that was effectively worded as such. It repealed the Green Energy Act. It dealt with conservation programs that were redundant and no longer useful in the system, while protecting Ontario's most vulnerable groups and their rates. It dealt with a corporate attitude in the utilities of Ontario that were paying executives way too much money.

There are a number of other steps, and one, most importantly, was to take down 750 projects that most municipalities—if not all—didn't want, the grid didn't need and that were terribly expensive. We got rid of those.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, during the campaign, the Premier promised that the horrendous hydro bills people were paying under the Liberals would go down, but families are seeing the opposite.

Dawn Van Nostrand wrote us with concern about her bill, which jumped 7% from last year. She writes, "I am now on a fixed income. My mortgage, heat and hydro are my highest monthly payments. However, I am one of the lucky ones. What happens to the people who are dependent on OAS and CPP? Do they have to start making horrible life choices to keep the power on?"

That's the question for this government, Speaker: Do people like Dawn have to start making horrible life choices to keep the power on, just like they did under the Liberals?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? I think that's the second example of a constituent from the opposition. I'll tell you what: Table their names, give them to me, and I would be happy to give them—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I just gave you the name. They're in the Hansard now.

Hon. Greg Rickford: That's right. They're tabled, so it's official.

We will follow up with those folks—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please make your comments through the Chair. Conclude your answer.

Hon. Greg Rickford: More importantly, Mr. Speaker, through the Chair, I would be happy to meet with those folks, and I would explain to them the statistics year in and year out, that, for the record, I have repeated in this place, most notably, an increase of 22% on November 2015. At the same time, the Auditor General, who, conveniently, the Leader of the Opposition is not speaking about today, concluded that ratepayers paid \$37 billion more necessary from 2006 to 2014 under the previous Liberal government that they supported 100% of the time.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's what people see: The Premier promised bills would be 12% lower; retirees are getting bills that are 7% higher. The Premier's meddling at Hydro One and the hundreds of millions spent tearing down wind farms aren't reducing hydro bills.

Can the Ford government tell us when bills will start going down, or are they ready to admit that they never intended to keep this promise and it was just another Liberal stretch goal?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Somebody appreciates what we're trying to accomplish here in an effort to reduce hydro bills—turns out, it's the Auditor General. When the government tabled their 2018-19 public accounts, the auditor actually reviewed our allocation. In speaking to the media yesterday, she stated that her office had “already looked at the costs associated with the cancellation of the contracts.”

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The audit “looked at all of the ‘big contracts’ and a sample of smaller ... deals to determine whether the government’s ‘calculations are reasonable.’”

The auditor herself concluded: “Based on the review of the contracts and estimates of the payment, I find the audit to be clean.”

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General, the people of Ontario and this amazing caucus recognize the steps that this government had to take to ensure that hydro rates can come down in the future. We intend to deliver on that promise, but not until we've cleaned up the mess that they supported of that previous government 100% at the time.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's interesting that the minister is making these claims, because concern about the real cost of the Ford government's \$231-million war on renewable energy continues to grow.

Ontario's auditor has made it clear that her office will be taking the same approach that that office took during the gas plants scandal: They will conduct a review when the Ford government cabinet, or this assembly, or, as with the Liberal gas plants—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I'm finding it quite difficult to concentrate. It's quite rude, actually.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I would agree with the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Start the clock. The Leader of the Opposition has the floor. She can place her question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The auditor will be taking the same approach as they took during the gas plants scandal: They will conduct a review when the Ford cabinet, or this assembly, or, as with the Liberal gas plants, the public accounts committee, asks for one.

No minister has stepped up yet, Speaker. The government blocked the assembly's efforts to call in the auditor.

Will the government finally do the right thing and direct its public accounts members to vote in favour of calling in the auditor?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Who is the question addressed to?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It was to the Premier, Speaker.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: It turns out that the auditor has been called. It turns out that through the global adjustment, between—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Oh, my goodness. Okay.

It turns out, Mr. Speaker, that from November 1, 2009, to November 1, 2015, we saw rate increases from 5.5% to 22%. As Abigail Mae, my little girl, likes to tell me, the thing is that nobody knew about it. Nobody knew about it, Mr. Speaker, because it was put in this innovative global adjustment fund that was really 90% of a ratepayer's bill. It had been created by the previous government, which was asked to leave because of that scheme. It had been supported by the official opposition 100% of the time, to build those wind towers, Mr. Speaker, and maybe even put them up on the Danforth, as the one member had suggested. They would be only too happy to have 90-metre towers.

Ontario rejected that plan, and they're supporting us in our measures to reduce hydro rates for everybody in this province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It turns out that the Conservatives are doing exactly what the Liberals did.

Today's Toronto Star reports that only a fraction of the companies entitled to compensation have been processed, and that the price tag, which has already grown from zero, which is what the Premier claimed it was going to be, up to \$231 million, will just keep growing.

During the Liberal gas plants scandal, the Conservatives were adamant about calling in the auditor. When they sat on this side of the House as opposition, they wanted that Auditor General to review what the Liberals were paying for the cancelled gas plants.

So now, what are they afraid of? What are they afraid of? Will they call in the auditor and do the right thing?

Hon. Greg Rickford: We're not afraid of anything, actually. It's always incredible when the opposition party needs the Toronto Star to do their heavy lifting. I'll take no lessons from the NDP on this.

The Auditor General has spoken loud and clear. She looked at all of those big contracts and a sample of smaller deals to determine whether the government's calculations were reasonable. The auditor herself concluded—and I quote for the benefit of this place—“Based on the review of the contracts and estimates of the payment, I find the audit to be clean.”

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I think this minister might want to talk to some of his colleagues who were in the Legislature when the Liberal gas plants scandal went down, because they can tell you exactly what happened.

It's amazing how much the Ford government sounds like the former Liberal government. Just like the Liberals, they first claimed their electricity boondoggle would cost nothing. Then, just like the Liberals, they adjusted the

price tag to \$230 million. And now, just like the Liberals, they say the auditor has reviewed the numbers in public accounts and signed off on them. And just like the Liberals, they're refusing to call in the auditor.

Tomorrow, New Democrats will be moving a motion at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, just like what happened when the Liberal gas plants scandal went down. We're going to ask for the auditor to look into this.

Will the Ford government allow that motion to pass? Or will they continue to stand in the way of transparency and accountability and follow in the horrifying footsteps of the Liberals?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Would that be the horrifying footsteps of the Liberals that the NDP followed in 100% of the time?

I'll tell you what my colleagues around this place had to say about their days in opposition and the decisions made by the previous Liberal government and the ones that the NDP supported 100% of the time. They talked out loud about how these wind towers were going to be expensive and erratic. They talked about how they would scar the landscape.

So I had to go where I had gone after all of my years in university: to the literature. I looked through periodicals, and I came across the Climate Change Dispatch. I had a quote yesterday: "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."

That's why we led and got rid of those contracts—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. But all I would urge the members to do is to vote the same way at committee as you did the last time when this was on the docket: to vote with us to call in the Auditor General.

It has already been a tough year for parents and students, but today they started their school day with more uncertainty than usual. Parents, students and teachers are all pointing to the Premier's classroom cuts as the culprit here.

Is the Premier ready to admit that the Ford government's education cuts, which have already done so much damage, were reckless and poorly planned and have created the conflict that parents are seeing today?

Hon. Paul Calandra: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, it is the government's aim to get deals with all teacher unions in the province of Ontario. We have turned to mediation as an authentic means to get those deals, as we did with CUPE.

What is regrettable is that on this date, across the province of Ontario, parents will face more uncertainty singly because unions have opted to escalate at a time when we are trying to keep them at the table and keep their kids in

class. That is our aim. We're going to continue to be reasonable and continue to invest in public education at the highest levels ever invested in Ontario's history, because we believe in the potential of every student in this province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What's regrettable is that for months the Ford government insisted their cuts wouldn't hurt kids in the classroom, and now they're doing everything they can to keep the cuts in place. Only the Ford government would claim that expanding class sizes from 22 to 25 students isn't an increase in class sizes. Only the Ford government would claim that moving from zero mandatory online courses to two is a decrease in the number of mandatory online courses. Half of a bad plan is still a bad plan.

Teachers, parents and students don't want these cuts finessed. They want these cuts reversed. When will the government do that?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, what hurts kids are strikes, and we seek to avoid them, to keep children in this province in class.

What we are doing is investing in public education, at the highest levels recorded in Ontario history, under this Premier's leadership. We're doing this because we want to ensure that young people can graduate and get access to good-paying jobs. In the public accounts, this year alone, we are on track to spend \$1.2 billion more than we did last year. That is proof positive of our defence of public education. We want to make sure English and French urban and rural communities right across Ontario can benefit from those net investments in improving math scores, in positive mental health and in STEM at the front of the class.

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Mr. Speaker, we're not going to be deterred from our aim to keep kids in class, get good deals for teachers and, at the end of the day, improve education for students in this province.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Earlier this month, the minister delivered our government's fall economic statement and, with it, our plan to build Ontario together. The minister outlined a plan that involves creating a competitive business environment in our province.

It's clear that our government understands the importance of supporting small businesses. Would the minister please inform the House of what actions our government is taking to support small businesses in our province?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for that question. Our government understands that small business is essential to our province's economy. That's why we remain committed to making a more competitive business environment for all those small businesses.

To do so, we have committed, in the fall economic statement, to cut the small business tax rate by 8.7%. That will save over 275,000 small businesses up to \$1,500 a year. It's a measure that will benefit small businesses across the province.

That's why, when we visited the family-owned 247 Salon in Brampton with the member from Brampton West and the Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction two weeks ago, we talked to that small business person. We talked to Lu. She understood that this is a government that's for small business, and that's because it creates jobs and opportunity in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you to the minister for his response. It's really exciting to be a part of this government's plan to build Ontario together. Ours is a government that understands that Ontario's competitiveness is essential to our long-term success.

Tax relief for small businesses means that savings can be reinvested to help small businesses grow, create more jobs and boost our economy.

Would the minister please inform the House about the additional steps the government is taking to ensure its vision for an Ontario that is a top global destination to invest, work and create jobs in becomes a reality?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Again, I thank the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for the question.

When you talk to Lu, what's interesting about Lu is she's like a lot of other Ontarians. Her husband is also a small business owner. She owns a salon; he owns an auto repair shop. She said, "We just want to be able to employ people, get ahead, have the things our family wants; and we can do that with a government that supports us."

One of the things we're doing as well for Lu, for her husband and for all those 275,000 small business people is, we are going to create a small business strategy, a strategy for small business success. We'll be talking to small business people about what else we can do, what regulations we can cut, what taxes we can reduce: what we can do to make them successful, to make our province successful.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. While the education minister is busy bungling education negotiations and forcing teachers into job action, students and families are feeling the impact of this government's cuts. School budget cuts in places like Kitchener mean that schools that are already 600 students over capacity are now having to force kids into even bigger classes with fewer teachers.

With teachers taking action to defend public education against cuts, will this government stop their spin, stop the attacks on teachers and education workers and reverse their cuts?

Hon. Paul Calandra: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, the government is going to continue to invest in the defence of public education. It's why we have increased expenditures to the highest levels ever recorded in Ontario history.

Those parents—I agree—seek an investment in their children's future, which is why we put more money into the system than ever before.

Those parents also seek predictability. The question for every member of this Legislature is: Do they stand with parents and with the government to say to unions to cease escalation, stop hurting our kids and start keeping their focus on getting a deal at the table? That is the question. My suspicion is that there is not unanimity of purpose on that question.

Our aim, under this government, is to keep kids in class and to get good deals, as we did with CUPE, that ensure that children's education is never compromised in this province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: If that is the government's aim, they're doing an absolutely terrible job of it. And inflating your spending numbers by throwing child care rebates into that is complete fiction.

I want to go back to the Minister of Education this time. The minister wants to play the blame game, but it's his own government that's to blame for the absolute mess in our schools. The minister says he wants kids in class, but I have heard from kids whose classes are so full now, thanks to this government's cuts, that their desks are out in the hallway. The minister says he wants predictability, but the only thing predictable is that this government's cuts are going to get deeper and more teachers will be fired, and kids are going to suffer.

The minister keeps saying he's being reasonable, but Mr. Speaker, in a world where 10,000 pink slips and overcrowded, underfunded classrooms are considered reasonable, we don't want any part of it. Reverse your cuts.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The way by which we avoid any further escalation is twofold. The first is for unions to consider mediation as a legitimate means to get a deal, because parents in this province are sick and fed up with, every three years, irrespective of the Premier and the party—it does not matter. What is truly the constant is that irrespective of party, there is escalation by unions.

Students of this province should not be compromised in their education. There should be a continuum of education in the class. We should be able to get a good deal for all parties, to keep teachers in class, but most importantly, to provide predictability for the parents of this province, so that every child in Ontario is able to get education every single day this year.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last week, the minister made a light-hearted quip in this House about not being in the Hockey Hall of Fame yet, but if his handling of autism

doesn't improve, he may surely find himself in the political hall of shame.

Rachael Wilcox's son is a nine-year-old boy with autism. His parents are paying out of pocket for his ABA therapy. They have exhausted their savings and are being forced to dig deeper and deeper into their lines of credit, and this government dithers and refuses to release funds to assist families like theirs.

Speaker, will the minister stop skating around his responsibilities and help out this young boy and his family?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks very much to the member opposite for the question, and thank you, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to respond. For the last five months, I've been honoured to be the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, something that I am taking very seriously, Mr. Speaker. The one thing that I can tell you about the autism file is that over the last 30 years, dating back to the Bob Rae government, no government has ever got this file right.

That's why, over the last five months, I've been taking the time to criss-cross the province and talk with interested stakeholders in every community, while at the same time we had an Ontario autism panel that was working deliberately: 18 days they met, face to face, in all-day sessions to develop an autism program in Ontario for the autism community in Ontario.

This is going to be the gold standard when it's finally developed, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that my officials have been working extremely hard, since getting the recommendations from the Ontario autism panel about three weeks ago, to develop a truly needs-based program, one that has double the amount of funding in it than the previous Liberal government's.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: This government has been ragging the puck on autism, and I say that because I spoke with Rachael Wilcox, and she heard back from the ministry. This is what they told her: The ministry's first priority is young children, not older ones that are nine years old like her son. Their second priority is those who have been on the wait-list the longest, not her son, who has only been waiting nearly three years. Three years is an eternity in a child's development.

The minister stated that this government has doubled it and has added \$300 million for autism, but apparently providing it to families is not the ministry's priority. Speaker, can the minister tell this House and Rachael when her son will become a priority?

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member opposite and I can tell Rachael that when this program is fully up and running, every child in the province will be able to get supports from the Ontario government, something that we were never able to say before in the province's history.

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I can tell you, Speaker, that right now, more children than ever in the province's history are getting support from

the Ontario government: 11,499 of them, to be exact, as of November 1. That's not good enough; I acknowledge that. That's why we continue to roll out childhood budgets to families across the province. That is why we are continuing to work towards the gold standard Ontario Autism Program, so that families like Rachael's and families all across the province—I've heard from every member of this Legislature, I'm sure, over the last five months, about constituents or a number of constituents who aren't getting the services they need. But with the investment of an additional \$300 million and a truly needs-based program, we will be able to reach those families with the help they're looking for.

IMPAIRED DRIVERS

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My question is for the Solicitor General. With the holiday season fast approaching, I know that many people in my riding and in communities across Ontario will be attending holiday parties with their families, friends or co-workers. Most of us know not to drive home while under the influence. However, during the last holiday season, police services in the greater Toronto area laid hundreds of charges for impaired driving, including 265 impaired driving offences charged by Peel Regional Police. It's clear that some people still need a reminder about Ontario's impaired driving laws, especially considering the changing landscape of federal cannabis legalization.

Can the Solicitor General explain to this House about the importance of Festive RIDE programs?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Brampton West. I don't think it is a surprise to any in this House and the vast majority of Ontario residents that impaired driving, whether by alcohol or drugs, is an offence and we need to stop it in its tracks in our communities.

He's absolutely right: The RIDE program is augmented during this time of year. It's a tool that we give our front-line officers to keep our roads safe.

I want to remind the public that when you see someone who is abusing it, whether it is through alcohol or drugs, we need to speak up and talk out, because ultimately, we need to keep our communities safe. Whether that is a danger to others on the road or pedestrians, we all have a responsibility.

That is why the municipal police forces across Ontario are increasing their RIDE checks in the coming weeks. Ontario already has strong, immediate penalties for those who drive while under the influence, including 90-day driver's licence suspensions, seven-day vehicle impoundment—

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Speaker, through you, I want to thank the Solicitor General for that answer. I want to thank the hard-working members of the Peel Regional Police service for their work in my community of Brampton West.

Our police services work hard to keep our roads and communities safe from impaired driving every day, especially during the holiday season. It's an important reminder that whether it's alcohol, drugs or both, impaired is impaired. Keeping our communities safe is a shared responsibility, and we all have a part to play in community safety.

Can the Solicitor General outline how our government is supporting Festive RIDE programs across Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Brampton West for sharing this important message. Every day, our police do incredible work to keep our communities safe. Often this work is silent, preventive and unseen. On behalf of all members of the House, I want to thank the police services and front-line officers who are participating in these many holiday RIDE programs, starting this week.

As I said before, our government is committed to providing police services with the tools and resources they need to do their job effectively and keep our communities safe.

Finally, Speaker, as a plea, as a reminder: If you are planning to celebrate the season, please plan ahead. Drive sober. Get home safely. Your families expect it.

POVERTY

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is for the Premier. A new report released today shows what hundreds of thousands of racialized Ontarians and their families already know because it is their lived experience: Black and other racialized people make up nearly 46% of the GTA's workforce but 63% of the working poor. Black communities, in particular, experience among the highest rates of working poverty in Ontario.

What are the Premier's plans to address the connection between anti-Black racism and working poverty?

Hon. Paul Calandra: To the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the question. It's a very important one, and that's why we're taking a cross-sector approach and a cross-government approach to this very, very important issue, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you that over the last number of months that we've been the government of Ontario, I am very proud of our record when it comes to job creation for all residents of Ontario. We have created over 250,000 jobs. At the same time, we have seen salaries and pay increase during that time.

That's why we've taken a very, very concerted effort in my ministry and others, along with the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, to ensure that we're lifting people out of poverty by getting them into work. And there is a lot of work out there. As the Premier has often said in this House, and certainly the Minister of Labour has said, with the success that we've had in creating jobs, there are good jobs out there for all the people of Ontario, that need to be filled.

We're doing what we can in the employment sector in the part of social assistance to lift people out of poverty by giving them a job.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: Back to the Premier: Speaker, that answer and this government simply just ignores the real facts on the ground. Low-wage and precarious employment are what this government and the previous Liberal government had to offer for Ontarians. The economy may be working for the friends of the Premier, but for too many families in places like Brampton, Scarborough and across the greater Toronto area, life is hard, and those jobs simply are not there.

The report shows that over 10% of the working poor in the GTA are second- and third-generation Black residents. The data is clear: Increasing economic inequality disproportionately impacts racialized—racialized—communities, so we need to hear the minister acknowledge racialized communities.

My question for the Premier and the minister is, what is this government's plan to address poverty and the disproportionate impact on racialized workers here in Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: The Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Our government is committed to supporting better outcomes for Black children, youth and families through the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan. Speaker, organizations across the province that are funded through the Black Youth Action Plan are doing amazing work. They are providing key services in communities across the province, including:

- culturally focused parenting initiatives and mentor programs for Black children and youth ages six to 25;

- programming to support young people's wellness by connecting them and their families to local resources and help them take preventive measures;

- supporting access to higher education and skills development opportunities;

- providing training and work placement opportunities to help Black youth who have graduated from post-secondary secure high-quality employment and advance their careers; and

- investing in community outreach and promoting anti-violence.

Our government is focused on improving outcomes for Black children, youth, and families throughout Ontario.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Co-ops provide people in Ontario with access to valuable goods and services, including those that might be otherwise out of reach. They also provide job opportunities across the province, especially in rural and northern regions, where they foster inclusive economic growth for newcomers, women and low-income individuals.

Our government understands that outdated and burdensome legislation creates barriers for co-ops, costing them time and money, which prevents them from growing. Can the minister inform the House on what steps the government is taking to support co-operative corporations in Ontario?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for this important question. Part of our plan to create a more competitive province and to create better opportunities for Ontarians is to modernize the co-operative corporation sector so that they can continue to contribute, particularly in rural and northern Ontario.

Our government recognizes the importance of serving this important sector and the role that they play in communities. That is why, after extensive review and consultations on the Co-operative Corporations Act, we are proposing changes that will level the playing field. We are going to remove the current 50% rule that limits co-operatives to working only with their members and unfairly restricts them from doing business with other members of the community.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one part of our plan to grow Ontario together.

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

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the minister for his answer. I am proud of the work our government is doing to support the success of co-operative corporations in Ontario. Co-ops are an integral part of the small business landscape in Ontario and we remain committed to creating a competitive business environment to ensure their success.

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Earlier this month, the minister introduced our government's fall economic statement, which outlines our government's plan to build Ontario together. Could the minister please inform the House about any additional steps this government is taking to support small business in Ontario?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Small business, as I have said before in this Legislature, is essential. Some 98% of the businesses in Ontario are small businesses, and two million Ontarians, or almost one third of the private sector workforce, work for small business. That's why we are taking a number of steps. We are setting up the small business success task force. We are reducing the small business tax rate by 8.7%. We've reduced WSIB premiums. We have eliminated the cap-and-trade carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, when you put all of those supports in place—the proposed tax relief measures and the other measures—Ontario small business will expect to see \$2.3 billion of relief in 2020.

Mr. Speaker, this is part of our plan to build our province together and to work with small business to support our province and to support our employees.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last night, Highway 17 east to Nipigon

was closed to snow. At the same time, Highway 11 between Nipigon and Cochrane was closed to snow. This is the Trans-Canada Highway; this isn't just a northern Ontario issue. All the trucks that come out of the GTA, out of the engine of Ontario, serving the rest of the country, are stopped dead right there. Millions of dollars of economic activity stopped dead right there. Why won't this government treat the Trans-Canada portion of Highways 11 and 17 the same as the Trans-Canada portion of the 400 series of highways?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I want to thank the member for continuing to raise his concerns about highway safety and the economic impact, as well, of road closures on the lives of Ontarians and on the businesses of Ontario. It is something that, at the Ministry of Transportation, is of great concern to us.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very good record in Ontario of safety on our highways and of maintenance on our highways. As I've said in this House before, making sure that we keep those standards as high as possible is a priority in the Ministry of Transportation. We are working diligently to make sure that we are taking all the steps necessary.

Unfortunately, when it snows, for safety concerns—which I am sure the member opposite would agree is a concern for all—sometimes we have to close the highways. But once those measures have been taken, all necessary steps are taken to reopen those highways as quickly as possible. And in Ontario and in the north, on sections of Highway 11, we are beating the standards of class 1 highways already—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: We are all in favour of safety in this Legislature. The issue with snow on the Trans-Canada Highway: If you can't get it off quick enough, do it more often. That's why this side of the House pushed for Highways 11 and 17 to have class 1 standards like the 400 series highways. You solidly voted against it. The member of Nipissing stated in the media that we don't need class 1 highways in the north.

Again, this isn't just a safety issue. Northerners are cut off, but I don't think that southern Ontario realizes how much it's costing the province, costing the country, to not clean the snow.

The answer is not, "Well, it's snowing; close the highway." It happens all of the time. It's snowing; run more plows. That's the answer. Why won't you do it?

Interjections.

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

The minister to reply.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: As the member opposite knows, sections of Highway 11 and sections of Highway 17 are already considered class 1 highways. And as he knows, because I've repeated it in the House, we already exceed the standard for class 1 highways on other-classed sections of Highway 11 and Highway 17. We already do run more plows, Mr. Speaker, because we take the safety

of drivers and of motorists on those highways very seriously. We want to make sure we're getting goods to market.

The standard for class 1 highways is getting to bare pavement in eight hours. We exceed those standards, Mr. Speaker. Since 2015-16, we've invested \$40 million more on northern highway safety and maintenance. We continue to work to improve our record and to clear snow faster and to make sure that we're doing everything we can to ensure the safety of our motorists. We will continue to do so, but we are investing in northern highways and we will continue to do so in the appropriate way.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is to the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. Speaker, I know that she has had a busy summer touring the province to learn about Ontario's child welfare system, speaking to those on the front line. In fact, the minister came to my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, where she met with our local children's aid society. We spoke about what is currently working in the system, as well as what could be improved.

Can the minister update the House on how these visits to the different children's aid societies in Ontario have gone so far, in respect to modernizing the child welfare system?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that great question. I had the opportunity to visit your beautiful riding this summer. Thank you for joining me as we toured the Children's Aid Society of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, one of the 33 different children's aid societies I have met with so far.

Speaker, we know that all children and youth in Ontario deserve the best care and support, especially those in the child welfare system. The services provided to those in the child welfare space need to be high-quality, culturally appropriate and truly responsive to their needs.

That is why, in August, I announced a review of Ontario's child welfare system. We want to modernize the system and are committed to improving outcomes for children and youth in care, as well as youth transitioning out of care. By consulting with those on the front line and those with lived experience, we can understand their needs and implement their suggestions to improve our system.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. It's reassuring to know that you are working hard to better understand the needs of the child welfare system by directly speaking to those on the front line and who work in the system. This was the first visit by a minister to the local society in some time, and staff were pleased to report on the progress being made. I also know that there was an online survey for those in the child welfare space to participate. This included front-line workers, family law professionals and children who are part of the system, just to name a few.

Can the minister let this House know the impact of the survey and what she has been hearing so far as she looks to modernize the child welfare system?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you, again, to the member.

Speaker, I want to take a moment and thank all of those who participated in our online survey. There were children and youth in the system, families, Indigenous partners, family law professionals, caregivers, front-line workers and sector leaders who took the time to share their experiences. I am proud to share that we had over 3,500 responses to the survey. It is through this feedback that we can modernize the system, where we reduce barriers and build a system that is focused on prevention and early intervention. This would mean that less children and youth would be placed in care and more would be able to stay with their families, which we know provides the best outcomes.

I look forward to continuing to meet with front-line workers, including Indigenous partners, so we can create a system that provides the services needed for children and youth to succeed and thrive.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

M. Jamie West: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. La semaine passée, les étudiants de l'École des sciences de l'éducation à l'Université Laurentienne ont appris que l'université avait décidé d'annuler le programme du cycle intermédiaire-supérieur. L'Université Laurentienne offre le seul programme en enseignement pour la septième à la 12^e année complètement en français. L'annonce de la fermeture du programme a eu l'effet d'une bombe pour les élèves.

Qu'allez-vous dire aux étudiants qui rêvent de et qui désirent enseigner aux jeunes du secondaire en français, mais qui sont maintenant incapables de le faire?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Obviously, I think our government made some very, very strong indications early in my time as Minister of Colleges and Universities, working alongside our Minister of Francophone Affairs, with respect to the Université de l'Ontario français. The work that we have made with respect to the area of francophone relations and education is very critical and important to us as a government.

1120

The work that we are doing is to ensure that we foster an environment where our students across this province can learn and gain an education, and to ensure that they do so in a way that is going to allow them to learn in the French language. We're doing a lot of work to ensure that we can work with the Université de l'Ontario français and other such institutions.

With respect to my friend's comments about Laurentian's specifics, I would be happy to discuss this

with you further, and happy to meet with Mr. Haché, the president of Laurentian, as well to discuss—

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

Supplementary question? The member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Encore pour le premier ministre par intérim : monsieur le Président, ceci est encore un exemple de l'ampleur des coupes en éducation postsecondaire, et encore plus à la communauté franco-ontarienne par ce gouvernement conservateur.

Rappelons-nous qu'en novembre 2018, le gouvernement Ford avait utilisé les programmes d'éducation postsecondaire bilingues comme excuse pour couper le financement de l'Université de l'Ontario français, et tout ça malgré le fait que les conseils scolaires francophones de la province débordent d'élèves et manquent d'enseignants qualifiés.

Ce gouvernement, tout comme les libéraux avant eux, traite les Franco-Ontariens comme des acquis. C'est une question d'équité, monsieur le Président. Comment est-ce que le gouvernement compte régler le problème de la pénurie des enseignants francophones quand la demande ne cesse d'augmenter?

Hon. Ross Romano: To the Minister of Francophone Affairs.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Monsieur le Président, je remercie le député opposé de sa question, mais il sait très bien que c'est notre gouvernement qui a finalement accordé du financement concret pour l'établissement de l'Université de l'Ontario français. Il sait très bien que c'était une promesse—une revendication de la communauté franco-ontarienne—depuis plus de 40 ans, et que le gouvernement libéral précédent avait 15 ans pour accorder du financement concret, et ce gouvernement libéral ne l'a pas fait.

Monsieur le Président, en moins d'un an notre gouvernement a fait ce qui n'a pas été fait pendant très longtemps envers la communauté francophone, pour mettre sur pied l'Université de l'Ontario français.

Pour ce qui est de la question de la pénurie des enseignants francophones, c'est une très bonne question, une question sur laquelle notre gouvernement se penche, et je travaille de très près avec mon collègue le ministre de l'Éducation pour nous concentrer sur cela et pour nous assurer que les étudiants francophones dans cette province et les enseignants—

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

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Mr. Speaker, farmers in Ontario have been dealing with a cold, wet spring and a disappointing harvest. Often this is the nature of farming, and we have to do our best to support our farmers in these difficult times.

Last week I received an email from Andy Corput, a farmer in my riding, telling me that after a long and difficult harvest, his propane shipments had been cut off due to a CN strike. I'm happy to say that as of early this morning, the strike is over. Nevertheless, this highlights the difficulties our farmers face regularly, especially those who rely on propane to dry the harvest, which otherwise could be lost.

Andy was not the only farmer struggling. Will the minister please tell us about what the government has done about this strike?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry for the question. I'm proud to say that given the strike is ending, farmers can rest assured that CN rail workers will be back on the job tomorrow at 6:30 a.m., and we can expect propane shipments to start once again.

This was squarely a federal issue. Last week I called my federal counterpart, Minister Bibeau, to press the federal government on this very issue. The Premier likewise pressed the Prime Minister on this matter, highlighting the struggles farmers face.

Last Friday I visited Dan Veldman, a corn farmer in my riding facing much the same issue that was mentioned.

Our government acted quickly and proactively, and reviewed ways to help farmers in rural communities during this time. This highlights the vulnerabilities farmers face regularly, but our government will always be ready to stand up for Ontario farmers and rural communities.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you to the minister for that answer. Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to supporting farmers and supporting rural Ontario, and I am encouraged that the strike has ended and am encouraged by our government's quick action on the matter.

Farmers have struggled long enough, and deserve clarity when every effort is made to ensure that they are able to dry their harvest and bring their goods to market. Their livelihood depends on it.

Unfortunately, I know this isn't the only federal issue that is impacting farmers. Can the minister tell us the other issues he's working on with his federal counterparts?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member again for that great supplementary question. I'm pleased that Minister Bibeau has been reappointed to her role, and I look forward to continuing to work with her on the challenges our farmers are facing. I've talked to her a number of times since the reappointment.

Another urgent federal issue impacting our farmers is the shortage of processing capacity for our cattle. The CFIA has suspended the licence of one of the large federal plants here in Ontario, which means that farmers have nowhere to ship their cattle.

We have communicated to the federal government the urgent situation our farmers are facing. We urge them to find a solution as quickly as possible that both maintains our high levels of food safety and creates capacity for our farmers.

We are committed to standing up for our farmers and working with the federal government as they address these challenges our farmers are facing. Thanks again for the question.

RETIREMENT HOMES

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Over the weekend, we learned from a CBC Marketplace investigation that some seniors homes are using Ontario's trespassing law to ban family members from visiting their loved ones when they speak out about their living conditions.

In Ottawa, Mary Sardelis was banned from seeing her 97-year-old mother, Voula, for 316 days after she raised concerns about her mom's living situation.

Speaker, it's not an isolated incident. The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly gets called about trespass matters like this at least once a week.

In my opinion and, I think, in this House's opinion, banning family members for raising concerns about living conditions of seniors is wrong.

So my question for this government: Will they launch a full investigation into retirement homes using trespassing laws in these ways, to make sure that family members can access their loved ones when they want to see them?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I would like to thank the member who's raising that question. I'm well aware of this. It's my understanding that one of the family members is banned from coming into the long-term-care home because of some—how can I say it?—uneasy incident that happened and is now being investigated. I will come up there later in more detail. The daughter of the 97-year-old senior can contact her mother in different ways, because when the daughter comes to the retirement home, some violent incident happened against the staff.

So I'd like to get more details, and next time I will get a more detailed answer to you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Joel Harden: Back to the Deputy Premier or the minister: Just to be clear, this is a CBC Marketplace study. Any of us can avail ourselves in watching it. If you haven't watched it, you really must.

In this case, Mary was not allowed to see her mom, Voula, on Christmas, Thanksgiving or even her birthday, for 316 days for asking questions about the living conditions of her mother. That's not disrespectful of the staff. That is the duty of us and families to take care of each other.

I think it's unacceptable that Mary had to risk arrest. She defied the trespass order, went into the home and waited for police to come so she could raise her objection to this process.

I want this government to take this concern seriously. I'm not trying to score points. I want you, as a minister, to

actually do something about this. I want you to use your power to investigate retirement homes to make sure Mary and other loved ones get access to their loved ones on a timely basis. Please do your job.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you again for the question. At the present time, the situation is under investigation so I cannot answer in more detail. But I'll make sure that we will help the family at the same time, for the staff and all of the residents in that retirement home. So I will get back to you with more later.

1130

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Mr. Vincent Ke: My question is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Minister, suicides continue to affect too many people and families across Ontario each and every day. In fact, suicide has become the second-leading cause of death for young Canadians aged 15 to 19. We know that in Ontario, about 14% of high school students reported having seriously contemplated suicide in the past year and about 4% reported having attempted suicide. These numbers are staggering.

Minister, could you please share with the members of this Legislature what our government is doing to address suicides in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member from Don Valley North for that question. As the member mentioned, suicide continues to affect many people and families across Ontario each and every year, including far too many young people in communities throughout the province. That is why we will continue to invest \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years to build an integrated mental health and addictions system.

Our investment will reach across an individual's entire lifespan, where services are easier to access, of high quality and focused on better outcomes for Ontarians, including children, youth and their families.

Notre investissement couvrira toute la vie d'une personne, où les services sont plus faciles d'accès, de haute qualité et axés sur de meilleurs résultats pour la population ontarienne, y compris les enfants, les jeunes et leurs familles.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: I want to thank the minister for his response. I am thrilled to hear that our government is taking the ongoing issues around suicide very seriously.

Suicides continue to affect people of all ages across Ontario. It is reassuring to hear that our government is taking real action to address suicides and is supporting suicide prevention initiatives across the province.

I know that constituents in my riding of Don Valley North would like to know more about the various programs and services that are available to those who may be struggling. Minister, could you please provide some additional details about the investments we are making to

address the ongoing issue of suicides in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'm proud to stand here today knowing that our government has taken real action to address the ongoing issues surrounding suicide across this province. Recently, our government was proud to announce an investment of \$3 million over three years in a new mental health initiative called Project Now, which aims to end child and youth suicide in Mississauga within the next decade, by the year 2029.

Recent investments also include \$6 million in intensive services for youth addictions, including withdrawal management services and residential treatment, and \$3.5 million for early psychosis intervention services. In addition, we will be providing \$3.3 million over four years to test an integrated youth services approach currently known as youth wellness hubs.

Mr. Speaker, new investments are also being made across our government, such as mental health initiatives in the schools—

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. More than 18 months ago, the Ministry of Labour ordered Isabelle Faure's employer, Mankind Grooming, to pay her \$5,000 in back wages. When the payment deadline was missed, the order was sent to the Ministry of Finance, but the ministry has not collected the payment because the company Isabelle worked for changed its legal name.

Isabelle says that she had no way of knowing that the Ministry of Labour would do "essentially nothing" to enforce its own regulations, and she has yet to receive her money.

Will this government act now to enforce orders against employers like Isabelle's who break workplace laws?

Hon. Paul Calandra: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I commend the member from London West for this question.

I want to be crystal clear: Our government stands shoulder to shoulder with every worker in the province of Ontario. As Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, I expect that the Employment Standards Act is followed to the letter, and I believe strongly that the Occupational Health and Safety Act should be followed as well.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have more to say in the supplementary on this particular issue but, again, we expect the Employment Standards Act to be followed and the Occupational Health and Safety Act to be followed.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, this government is not standing shoulder to shoulder with Isabelle, nor with many other workers.

A year ago, the Ministry of Labour ruled that Juan Jose Lira Cervantes was owed more than \$25,000 in lost wages

and benefits. Like Isabelle, Juan is still waiting for his money. The corporation that owned Domino's Pizza, Juan's employer, simply dissolved two months after the order was issued. The Ministry of Finance says it can't collect from a company that no longer exists, even though the Domino's Pizza franchise where Juan worked is still going strong. You can go there today and order a pizza.

About two thirds of employees whose wages are stolen by their employers never receive what they are owed. Will this government close the loopholes that allow employers to ignore their obligations to the people who work for them?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: As Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, I believe strongly that when someone goes to work, they deserve to be paid for a fair day's work.

But let me tell you a bit about what we did in our ministry in 2018 and 2019. Mr. Speaker, we resolved 22,434 claims in the province to ensure that people were paid for a day's work and for their time working with an employer.

We continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with every single worker in the province of Ontario. That's why I am proud of our track record. In 16 months, we have created more than a quarter of a million new jobs in the province. Wages are going up. I thought the member from London West would support our action to eliminate the provincial income tax for those earning under \$30,000 per year.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Beaches–East York has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services concerning Black communities in poverty. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Also pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Ottawa Centre has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility concerning trespass orders in retirement homes. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 72 relating to allocation of time on Bill 138, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the members to please take their seats.

On November 26, 2019, Mr. Calandra moved government notice of motion number 72 relating to allocation of time on Bill 138. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Jones, Sylvia	Piccini, David
Baber, Roman	Kanapathi, Logan	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Rickford, Greg
Bailey, Robert	Ke, Vincent	Roberts, Jeremy
Barrett, Toby	Khanjin, Andrea	Romano, Ross
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kusendova, Natalia	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Lecce, Stephen	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	MacLeod, Lisa	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Martin, Robin	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Martow, Gila	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Miller, Norman	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Mitas, Christina Maria	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Mulrone, Caroline	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ghamari, Goldie	Nicholls, Rick	Wai, Daisy
Gill, Parm	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Park, Lindsey	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Mike	Parsa, Michael	
Hogarth, Christine	Pettapiece, Randy	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Schreiner, Mike
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Shaw, Sandy
Begum, Doly	Hatfield, Percy	Simard, Amanda
Bell, Jessica	Hillier, Randy	Singh, Gurratan
Berns-McGown, Rima	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Sara
Bourgouin, Guy	Kernaghan, Terence	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Burch, Jeff	Mamakwa, Sol	Stiles, Marit
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Fraser, John	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	Morrison, Suze	West, Jamie
Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Glover, Chris	Rakocevic, Tom	Yarde, Kevin
Gretzky, Lisa	Sattler, Peggy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 61; the nays are 41.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

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

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a friend of mine and PhD candidate in my riding of London North Centre: Jane Kovarikova, and the Child Welfare Political Action Committee members who all have lived experience, including Christine Bradley, Kristy

Denette, Carina Chan, Amelia Merhar and Carlos McDonald, but also the Child Welfare PAC allies volunteering in the Legislature today, including Wendy Miller, David Morneau, Stephanie Vizi, Jana Smith and Ann Fitzpatrick. Welcome to the people's House.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I welcome back to the House some of our guests from White Ribbon: Humberto Carolo, the executive director; Jeff Feiner, board chair; Mona Mitchell, incoming board chair; Kate Bojin, director of programs; and Manoj Paul, director of finance and operations. I recognize some of you were here in the morning who aren't here in the afternoon, but I'm very happy to see you. Welcome to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M. Michael Mantha: On vient juste de finir notre semaine de circonscription, et je suis certain que tous les députés, quand ils ont visité leurs communautés, ont reçu les histoires ou bien donc les misères que les gens de nos circonscriptions ont à travers leur journée. Je veux en partager une aujourd'hui.

J'ai rencontré M^{me} Lorraine Lemieux à Chapleau. M^{me} Lemieux me contait comment elle prenait soin de sa mère qui était prise dans un lit à long terme à l'hôpital—excusez, un « ALC bed » qui est à l'hôpital, qui devrait être un « long-term-care bed ». Elle prend soin de sa mère. Elle est là trois ou quatre fois par jour pour faire certain qu'on prend bien soin de sa mère. Puis Lorraine est claire que son problème n'est pas avec les gens qui travaillent à l'hôpital. Ce n'est pas avec eux. Elle sait qu'eux autres font tout leur possible. Mais une journée, ce qui est arrivé avec sa mère—elle a été prise dans son lit sans se faire changer pour la pleine journée. Coudonc. Elle m'a regardé et elle a dit : « C'est ma mère. Je l'aime, ma mère, puis je vais en prendre soin. Mais je ne sais pas où aller pour faire certain que les problèmes soient adressés et pour qu'on prenne bien soin d'elle. »

Lorraine m'a laissé savoir que son problème n'est pas avec les gens à l'hôpital. Son problème est avec les fonds qui ne sont pas disponibles pour l'hôpital. Il faut qu'on change les affaires et puis qu'on fasse les investissements nécessaires dans nos maisons à longue durée.

CPAC

Mrs. Daisy Wai: This weekend, I had the honour of participating in the 2019 CPAC annual gala. CPAC, formerly the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada, was first founded in 1992 as a registered not-for-profit organization. Their mandate is to assist internationally trained professionals in gaining recognition, cultural integration, career advancement and civic engagement in Canada and abroad.

I am very impressed with the four recipients they recognized this year. Serena Chan, a partner of IBM Financial Services, is one of Canada's top 50 women in FinTech. Serena holds 16 professional certificates, is a four-time IBM Redbooks author, and has received 28 personal awards.

Dr. Heyu Ni is the platform director for hematology, cancer and immunological diseases at Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital, a senior scientist at the Canadian Blood Services Centre for Innovation, and a professor at University of Toronto. Dr. Ni is ranked number one nationwide for fundamental research.

Allow me to say two more very quickly.

Clara Weng is a private banker at HSBC and is the president of Emerging Young Artists.

Dr. Mingyao Liu is an exceptional academic leader who has overcome the impossible. Despite not having an education background in North America, he became a professor at the University of Toronto.

Congratulations to all on their achievements.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, why is the government afraid to go on record and state, once and for all, that it will not amalgamate any of the existing 59 municipal ambulance services? Why is the government afraid to go on record and state, once and for all, that it does not intend to privatize any portion of ambulance service delivery in this province?

Ontario's existing 8,800 front-line paramedics, along with our 1,100 ambulance communication officers, serve our communities 24/7 with world-class pre-hospital emergency care and transportation for over 1.2 million Ontarians.

Presently almost one third of all 911 calls for medical assistance come from the elderly. As this age demographic continues to increase, the demands on paramedic services will increase like never before. By investing into modern ambulance dispatch technology, more patients could be diverted from our overcrowded ERs as more could be treated on-site or transported to other, more appropriate health facilities.

Is the government prepared to proactively invest and expand upon the existing community paramedic programs, which have been shown to reduce the number of 911 calls and transports to hospital for the most vulnerable sectors of our society? In fact, Speaker, the city of Hamilton saw a 58% decrease in frequent ambulance callers compared to the previous year simply by connecting with select patients and monitoring health risk factors before they became medical emergencies requiring ambulance transport to the ER.

With the appropriate tools and resources, the current municipal-based ambulance service delivery model is more than capable of meeting the increasing demands for emergency pre-hospital medical assistance.

In closing, paramedics tell me to tell you, "Hands off our municipal ambulance services, please."

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Today I am standing up to say no to bullying. Last week, from November 17 to November 23, was Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. School boards and various groups across Ontario commemorated this very important week and held ceremonies and workshops that aimed to shed a light on bullying and to stop bullies in their tracks.

As a teacher, I have a long track record of involvement in anti-bullying initiatives. When I lived and taught in China, I organized my school board's first-ever anti-bullying awareness week. When I served as the president of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education graduate students' association, I served as an ambassador for International Day of Pink, a day against bullying that originated in Nova Scotia, of all places, when one male student saw another male student being bullied for wearing a pink shirt and he said it wasn't okay.

Now as a mother of almost two, I am very keenly aware of the pressing need to ensure that bullying is eradicated in Ontario, in Canada and across the world. On this note, I must say how proud I am knowing that my riding of Scarborough Centre not only fought against bullying last week, but does it every day. David and Mary Thomson Collegiate Institute held an anti-bullying workshop with Suitcase Theatre last week. Winston Churchill Collegiate has put a student team in place that is reviewing their anti-bullying policies and revising them with the school administration. These are just a few examples, but they really illustrate that schools are taking bullying seriously at every level. Students, teachers and administrators are fighting together.

As a government, we are also fully committed to being a part of this fight. We pledge to do everything we can to ensure that all students go to school and they feel supported, respected and encouraged to be their best selves.

Please join me and anti-bullying allies across our great province and country in standing up to bullying today and every day.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'm happy to rise today in this House on behalf of the constituents in Thunder Bay-Atikokan in northern Ontario. As my northern colleagues and I have pointed out many times, we do not believe that this PC government is in touch with the reality of living in the north. Many things that those in the south take for granted are not our reality.

We have pointed out that we have poor or no broadband Internet or wireless services in many areas, as this government moves toward digital online public services and mandatory e-learning.

We have pointed out treacherous road conditions on our highways, only to be quoted data that ignores the above-average fatality rates and that most of our highways are two lanes with no barriers.

Our access to health care is also problematic as we face an opioid crisis. We lack detox and treatment spaces. We lack mental health resources. The model for resources based on population and that ignores our vast geography is flawed. We must travel long distances for specialists, diagnosis, treatments and follow-ups. This comes with a tremendous financial burden.

I want to give a huge shout-out to all the people who are donating to Our Hearts at Home, who are raising money so heart and vascular surgery can occur in Thunder Bay.

The Northern Health Travel Grant is supposed to ensure that people in northern Ontario have reasonable access to health care. It is falling far short on that and needs to improve.

1510

VAPING PRODUCTS AND E-CIGARETTES

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I rise today to express concern about the increasing prevalence of e-cigarettes and vaping products among youth in Ontario. We know that e-cigarettes and vaping products have harmful health impacts, particularly on young people. These products have high levels of nicotine, a substance which negatively impacts youth brain development. They also contain chemicals linked to cancer. There is a link between the use of these products and the development of lung disease and other serious health issues, and that health link is becoming clearer every day.

Despite these risks, use of these products by young people is increasing. Recent research from the University of Waterloo indicates that youth vaping is rising at an alarming rate in Canada, and the US centre for disease control has declared youth vaping an epidemic.

The Toronto District School Board is calling on the government to address this growing health crisis in our schools. Among their recommendations are a ban on e-cigarettes until sufficient scientific research on their adverse health effects can be conducted, the removal of flavoured e-cigarettes from the market, additional regulations on the selling and restrictions on the advertising of e-cigarettes and vaping products, and the provision of funding for schools to install vape detectors.

Mr. Speaker, the information on vaping is coming fast and furiously. It is becoming an emergency and urgent issue. For the present and future health of our young people, I implore the government to consider these recommendations and take further steps to address this critically important issue.

VELVET REVOLUTION

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Today, I rise to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the velvet revolution and the fall of Communism in eastern Europe. As someone with Czech, Slovak and Polish roots, the date of November 29,

1989, is of utmost significance to me. For almost 50 years, an Iron Curtain had descended across Europe, separating the east from the west and subjecting eastern Europe to years of brutal totalitarianism.

In 1989, the people of what was then Czechoslovakia took to the streets to agitate for an end to one-party Communist rule. On November 17, riot police suppressed a student demonstration in Prague. The event marked the 50th anniversary of a violently suppressed demonstration against the Nazi storming of Prague university in 1939, where 1,200 students were arrested and nine were killed. On November 20, the number of protesters assembled in Prague grew from 200,000 the previous day to an estimated half a million.

The movement was completely non-violent. With nothing but words and non-violent action, the people of Czechoslovakia ended Communist rule in their country on November 29, 1989. The velvet revolution, along with other movements, such as Polish Solidarity, helped bring down the Iron Curtain once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, today, we watch others around the world fight for their freedom and democracy. So my message to this House is not to take our freedom and democracy for granted.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Suze Morrison: I rise once again in the Legislature in solidarity with tenants across this province who live in constant anxiety about keeping a roof over their heads during the housing crisis.

This government is doing absolutely nothing to protect tenants and has, in fact, taken the housing crisis from bad to worse. By slashing rent controls, this government gave landlords a free pass to raise rent by as much as they want. We are seeing it in West22, the apartment building in Weston whose residents received notice of rent increases of as much as 25% and who are still facing a rent increase of up to 10%.

The government is propping up predatory landlords at the expense of everyday Ontarians. Make no mistake, Speaker, this is an attack on renters in this province. This government seems to believe that profits are more important than people. I commend the tenant associations who have worked together to assert their rights and stand up to landlord abuse.

Under a government determined to gut their rights, organizing together has never been more important. That's why I'm hosting a tenants' rights workshop next Tuesday, December 3, with the help of local lawyers in the community who work with tenants.

Building tenants' collective power is a priority for me and my office, and I will continue to support tenants to learn and assert their rights, to form tenant associations and to hold landlords accountable.

I encourage this government to do more for tenants, and you can start by reinstating rent controls.

VISIT TO PUNJAB

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to stand in the House to speak a little about representing our government at the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, who was the first guru and founder of Sikhism, a poet, a religious teacher and a social reformer. His philosophy is the key to the creation of a harmonious society based on tolerance, peace, communal harmony, women empowerment and protection of natural resources.

The visit to Punjab, India, enabled me to see first-hand significant input by society as a whole—the police, government, visitors and all of those involved—to allow hundreds of thousands of people to peacefully visit Sultanpur Lodhi, which is said to be the place where he lived for 14 years. It is here that he gained enlightenment at the end of the 15th century.

Aside from the spiritual part of my visit, I also met with officials, businesses and partners to discuss ways to work together to increase trade with India. Together with Minister Fedeli and MPP Anand, we saw how many companies wish to do business with us here in Ontario, and we were able to talk with them in great detail regarding our talent in the IT sector and products and architecture that can be used in their infrastructure. At the conclusion of our mission, I met with members of the Punjab dairy farmers and spoke of our great technology and farming techniques, which they are looking to adopt.

I look forward to a number of delegations that will be visiting us in the near future to look at investing in our great province. All in all, Speaker, it was an excellent, productive trade mission that will bring great results for us here in Ontario.

JIM FLAHERTY

Mr. Lorne Coe: For 64 years, the Whitby Chamber of Commerce has presented the Peter Perry award to a person who has made significant contributions to the Whitby community. It's Whitby's most prestigious honour.

On November 21, at its annual Business Achievement Awards gala, the late James Michael Flaherty received the Peter Perry award. I was honoured to be present to watch my colleague and friend the Honourable Christine Elliott, accompanied by two of her three sons, accept the award on Jim's behalf.

In presenting the award to the Deputy Premier, Whitby mayor Don Mitchell referenced many of Jim's outstanding provincial, federal and international accomplishments in public service. As I listened to the mayor's remarks, I was reminded of a speech that Jim gave to students at Western University in 2011, when he encouraged them to consider a career in public service. "Public service is good for you," he said. "You will have opportunities to change the world around you in a varying ways, and to different degrees, large and small." Speaker, Jim Flaherty did indeed change the world around him, and we will never forget all of his accomplishments—never forgotten.

I congratulate Minister Elliott and her entire family on Jim being Whitby's 2019 Peter Perry award winner.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 26, 2019, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DYSLEXIA AWARENESS MONTH
ACT, 2019LOI DE 2019 SUR LE MOIS
DE SENSIBILISATION À LA DYSLEXIE

Mr. Harden moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 149, An Act to proclaim Dyslexia Awareness Month / Projet de loi 149, Loi proclamant le Mois de sensibilisation à la dyslexie.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Ottawa Centre care to explain his bill?

Mr. Joel Harden: Yes, Speaker. This bill proclaims the month of October of each year as Dyslexia Awareness Month.

ENSURING TRANSPARENCY
AND INTEGRITY IN POLITICAL PARTY
ELECTIONS ACT, 2019LOI DE 2019 VISANT À ASSURER
LA TRANSPARENCE ET L'INTÉGRITÉ
DES ÉLECTIONS DES PARTIS POLITIQUES

Mrs. Karahalios moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to enact the Ensuring Transparency and Integrity in Political Party Elections Act, 2019 / Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2019 visant à assurer la transparence et l'intégrité des élections des partis politiques.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd like to invite the member for Cambridge to explain her bill briefly.

1520

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: The act provides rules relating to the election of an official party candidate for an electoral district, the election of a leader of a political party and the election of a president of a political party.

The act requires a report to be filed with the Chief Electoral Officer within seven days after an election, and the report must set out, among other things, the number of persons who were eligible to vote in the election, the number of persons who voted and the number of votes that each candidate received.

The act permits a candidate to contest the validity of an election by commencing an action in the Superior Court of Justice.

The act sets out various offences related to voting in an election.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

Hon. Todd Smith: I rise in the House today to recognize the White Ribbon campaign and the work done to educate men and boys that violence against women is never acceptable.

We introduced members of the White Ribbon campaign earlier this morning in question period, but I'd just like to welcome them back here this afternoon. Humberto Carolo, Jeff Feiner, Mona Mitchell, Kate Bojin and Manoj Paul all joined us for question period and again this afternoon.

The White Ribbon campaign was born in London, Ontario, back in 1991. The campaign asks men to wear white ribbons as a sign of their pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls. Just two years earlier, prior to 1991, Canadians watched in horror as news broke of the murder of 14 women at École Polytechnique in Montreal. That was 30 years ago next month, on December 6, 1989. They were targets because they were women.

It's perhaps fitting that yesterday, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses joined us at the Legislature for their Wrapped in Courage purple scarf campaign to raise awareness of violence against women and children in Ontario. OAITH's work is vital not only in our communities for women who have found themselves in difficult and harrowing situations, but their advocacy serves as a reminder to us all that we must do more to eradicate abusive behaviour. The purple scarf symbolizes the courage that it takes for a community to end that violence. Today, the reminder is to men and boys. Tomorrow, the courage will be to raise your voice and confront what you know to be wrong.

Violence against women is both a global problem and a Canadian problem. It's also preventable, but only with a united stance. Globally, the statistics are shocking. Half of all women who are killed were killed by their partner or

another family member—half. That number drops to one in 20 for men. Some 700 million women on this planet were married before their 18th birthday. That's 10% of the world's population.

It's often easy to fall into a trap of believing that because women's rights have progressed in Canada or because we see gender-based atrocities in other parts of the world, violence here is rare. My friends at OAITH and White Ribbon would disagree, and I know this House would disagree. It upsets me that men are running a large network of human trafficking right here in Ontario. It should upset us all. It angers me, actually, that that is happening right here in our province. It's disgusting that it's happening in Ontario, and it galvanizes me and I know it galvanizes many other men in Ontario—and women, too—to take action.

It wasn't long after assuming my new portfolio as Minister of Children, Community and Social Services that I began to realize the depth and gravity of the human trafficking issue here in the province. I know that my colleague who was previously the MPP—she still is, actually—for the Kawartha area—and I'll leave it at that; I know it has changed a couple of times. She brought in a private member's bill a number of years ago, the Saving the Girl Next Door Act, and that seemed to really spur on a lot of interest in this topic. Government legislation came after that, and we continue to work away at this issue.

It's quite remarkable, Speaker, in a bad way, that Ontario is that major hub for human trafficking in our country and on this continent, with nearly two thirds of police-reported violations in Canada occurring right here in our communities in this province. Sadly, the victims of sex trafficking are predominantly young women—not even young women. They're young girls, age 13. The average age of recruitment is 13. That means it's happening earlier than that, and that's a frightening thing.

If you are a father of two girls like I am, or if you aren't a father at all—that distinction shouldn't matter—this should bother you. It should bother all of us. More men should feel the same way. As a man and as a member of this government, I'm choosing to be a part of the solution, and I encourage other men to stand with me to speak out and act against this heinous crime and all violence against women—not just human trafficking, Mr. Speaker, but all violence against women.

Our government is committed to raising awareness and combatting human trafficking as well as increasing access to dedicated services to help survivors heal and rebuild their lives. Over the last several months, we hosted a series of round tables to source new ideas for combatting human trafficking. We listened to front-line workers and we heard the harrowing stories of survivors. And they are harrowing. They make the hair stand up on the back of your neck when you're listening to their stories.

I want to assure this House that very shortly we're going to be taking further action against human trafficking. Combatting human trafficking is part of our government's commitment to protecting women and children and putting an end to gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse.

As men, we need to be role models. Our sons are looking at the way that we treat women. What signals are they picking up from us? What behaviour will they emulate when they enter adulthood? What ideas and bad habits have been entrenched before they get to adulthood? And if they are not to blame, will they stay silent when others are exhibiting these qualities?

For all of us as men, it has never been more important to open our eyes and our ears. Speaker, we live in a moment in history when we have the ability to make permanent and positive change. But we can't let up. We can't let survivors down. We must continue this fight. That's why days like today and the White Ribbon campaign are so important. We want every woman and we want every girl to reach their potential and to live in a society dedicated to equality and opportunity.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to recognize the member for Toronto–St. Paul's on a point of order.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am requesting unanimous consent so we may all wear our white ribbons in acknowledgement of November as Woman Abuse Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–St. Paul's is requesting the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear white ribbons. Agreed? Agreed.

Responses?

Ms. Jill Andrew: White Ribbon saves lives. I thank you for your long-standing commitment to ending violence against women and girls.

1530

For those of you unfamiliar with their work, I'd like to read the following, from White Ribbon's mission statement:

"We engage men and boys in the prevention of gender-based violence by promoting equity and transforming social norms. We challenge and support men and boys to realize their potential to be part of the solution in ending all forms of gender-based violence."

Their vision, my vision, is "a future free from gender-based violence."

"White Ribbon is the world's largest movement of men and boys working to end violence against women and girls, promote gender equity, healthy relationships and a new vision of masculinity. Since its inception in Toronto in 1991, the White Ribbon campaign has spread to over 60 countries around the world. White Ribbon asks men to wear white ribbons as a sign of their pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls."

The White Ribbon campaign has partnered with countless organizations like the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, with the Draw the Line campaign, and countless communities to bring their very powerful message to life.

They also advocate for cross-cultural engagement, where, while collaborating with community stakeholders, immigrants and newcomers participate in helping to build

safer, violence-free communities where women and girls are respected, listened to and valued.

The Immigrant and Refugee Communities, Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign was launched in 2006. Men and boys are trained through this program to become White Ribbon NFF allies, who then, to quote White Ribbon, "will flex their creativity and put their passion into practice." These men then lead gender-based violence education, awareness and prevention programming.

Let's return to the notion of flexing creativity. All too often, men and boys are encouraged to build and flex their muscles, their masculinity. This in and of itself feeds into the "brute force" masculine trope—one which has often served as a backdrop for toxic masculinity, one that often socializes boys and men into thinking that they can't cry or that a boy or a man who dances in ballet isn't a "real man" and that the strongest emotion men and boys can show is anger, with a thirst for power and control. White Ribbon and their legendary White Ribbon campaign support men and boys in learning how to flex their hearts, the hardest-working muscle in our bodies.

This government must wholeheartedly support the work of White Ribbon through funding that allows them to actually do this critical work on the ground. They are training current and future positive bystanders.

Yesterday was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. December 6 will mark the 30th anniversary of the Montreal massacre. There are also current databases that have listed the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across Canada to almost 2,000—not to mention that 20 to 30 women are killed each year in Ontario, and that's just from intimate violence.

Days of significance are great, but they don't go far enough. Women and girls—Black and racialized women and girls; First Nation, Métis and Inuit women and girls; lower-income, disabled and trans women and girls—must be on the agenda 365 days a year, especially this government's agenda, and in their budget.

As I've previously said in this House, this government must create an inter-ministerial gender equity strategy, inclusive of a fully costed response to gender-based violence, reflective of inflation.

The funding cut that White Ribbon experienced in the spring from this government has had a significant impact on their organization's ability to grow and expand through educational curriculum, which is crucial for students. While we know that the government cares and is fond of what the White Ribbon campaign stands for, that fondness must translate into funding—short-term, long-term, annualized funding. White Ribbon needs to do its preventive work. Preventive work is the cornerstone of making a real, indelible mark in ending gender-based violence.

When this government doesn't fund accurately, organizations lose their ability to grow not only in scale, but in the depth of services that they can provide to survivors and to men and boys who want to know better

and learn better so they can do better and be part of the solution and not be perpetrators of the problem.

I thank you very much, White Ribbon, for all the work that you've done.

And to the government, remember: Cuts causing burnout to workers like the White Ribbon campaign don't create efficiency in Ontario. It's not better for people or smarter for business; it's cruel. Let's do better, because one woman—

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

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the opportunity to add my voice to the response to the minister. I want to thank him for his remarks, and I want to thank all of the men who have created and supported the White Ribbon campaign over the years.

I think that these symbolic measures are very important. I think that they send a message, as the minister said, to boys and young men. They model behaviour that is very, very important, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is absolutely critical that there be a focus on things like tackling sex trafficking. The Minister of Infrastructure, who I think the minister was referencing, the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, just to remind him, was a trailblazer. Under our government, she worked with us. She raised the issue of sex trafficking, and I'm very, very pleased that the current government is continuing to focus on that. It is absolutely critical.

But the thing I wanted to add to the discussion today is a question. I look around this room and I'm one of the older—with all due respect to some of my other colleagues, who shall remain unnamed—members of the Legislature. I was born in 1953. When I was in high school, between 1966 and 1971, we were having many discussions about these issues: What was it about women's place in the world that led to a denigration of women, that led to violence against women, and how were we going to tackle that? I honestly believed, Mr. Speaker, that by the time I got to be 66 years old, we would have come farther. I honestly believed that we would have gotten rid of the attitudes that lead to women being denigrated and being vulnerable to violence. I would have thought that maybe by now women wouldn't have to be afraid to walk in an underground parking lot; they wouldn't be afraid to walk down a dark street.

When I was a kid, I would walk down the middle of Centre Street in Richmond Hill because if the lights were on, I didn't want to be in the shadows. I would have thought that by 2019, maybe we would have gotten to the point where that wasn't necessary, and maybe we would have gotten to the point where domestic violence was easier for us to talk about—that we didn't relegate it to a discussion about particular communities or particular socio-economics, that we would understand that it affects everyone and that we have to tackle it so that everyone can live safely.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, we have not gotten there. Sadly, in 2019, we still have to acknowledge that we have so much more work to do. All I want to say is that sometimes we

distinguish between a discussion about women and violence and a discussion about the economic realities, the societal realities, of women's lives. I think we have to bring those things together. We have to recognize that if women can't get an education, if they are not able to work their way out of poverty, if they are not able to access the paths to success that other people are, then they are going to continue to be vulnerable. Those things are related, and my hope is that by the time my daughters are 66, we will have gotten a lot further.

The White Ribbon campaign is important nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, and I support all the men who lend their voices on this day.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Members, I'd like to bring to your attention that we have a former member in the east gallery this afternoon, from the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments: Phil Gillies is here from the former Progressive Conservative Party. Welcome back, sir.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition from the Family Council Network 4 Advocacy titled "Time to Care Act—Bill 13."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

1540

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

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

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

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I have a petition here: "Save Our Public Health Care."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford PC government has passed omnibus legislation to drastically overhaul our health care system with no commitment to publicly delivered health services;

“Whereas the previous Conservative government under Mike Harris privatized Ontario’s home care system, which contributed considerably to our present-day hallway medicine crisis; and

“Whereas every night hundreds of Ontario’s patients wait for care in hospital hallways, showers and TV rooms; and

“Whereas Ontario sits near the bottom of developed countries for hospital beds per patient and has the fewest registered nurses per patient in Canada;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Ontario government protect and invest in a robust, publicly funded and publicly delivered health care system and reject any further private delivery of health services.”

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the Clerk with Luba.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I’m going to be reading a petition from the CFS today. It’s called “Increase Grants Not Loans, Access for All, Protect Student Rights.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

“—provide more grants, not loans;

“—eliminate tuition fees for all students;

“—increase public funding for public education;

“—protect students’ independent voices; and

“—defend the right to organize.”

I certainly support this and will be signing my name to it and giving it to page Alexandra.

WATER EXTRACTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank Karen Rathwell from Waterloo for delivering these petitions to my Queen’s Park office. This is entitled “Extend the Moratorium on New Permits for Water Bottling.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas groundwater is a public good, not a commodity; and

“Whereas local ecosystems must be preserved for the well-being of future generations; and

“Whereas the United Nations recognizes access to clean drinking water as a human right; and

“Whereas the duty to consult Indigenous communities regarding water-taking within traditional territories is often neglected, resulting in a disproportionate burden on systemically marginalized communities during a period of reconciliation; and

“Whereas a poll commissioned by the Wellington Water Watchers found that two thirds of respondents support phasing out bottled water in Ontario over the course of a decade; and

“Whereas a trend towards prioritizing the expansion of for-profit water bottling corporations over the needs of municipalities will negatively impact Ontario’s growing communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to extend the moratorium on new permits for water-taking and to prioritize public ownership and control of water over corporate interests.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature because I fully support this petition, and give it to page Clara.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My petition is from the Canadian Federation of Students and is entitled “Increase Grants Not Loans, Access for All, Protect Student Rights.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

“—provide more grants, not loans;

“—eliminate tuition fees for all students;

“—increase public funding for public education;

“—protect students’ independent voices; and

“—defend the right to organize.”

I completely agree with this petition, will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Luke to take to the Clerk.

DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier M. Paul-François—avec une cédille sous le C—Sylvestre de Toronto pour la pétition.

« Pétition—Accents en français sur les cartes de santé de l'Ontario et les cartes de permis de conduire en Ontario.

« Alors qu'il est important d'avoir le nom exact des personnes sur les cartes émises par le gouvernement, tels la carte santé ou le permis de conduire;

« Alors que plusieurs personnes francophones ont des accents dans l'épellation de leur nom » ou des cédilles;

« Alors que le ministère des Transports et le ministère de la Santé ont confirmé que le système informatique de l'Ontario ne permet pas l'enregistrement des lettres avec des accents, » trémas, ou cédilles;

Ils pétitionnent « l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario pour qu'elle s'assure que les accents de la langue française soient inclus sur tous les documents et cartes émis par le gouvernement de l'Ontario », et ce, « avant le 31 décembre 2020. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et je la donne à Augustine pour l'amener à la table des greffiers.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank Art Tiesma and Anton Brink for collecting these signatures on a very important housing issue. They are petitioning the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Support Urgent Funding for Housing in London, 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;

“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, sign it and give it to page Alexandra to deliver to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: This petition is called “Stop Ford's Education Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford's new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes”—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me; I'm sorry to interrupt. I know those are the words that are written on the petition, but we don't refer to members in the House by their name. We refer to them by their title. If you could rephrase what is written on that petition, it would be then within order; otherwise, you'll be down and someone else will be up.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you, Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas” Premier “Doug Ford's new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes...;

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

“Whereas” Premier “Ford'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 agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the Clerk with Mathias.

1550

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I proudly affix my signature to this petition, and I will be giving it to legislative page Luke.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'll be reading a petition entitled “No Cuts to Libraries.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas libraries perform a vital function storing and sharing information in our communities and are integral to healthy, strong communities;

“Whereas the Ontario Library Service—North and the Southern Ontario Library Service programs ensure that smaller libraries in rural communities have equal access to all of Ontario’s library collections; and

“Whereas libraries are particularly important spaces for people who face geographic and socio-economic barriers to accessing information and technology;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: reverse the budget cuts to our libraries and reinstate the necessary funding to keep our libraries strong.”

I support this petition and will be signing it and giving it to page Luba.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from M. Laferrière from Azilda in my riding, and it reads as follows:

“911 Emergency Response:

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

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’ve been getting hundreds of petitions from all over Ontario petitioning the Legislative Assembly.

“Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

“Amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours of hands-on care per resident adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Deborah Bourgeois from North Bay for this petition called “MS Specialized Clinic in Sudbury.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROVINCIAL ANIMAL WELFARE SERVICES ACT, 2019

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 19, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 25, 2019, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Jones has moved second reading of 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?

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 20-minute bell—unless I get a notice handed to me.

Interjection.

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

“To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I respectfully request that the vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019, be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, November 27, 2019.”

It’s signed by Lorne Coe, chief government whip.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Orders of the day?

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

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 5, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. You look great in your chair today.

It is with great honour that I rise today in support of Bill 116, Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act. This legislation promises to put the people of Ontario first. It promises to improve the quality of our mental health and addictions services. And for that, I wish to thank our Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, who has worked tirelessly to protect and transform our health care system; and our Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, whose passion for this file is truly contagious.

Some may ask why this bill and government strategy in general have grouped mental health and addictions services together. The simple truth is that we cannot address the complex problem of mental health services without addressing addictions services, and vice versa. Ontarians need and deserve access to an integrated and connected system—a system that understands that these complex issues demand comprehensive solutions. That is why our

government has weighted our investments toward community care. We need to build a future where the emergency room is one of the last options for someone in crisis, not the only option.

As an emergency room nurse myself, before I had the honour of representing the people of Mississauga Centre, I often wondered: How is it possible that in our province, in our beloved home, if a child comes into the ER with a broken bone, we can provide treatment within hours; but if a child comes in with suicidal ideations, anxiety or depression, the waiting list to see a specialist is 18 months? We must do better. Our children deserve it.

If passed, this bill will potentially allow Ontario to recover health care costs that have resulted from the ongoing opioid crisis that has gripped our country and has taken far too many lives. Ontario has experienced some of the highest rates of opioid overdoses in Canada; and that means that our health care system has felt the strain, and so has the public purse. It is time that we take action to protect what matters most—which is why I’d also like to extend my thanks to our Honourable Attorney General for all his efforts in bringing this bill forward.

As I am sure many members of this House are aware, the opioid crisis is a public health issue that I take very seriously, which is why I introduced Bill 105, An Act with respect to the training required of police officers and others, to the House. Bill 105 would require all police constables in Ontario to be trained on how to administer life-saving naloxone.

1600

Naloxone, which is also known as Narcan, is an opioid antagonist and can temporarily reverse an overdose, giving time for help to arrive. We know that about 60% of opioid overdoses happen in a victim’s home, and many happen in our streets. Police officers are often the first ones to arrive at the scene. That is why it is so important to give our men and women the knowledge and tools they need to save a life.

Je voudrais aussi profiter de l’occasion pour rappeler à tout le monde que des kits de naloxone sont fournis gratuitement dans de nombreuses pharmacies dans notre province. Si vous connaissez des personnes qui participent à des activités qui peuvent entraîner une surdose d’opioïdes, nous vous demandons d’en informer un pharmacien et d’obtenir votre kit aujourd’hui. Ainsi, la vie que vous pourriez sauver pourrait être celle d’un proche.

I also encourage all members of this House to pick up your free naloxone kit from your local pharmacy and get yourself and your staff trained, and to put up the naloxone awareness poster in your office, the one that I sent you over the summer during the opioid awareness month.

The opioid crisis is a multi-faceted problem that does not have a cookie-cutter solution. We know that opioid use has increased across the country, with no sign of slowing down. We have seen the growing list of our friends, neighbours and loved ones who have lost their lives to the battle with opioids. Ontario has seen 1,337 confirmed opioid-related deaths between July 2017 and June 2018. In a period of less than three years, more than 10,000 fellow

Canadians have lost their battle with an opioid addiction. Last year alone, an estimated 4,000 Canadians lost their lives. If we look at our friends to the south, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 130 Americans die from an opioid overdose every single day. This problem can no longer be ignored.

The evidence is clear: Opioid overdoses are a serious public health issue in Canada and especially in Ontario. This crisis is taking place across the province, across the country and across the continent. This crisis is a complex problem made up of many layers. To address the problem, we need to take a holistic approach that will take all aspects of the problem into account, including the role played by opioid manufacturers and wholesalers themselves. That is why our government is taking action to hold opioid manufacturers and distributors to account by joining the government of British Columbia in their class action lawsuit.

We are not alone in this fight, and this problem is not restricted to Canada. Our friends in Oklahoma have brought similar litigation against the manufacturers of the opioid crisis. In August, a judge ordered one of the corporations to pay the people of Oklahoma \$572 million. Additional lawsuits are proceeding in the United States. For example, in March 2019, another manufacturer settled a state court proceeding in Oklahoma for \$270 million.

The truly scary part of the opioid epidemic is how it is so easy to become addicted to these prescription painkillers. It can happen to anybody: your neighbours, your friends, your spouse, your grandparents or your children. Many of these stories of people broken by the opioid epidemic begin with a simple accident and end with poverty, personal tragedy and overdose, all caused by addictions.

I have had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Darryl Gebien, an emergency room doctor who fell victim to opioid addiction. The addiction has cost him his career, his family and several years of his life. I'm happy to say that he has made a full recovery and now leads the fight on raising awareness about the risks of opioids. But I bring up his story to point out that this crisis is really something that can affect us all, regardless of education, socio-economic status, gender, race or walk of life.

Our government is also investing in improving our mental health and addictions services. This year, a commitment of \$174 million will go towards community mental health and addictions services across the province, and earlier and faster interventions in schools and in the community for mental health and addictions challenges faced by the young people of Ontario.

The government's annual investment will also create mobile crisis intervention units that will help police officers, paramedics, nurses and other first responders who manage sensitive situations when assisting people in mental health crisis. This means that mental health and addictions care will be delivered faster, more efficiently and in a more integrated fashion. This investment marks only the beginning of our commitment of \$3.8 billion that we have committed over the next 10 years to continue

maintaining, expanding and improving our mental health services.

I'd like to just take a moment to highlight a local example of Project Now. We're very proud that this project came out of Mississauga, and our government has committed \$3 million in funding over the next three years. Project Now has the mission and vision to empower our youth and to build resilience, and to eliminate child and youth suicide in Mississauga over the next 10 years.

This project has resulted out of the collaboration of multiple partners, because we need to start talking about mental health collaboratively. We cannot work in silos any longer. This project has brought together police enforcement, the local school boards, community care, the local hospital, as well as many youth and children organizations. This is a reflection of how we can work together and address mental health issues, especially among our youth.

I'm also proud of what we have done in education to strengthen mental health supports for students of all abilities. Furthermore, we have modernized our health and physical education curriculum to include mental health resiliency and online safety for the very first time. A big congratulations to our Minister of Education for championing this.

Some may ask, "Why does Ontario need a Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence?" Unlike other parts of the health care system, mental health and addictions lacks a provincial coordinating body which provides standardization and helps guarantee service levels are met. This lack of centralized, province-wide oversight has contributed to many challenges in the mental health and addictions system, such as long wait times, barriers to access, lack of data, a fragmented system and uneven quality. A centre of excellence would standardize the quality and delivery of mental health and addictions services across Ontario and provide a better and more consistent patient experience.

Ontario is delivering on a key recommendation from the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions of 2010, which the member from Nickel Belt spoke at and was a member of, which called for a central engine responsible to the Ministry of Health to manage and coordinate Ontario's mental health and addictions services and act as the central agency for quality and oversight across the province.

Establishing a centre for excellence inside Ontario Health would send a strong signal to the mental health and addictions sector that finally, 10 years after the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions recommended it, Ontario is moving forward with this important recommendation.

Notre gouvernement veille à ce que nous sachions bien où nous mettons l'argent et comment nous l'utilisons. Par cette loi, notre gouvernement met en place un organisme central, placé sous l'égide du centre d'excellence en santé mentale et en toxicomanie. Cet organisme veillera à ce que chaque dollar consacré à la santé mentale compte et ne se perde pas dans les mailles du système fragmenté dont nous avons hérité.

Les investissements porteront sur six domaines prioritaires du système de santé mentale et de toxicomanie : la réduction des délais d'attente pour accéder aux services, l'amélioration des services d'opioïdes et de toxicomanie, l'augmentation du nombre de lits mis à la disposition des patients souffrant de troubles psychiatriques dans les hôpitaux, la création de logements avec services de soutien, améliorer les services de santé mentale pour enfants et adolescents et, finalement, investir dans les services destinés aux communautés autochtones et aux populations prioritaires, y compris les francophones.

Les patients et les familles en Ontario, où qu'ils habitent, méritent un accès égal à des soins et à des services intégrés, normalisés et fondés sur des faits probants. En établissant un organisme central pour la santé mentale et la toxicomanie, notre gouvernement répare les fissures existantes. Grâce au centre d'excellence, l'Ontario sera enfin en mesure de normaliser la qualité et la prestation de services de santé mentale ainsi que de lutter contre la toxicomanie dans toute la province et d'aider les patients et leur famille à accéder à des services et à un soutien améliorés et plus cohérents.

1610

This move is part of a strategic effort to improve the quality of care that exists in our province, because as things stand right now, Ontario's mental health and addictions system is disjointed. The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health held 19 engagement sessions across the province: from Toronto to Thunder Bay, and from Ottawa to Windsor. Families have told her that they feel that they are being left to do the work, to navigate and advocate through the labyrinth system that is currently in place. After fighting to have their concerns dealt with and after waiting for treatment, they often experience disconnected care.

The status quo is no longer an option. The current system, with its uneven access to quality services, has become a challenge for patients and their families to navigate, just to receive the services they need. Ontarians deserve better and, with this bill, our government will be one step closer to delivering on the promise we made to the people of Ontario.

The Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence will develop clinical, quality and service standards for mental health and addictions. This will let us eliminate the patchwork system that currently exists, while moving toward a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy for all Ontarians. The centre of excellence will allow us to monitor metrics related to the performance of the system so we can focus on what works and cut out what does not work. The centre will provide resources and support to front-line health service professionals to allow for an integrated health care delivery system to replace the inconsistent nature of the current mental health and addictions delivery strategy.

Mr. Speaker, if I had the time I would list out all of the recommendations spelled out in the 2010 committee report, just to show that with this legislation our government is doing everything in our power to make sure we

follow the advice of that committee, something the previous government simply did not care enough to do. Given that the recommendations were supported by all parties 10 years ago, given that our government is responding to what we can all agree is an opioid crisis, and given that all of Ontario stands to benefit from what this legislation will accomplish, I hope and expect that all members of this House will join me in supporting this bill, which protects the most vulnerable people of Ontario.

Our government's commitment to building a modern, sustainable and integrated health care system starts and ends with the patient. We are building a health care system for the people. The government has consulted extensively with more than 200 mental health and addictions organizations, front-line service providers, hospitals, advocates, experts and people with lived experience about how to effectively fund services and how to create a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions system in Ontario. With the establishment of a Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence and by holding opioid manufacturers and wholesalers accountable, we are protecting what matters the most.

To conclude, I would also like to draw on an example from Mississauga, where the Mississauga Arts Council has recently been awarded a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for a new program that they have established which is called arts for mental health. The Mississauga Arts Council is not an obvious organization that one would think to be involved in mental health and addictions, but it goes to demonstrate that it is incumbent on all of us, and on any of us, to get involved. Because it truly does take a village, and we know that about 70% of all Ontarians will experience a mental health challenge in their lifetime. So this is truly an issue that affects us all. And so, by being leaders, such as the Mississauga Arts Council with their arts for mental health initiative, we can demonstrate that we all have a role to play, and it is a very important one.

I just want to conclude by saying, once again, a big thank you to our Minister of Health, our Associate Minister for Mental Health and Addictions, as well as the Attorney General and all members who have contributed to this discussion and this debate. We are looking forward to continuing this discussion. The journey has just begun, and I look forward to having many more conversations on this topic, because as a nurse who still works in our health care system, I still do see patients coming into the emergency room with mental health problems. Truly, as I said before, the hospital should be the last resort for somebody in crisis and not the only option available.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll just conclude by saying: Mental health is health.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm happy to stand and speak about this very important issue.

My wife, Linda, works in children's mental health at an agency in Niagara. It's a very, very important issue and very stressful for front-line workers, who are struggling as

they watch the wait-lists continue to grow, especially for children's mental health. Six months is a lifetime for a child who is suffering from mental health and needs help. We need to do better in this province.

I also want to give a shout-out to Niagara United, which is a group in Niagara which has put together peer-to-peer support services and is one of many groups across the province that could really use some help serving our growing wait-list.

Speaker, I thank the member from Mississauga Centre, but we're talking about solutions here, and the fact of the matter is that this bill really creates a mental health organization within Ontario, and it strengthens the government's ability to sue opioid manufacturers. That's what it does. It doesn't provide any funding or resources that directly impact front-line services. It simply doesn't.

We can stand here and give speeches about all the great things in our ridings and everything else, but at the end of the day, what's going to solve this problem is real resources that go to the front lines so that people who are dealing with the growing problem can deal with it.

I know that on this side of the House we'd like everyone to stop pretending and really look at what it's going to take to address this problem in terms of front-line resources. I hope that, moving forward, we can take issues like this and really devote resources to them.

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

Mr. Norman Miller: It's a pleasure to add some comments to the speech by the member from Mississauga Centre on An Act to enact the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence Act, 2019 and the Opioid Damages and Health Costs Recovery Act, 2019. I think she did an excellent job, as a nurse, of talking about all of the various parts of this bill. I would certainly like to commend her on her private member's bill, Bill 105, that obviously is connected with this issue as well.

This centre for excellence comes from the select committee back in 2010. I know that the current Minister of Health sat on that committee, and the current Solicitor General sat on that committee. I believe that the member from Nickel Belt was a key member of the committee. They did a lot of really good work—all parties working together—and came up with a number of recommendations. One of the recommendations was the creation of a Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence in Ontario. I'm pleased to see that finally, now, a number of years later, we're acting on that.

The member who spoke talked about the money. There's \$3.8 billion over 10 years, and certainly a Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence within Ontario Health would lay a strong foundation for the government's commitment of how we spend that \$3.8 billion in new funding over 10 years and develop and implement a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy.

I know that in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, particularly in the Parry Sound area, there is a real need. We're caught between two LHINs right now, and we

aren't getting the services that we need. So I hope, with the implementation of the new health teams that are incorporating mental health into them as well, that we will see improvements.

We also have a significant opioid crisis in the Parry Sound area and in my riding, and we need to do better. I think this is moving us in the right direction. I look forward to seeing improvement in years to come.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm proud to stand and speak about this bill.

I just want to say to the government that the way that we start to deal with mental health and the opioid crisis is by not shutting down opioid safe injection sites, which is exactly what this government did. They shut down several sites that were life-saving resources in communities.

I want to give a special shout-out to the John Howard Society, which provides programs to individuals who have been in conflict with the law or those at risk of. Their goal is to make Toronto safer through programs that focus on crime prevention, intervention and community reintegration.

JHS has four sites in Toronto. One of them is in my riding, on Eglinton West. I had the privilege of getting my own naloxone training. I would certainly encourage all MPPs and anyone watching in Ontario to receive naloxone training, which can really save lives. It's 20 minutes that you will invest of your life, and it may have an impact on a day when you could actually do something to help someone else. The training takes less than 20 minutes, as I said, and it really gives you a sense of how to prevent and recognize and respond to an overdose.

1620

Tonight, luckily, the John Howard Society will be joining me at my community healing call-in, a dinner and discussion we're hosting in St. Paul's, at the Montage Support Services at Oakwood and Vaughan, to discuss as a community family a response to some of the violent incidents we have had in our community. We are going to be focusing on healing, we're going to be focusing on our wellness, and we're going to be focusing on how to continue to live, survive and thrive after incidents of violence. I just want to say to Oakwood and Vaughan residents that Oakwood and Vaughan is absolutely one of the most beautiful, diverse and rich areas of our riding, and I'm proud to host our event there this evening.

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

M^{me} Goldie Ghamari: La santé mentale est un élément essentiel de la santé. La mise en place d'un Centre d'excellence en santé mentale et en lutte contre les dépendances au sein de Santé Ontario représente la première étape essentielle pour jeter les bases sur lesquelles la province élaborera et maintiendra une stratégie en matière de santé mentale et de lutte contre les dépendances. Cette stratégie reconnaîtra que les soins en santé mentale et en lutte contre les dépendances sont une

composante essentielle d'un système de soins de santé intégré.

Aux termes de la loi proposée, le Centre d'excellence en santé mentale et en lutte contre les dépendances assumerait les fonctions comme mettre en oeuvre la stratégie en matière de santé mentale et de lutte contre les dépendances; élaborer des normes cliniques, de qualité et de service pour la santé mentale et les luttes contre les dépendances; surveiller les indicateurs liés au rendement du système de santé mentale et de lutte contre les dépendances; et fournir des ressources et du soutien aux fournisseurs de services de santé, aux systèmes intégrés de prestation de soins et à d'autres intervenants liés à la santé mentale et aux luttes contre les dépendances.

Si elle est adoptée, la Loi sur les bases nécessaires à la promotion et à la protection des services de santé mentale et de lutte contre les dépendances permettrait au gouvernement, pour la population de l'Ontario, de poursuivre les fabricants et les grossistes d'opioïdes pour leurs présumés actes répréhensibles afin de recouvrer les coûts passés, présents et futurs des soins de santé en raison d'une blessure ou d'une maladie liée aux opioïdes.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I would like to thank the members from Niagara Centre, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Carleton and Toronto–St. Paul's for their additions to today's debate.

Je voudrais féliciter la députée de Carleton pour son discours en français.

I would also like to thank the member for Toronto–St. Paul's for taking the naloxone training. I think it's very important that all of us take that training, and include our constituency staff in the training as well. If you'd like, I can share a video that I and my staff have made specifically on recognizing the signs and symptoms of an opioid overdose, and as well how to safely and effectively administer naloxone. We took a weekend out of our schedule back in the summer and we had a lot of fun, actually, putting the video together. I'm more than happy to share it with the members of this House as an educational tool that you can use for your staff as well.

I wanted to just reiterate that the situation that we find ourselves in with regard to mental health and health care services in Ontario was years, or decades, in the making due to the inaction of the previous government, who sat on the recommendations spelled out in the 2010 committee report. They had sat on it since 2010. Our government are in contrast to that. We are taking immediate action because we recognize that mental health is an issue that we need to address. This was part of our commitment even during the campaign, and it is one commitment that we are taking extremely seriously.

In addition to the funding that we have committed to this, the \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years, Bill 116, the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act, is yet another example of how our government is taking swift action to address the

mental health issue in our province. Because, like I said, mental health is health.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate. I've been a long-standing advocate for early intervention and prevention on mental health, and I'm very pleased to review some of the actions that have currently happened in the province of Ontario as it relates to Bill 116, An Act to enact the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence Act, 2019 and the Opioid Damages and Health Costs Recovery Act, 2019. For those of you who are just tuning in right now, the first deals with creating a Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence, and the second allows the government to join the lawsuit against opioid manufacturers. I'll talk a little bit about that a little bit later.

The time has gone where we actually have to make the case to address mental health. The stigma obviously is still there, it's still there in the workplace, it's still there in the schools, but there is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates that mental health is health.

Over the years, when I was a school board trustee with the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and took a leadership role by trying to establish a provincial round table—ironically, this is about the same time that the select committee was doing its work. I, of course, was in the House and I listened to our health critic review what happened during those years, those 18 months that the select committee travelled around the province, an all-party committee—what they heard, how difficult it was, the emotional labour of being in very remote communities, where very few resources exist to address mental health and addictions. I felt her one-hour lead on this bill really told the story of how mental health has finally come to the floor of this Legislature and how none of us has any excuses whatsoever to not take action. In fact, that report that many have said has sat essentially dormant for 10 years—it's almost unethical that it has sat there and no action has been taken.

New Democrats, of course, are going to be very supportive of creating a Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence, and certainly some accountability needs to play itself out with regard to the pharmaceutical industry and the lawsuit around opioid manufacturers—certainly those things need to happen. But Bill 116, as it is currently crafted, as it is written, as it sits before us on all of our desks, is not the answer to the mental health crisis we see ourselves in in the province of Ontario.

Our world is changing more and more and we need to be mindful of the different circumstances of people, in the ways they interact with the world. Over the last few weeks, many of us have had the opportunity to meet with a number of stakeholders here at Queen's Park and in our own ridings—from Waterloo region—who have brought up mental health. Yesterday, I met with the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, who spoke extensively about student well-being.

For those of you who don't know, the school boards in the province of Ontario have a mandated, legislated

responsibility for well-being. It was actually the former Liberal government that brought the well-being conversation into the state of education in Ontario, because there was finally that tipping point and recognition that all of those students who come into our classrooms bring all of those conditions with them, be it poverty, be it homelessness, be it mental health issues. School boards recognized that student well-being was a key to academic success.

I do want to thank the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and the trustees who came for the Queen's Park lobby yesterday. I know that many of us had very productive meetings with them, and we have to acknowledge—and I hope you heard this message really loud and clear—that all of the issues in our communities for students, for children, including parental stress, including unemployment, fall into that classroom, and will impact how students receive their education and how successful they'll be.

1630

What I found very interesting is that one of their major asks around The Whole Child and Student Well-Being is very much connected to data, because if you have data and you have that information, it is actually irresponsible, fiscally irresponsible, and unethical to not take action on it. So what we heard yesterday is that “recent data shows that 67% of Ontarians oppose or somewhat oppose having fewer course options available to students.” Why does this matter for students? Because anxiety in our education system today is at some of the highest levels. “Mental health and well-being continue to be areas of concern in schools today. There is a direct relationship between students with mental health issues and academic performance. Although school boards are uniquely positioned to develop strategies to support mental health and well-being of students, there must be adequate and timely access to coordinated and integrated community-based services.”

And when the Ontario public school boards and the various unions and the public health divisions and hospitals and mental health experts were part of this provincial round table that we had taken a leadership with—because we were trying to decide: Who is going to deal with this? Mental health in our communities is so severely underfunded that when a teacher recognizes that a child in her or his classroom has a serious issue, the parents usually have already tried the various community resources. The school boards have, as of late, adopted a model where they now have child psychologists on staff, because when a problem does present itself, you just can't refer a young child to a wait-list, and we were finding that that was happening more and more.

We were trying to work with the former government to establish an overall mental health strategy as it related directly to education, and I have to say, some of the stats that OPSBA brought to us yesterday said that “88% of Ontarians support or somewhat support more funding for special education to support mental health for students and staff”—88%, Mr. Speaker. These are some numbers that you don't often hear from the Minister of Education, and we all know that those negotiations are not going well. I

think there has to be an acknowledgement that there is a significant amount of support in the province of Ontario for investment into education. That investment pays dividends. When you resource school boards and create some flexible funding so school boards can actually respond to the needs that their students are experiencing, be those students in Algoma or Hamilton or Waterloo region or Ottawa, trustees know their communities. So I thought their ask yesterday, essentially saying, “Let us be part of the solution on mental health. Help us react and respond and address mental health so that we can have very positive results in the public education system,” was well placed.

We also, of course, heard from the colleges and the universities last week as students came from various universities across the province, and one of their major asks was for mental health supports on campus. That transition from high school over to college or university is sometimes a very bumpy one. In Waterloo a couple of years back, we saw a number of suicides on campus. There was an immediate response: “We have to do something.” But certainly the post-secondary education sector is looking for a partner in the government because it's a shared responsibility. Everybody uses this language and everyone acknowledges that there isn't one-size-fits-all, so when U of T goes out and hires five psychiatrists to address the crisis in their system, they are responding to a lack of leadership at the provincial level—a lack of leadership, I will admit, that has been long-standing. I don't know when the PC government is finally going to stop blaming the former Liberal government. I don't know what that tipping point is, but I will acknowledge that these issues on college and university campuses have been long-standing, and, to their credit, the student associations and unions just won a major decision last week when they took on this government and the whole issue around opting in and opting out of fees. Thank goodness those students stood up and fought for their rights. We applaud them for their leadership.

When they came last week, they were serious. They said that they have friends who they are losing along the way. That is not good for those institutions. That's not good for those students. It certainly isn't good for the economy. So having a well-being and mental health strategy on campuses that is done in partnership with the ministry is well worth the funds.

We've covered the education piece. I do want to get on the record, though, that this is a government that has not been friendly to workplaces. I'm thinking, in particular, of the Cambridge EMS dispatchers. I want to address this, because this is really indicative of a government that has its blinders on 24 hours a day.

The Cambridge EMS dispatchers moved to Hamilton from Cambridge. They were moved because of staffing shortages. They were moved to a facility in Hamilton that did not have the appropriate equipment. The transition to this new workplace was not dealt with well at all. A lot of people are commuting from Cambridge to Hamilton on a daily basis, and some people, of course, are staying at

hotels. It costs about \$5,000 a day for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to have this band-aid approach to 911 dispatchers in this particular area.

I have to say, when you think of what 911 dispatchers deal with—this is a high-stress job. A majority of the dispatchers are women. They hear things that you can't even imagine. These are people calling that are stressed, that are filled with fear, that are in crisis, that are hurting. Their job is to calm that person down and make sure they get the appropriate resources. Well, how do you that when you, yourself, a 911 dispatcher, are in a state of crisis? When I look at the Ministry of Health and how they've dealt with the Cambridge EMS dispatchers—really, with complete disregard for the well-being of those front-line staff who are dealing with crises on a day-to-day basis.

I want to give them a shout-out. I want to let them know that we haven't forgotten about them. But you can't expect people who are in high-stress jobs to respond well and maintain their own mental health, when they are not being respected as employees.

One of the dispatchers said—this is a quote from an article—“It's a terrible place to work. When you're hearing people at the most vulnerable time in their lives ... there's no closure, except sometimes what you see in the paper.”

This government can do so much better for these vulnerable workers. We want them to come back to Cambridge. We want the Ministry of Health to stop wasting \$5,000 a day on accommodations, when these workers need to come back to Cambridge. So they're not alone.

The second part of this piece of legislation has to do with addictions and overdoses. I'm so very pleased to be representing Waterloo, because Waterloo region has done a very comprehensive job of tracking opioid overdoses. This should light a fire under this government to act on extending the licences for safe injection sites.

Some members have had to have a huge education on this file, because when they first came here and we were raising this issue—you'll remember, Mr. Speaker, that the minister put a freeze on new safe injection sites—completely irresponsible, exactly the wrong direction. I remember some members on that side saying, “Well, we can't make it easier,” and I feel that there has been, over the course of this year, an education based on what they're seeing in their own communities—because we are in an opioid crisis in Ontario. Even the member from Peterborough, too—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Sudbury.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —and Sudbury. But Peterborough, Ontario, is now number one in overdose deaths per capita, four times the poisoning rate of Toronto. So you can't keep your head in the sand.

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This piece of legislation will give you the ability to sue Big Pharma, if it's passed, but it's not overall a solution to the problem that exists. In Waterloo region, in 2015, we had 203 overdose-related calls. In 2016, that doubled to 419. In 2017 and in 2018, it was 801 and then 853

overdose-related calls. And this year—I know the Clerks want to listen to this—the region is on track for even more calls, with 965 calls around overdoses.

This is an escalating issue. Naloxone administrations have obviously gone up with education. Overdose-related deaths—these numbers are pretty shocking. In 2017, there were 86 deaths; in 2018, 61 deaths; in 2019, an estimated 53 deaths as of November 4.

God love, in particular, the Peterborough medical officer who has tried to get the MPP to pay attention to this issue. You have a PC MPP trying to get 10,000 signatures to get this government to recognize that opioid overdoses are a serious issue. The Peterborough medical officer of health also has written to AMO, and AMO has said that this province needs a much-needed provincial coordinator to address opioid overdoses.

So you need a strategy and you need a plan. That strategy is not in this bill. It just is not. You may not like to hear it, but it's not. The ability to sue is not a strategy.

It's crucial to track overdose calls, naloxone uses and deaths so that you can have the evidence to show that provincial policies around drug use and harm prevention need to change. Everybody knows that it needs to change. We have the data. Municipalities have taken it upon themselves. They've said, “You know what? Our citizens are literally dying in the street.”

There is no rhyme or reason here. You can't just type-cast someone who dies from an opioid overdose. It crosses all demographics, all cultures, all religions and all neighbourhoods. Finally, this light bulb has gone on where people have said, “We need to work to end the stigma surrounding drug use and put in place various supports, like safe consumption sites.”

In Waterloo region, a temporary safe consumption site was established. And here's some good news, because sometimes it's a little bit of bad news around here:

“The new supervised drug consumption site in downtown Kitchener is off to a good start after its first few weeks, officials say, and is now seeing 10 to 20 visitors on a typical day....

“Five overdoses were successfully treated at the Duke Street site in the first two weeks.” That means five lives were saved. “One required administration of naloxone and four needed oxygen,” and there was no need to call an ambulance. I don't know if you saw what I did there, but I connected the whole 911 emergency dispatchers and the state that they're in with how safe consumption sites actually save the system money. They're not only just saving lives, but they're intervening in a health care system that is already in crisis from an emergency perspective. All those individuals affected recovered.

“From opening day on October 15 to the 31st, the site was used 193 times....” They say that “operations have gone quite smoothly.” There have been no issues with security and police have not been called to the site.

I want to give a shout-out to the Waterloo regional police as well, because they need this. They wanted this. Chief Bryan Larkin was supportive of it, because this is how you change the culture around drug addiction.

“Staff do needle sweeps around the site three times a day....

“Along with supervision to keep people safe from an overdose, the site offers a great opportunity for education on how to reduce the risks associated with drug use.”

These sites, which the government had put a freeze on in, I would say, their complete state of ignorance, despite the evidence that existed—really, now the evidence is so overwhelming, Mr. Speaker, that we finally have reached a tipping point.

What I want to say to this government is that a lot of fingers get pointed at the Liberals, but if you were serious about addressing the issue of mental health and the correlation between addiction and, in this instance, opioid use, you would present a bill that added the resources. Because without the resources, you will not have a strategy, you will not have the plan, and people will still be waiting for services.

With that, I’m pleased to finish my 20 minutes, and I look forward to the questions and the comments.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s a privilege to rise today and make some comments on Bill 116 and the member from Waterloo’s comments.

This government has recognized, through a lot of data collection and, of course, meetings across the province, that we have extensive wait times, barriers to access. So in the Ontario budget of 2019, we committed, this government committed, \$3.8 billion for mental health and addictions and housing supports over the next 10 years. In May 2019, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care announced \$174 million in funding to address critical gaps in Ontario’s mental health and addictions system as well, to support patients and families across Ontario.

The 2019 and 2020 investments will continue to address six priority areas of mental health: reducing wait times for service; enhancing opioid and addictions services; expanding mental health beds in hospitals; creating additional supportive housing; building capacity in child and youth mental health services; and investing in services for Indigenous communities and priority populations, including the francophone community. These services will benefit thousands of Ontarians, including children and youth, post-secondary students, individuals who are involved with the justice system, people who experience homelessness and the Indigenous people and families in our communities.

I’m proud to say that in our community of Sarnia–Lambton, we have a meeting on an ongoing basis with the chief of police, with other community leaders and the president of the hospital board there. We have 17 beds that have been dedicated there. We’re waiting for funding, hopefully, to get to 24 beds that we can use as well. It’s a major operation to get everybody working together—

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I’m pleased to be able to just have a little, small piece of joining this debate talking

about mental health and addictions in the province of Ontario. This is an important conversation that we definitely need to be having. I’m pleased to see that we are able to have these conversations on the floor. I’m happy to see that the government sees there is a problem, so they’re putting stuff forward to have the conversation.

Unfortunately, it doesn’t go far enough, is my greatest concern. We have major problems, right across the entire country, of opioids in our communities. We have hundreds of people suffering from overdoses, thousands of naloxone kits being used regularly. This bill will not address this issue. Giving us a centre of excellence is important, but if they don’t do the legislative business that they need to do in enacting Bill 74 that has been before this House previously, then this will not move forward. Also, the only way of addressing the opioid crisis is by suing the manufacturers—I think that’s an important step, but it’s only one very small piece of this puzzle to stop the manufacturers from continuing to poison our residents, quite frankly.

The mental health portion: We’ve been talking about this in this House for years. In 2018, I myself brought forward a motion to the House that was supported by all parties unanimously to eliminate the wait-list for children’s mental health. Over a year later, we are still waiting for that to happen. My colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park brought forward a bill, also very similar. We’re waiting for these things to happen. True, meaningful action needs to happen.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to thank the member opposite, the member from Waterloo, for her comments and her presentation.

I find it passing strange that what we often get in the kind of debate we have here, from members opposite, is just a lot of criticism that this bill does not contain everything.

No, this bill does not contain everything. The bill has an express purpose. It is to create a centre of excellence for mental health and addictions, which I think was acknowledged as a very good idea and was recommended in the Select Committee on Mental Health. Everybody is in support of that. It also empowers the government to join litigation on the opioids crisis, and that is important.

I just want to correct the record: We do have a strategy with respect to consumption and treatment sites. In fact, it’s one of the first things that the Minister of Health and myself, as her parliamentary assistant, did when we got into office. We reviewed the existing programs available. We consulted with experts and people with lived experience and many, many people.

Nobody thought the system that we had was perfect and couldn’t be improved. What we tried to do was make a better model. It is a very blunt instrument, the existing consumption and treatment sites. We wanted to help more people have the opportunity, when they were ready, to have services available to get themselves out of addiction

and onto a hopeful and better track. That was what our whole model was about.

We're spending more money on consumption and treatment sites, by a long shot, than the previous government did, and we're trying to make sure that they are available where they're needed. If people apply, they will be—

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It is truly a pleasure to talk about this situation that's happening everywhere—the opioids and mental health crises—throughout Ontario, throughout Canada and globally.

This is a serious issue. The members opposite have to open up their minds, as we always have talked about, to understand that the legislation they put forward needs to be critiqued, needs to be improved, needs to have suggestions. That's what we're here to do.

We also have given the government the congratulatory pat on the back for bringing this forward; it's a good idea.

Something they need to understand, or at least pay attention to, is that this is like an administrative restructuring bill. The select committee recommended that the Ontario government should create a mental health and addictions organization that would be responsible to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, based on the Cancer Care Ontario model. But do you know what they did, Speaker? They dissolved Cancer Care Ontario.

The other piece of that, schedule 1 in this legislation, asks for the centre of excellence to be created by Ontario Health, but Ontario Health has yet to be a crown agency of the government, because they haven't passed Bill 74. That's a loophole.

Sometimes this government puts things on the agenda, pushing things through, controlling what this House does constantly, and they neglect to put the pieces together to successfully have a piece of legislation together. That's why we're discussing bills, that's why we need debate and that's why we need to have government opening their minds to discussions in this Legislature about what bills do and how they affect lives. We have very productive comments when it comes to that.

I look forward to more debate and to actually looking a little bit deeper into this bill and some of the examples that we go through in our ridings, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We turn back now to the member from Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Just to set the record clear on the funding: While the Conservatives continue to state that they are following through on the commitment of \$1.9 billion, the 2019 budget shows that the \$174-million increase to mental health and addictions is only federal funding from the four-year federal bilateral health agreement. In other words, the Conservative government, the PC government of the day, has not allocated its share of the \$1.9 billion in mental health and addictions funding over 10 years, because it is all back-end loaded.

The comment that we're being critical—the state of affairs on mental health in the province of Ontario, we all

agree, is a crisis. If it's a crisis, why bring forward an administrative bill on mental health, Mr. Speaker?

This goes on to say that, in their first year, they cut \$330 million from the 2018 budget, which left front-line agencies in a state of crisis across this province.

Then, around the opioid consumption treatment services, one of the first things this government did was, they put a cap to restrict the number of sites in Ontario to 21, despite the needs or the requests of communities experiencing opioid issues. Shortly before funding expired, the Conservatives revealed which CTS sites received funding under the new guidelines. Only 15 sites received funding, meaning that six sites were defunded.

You need to speak truth to power. It is our job as the official opposition to challenge you on the rhetoric that we hear on mental health and addictions and then the reality of what is contained in Bill 116 and your actions, or lack thereof, on mental health in the province of Ontario. Communities are looking for leadership from this government. You should be working with us on this file because it should not be a partisan issue at all.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence Act and Opioid Damages and Health Costs Recovery Act, 2019. I support the two measures that are in this bill—well, there are a number of measures here which I think are important.

I've spoken to the minister a number of times on community-based mental health, and I'll get into it a bit more. I think the minister's intent and the intent of members on the other side—we all want the same thing because all of our families, all of our neighbours and all of our communities are touched by the crisis that we have in mental health.

I want to say to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence that I don't think people are suggesting that you have to put everything in the bill, but when you talk about something like a foundational document, you've got to have a bit more than creating a centre of excellence—really important—and taking the pharmaceuticals to task for the damage they've created in our community.

I want to congratulate the government on that part of it because I do believe that holding those companies to account is important because we have an opioid crisis that's very serious.

The member from Waterloo very clearly articulated what happened with those consumption sites. What I think happened with the consumption sites—and I was listening to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence—is that people are saying, “Well, there's no treatment. They're just going in there and consuming narcotics, and no one's doing anything there to help them get better.” That's actually not the case; not at all.

For instance, in my city the site of the Shepherds of Good Hope and also the Clarence Street site very clearly demonstrate—I think that there was always an effort by these consumption sites not just to get people clean and off drugs, but before you can do that, you've got to be healthy.

Before you can do that, you have to address other things that are keeping you healthy and well: being housed and having adequate food. Those are the things that those consumption sites are doing.

I was pleased that the government continued funding. I was very disappointed that a number of them closed and that a number of them that are out there that are needed aren't being funded. I think that's a fair comment. That's not a criticism.

We have to do better in that regard because the people who are out there on the front lines are saving lives. They're saving people's sons and daughters and mothers and fathers. I think that creating a paradigm under which they weren't doing that job as an excuse for reviewing it is unfair and unbecoming of the government. I would suggest that it would be something that the member from Eglinton–Lawrence reconsider when talking about consumption sites.

As I said, I support this bill. What's missing in this bill is actually the real foundation for mental health. A centre for excellence is great. It can act as a hub that will help to do research and disseminate that research and best practices and treatments.

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But where it's at is in communities. Where communities have been successful—I think in London, they have services there; there are diversions from emergency rooms. In Ottawa, we've had that as well with Family Services Ottawa. What happened was, Family Services Ottawa and some other providers said—when you land in an emergency room twice because you have a mental health problem or an addiction, they get a call, and then they address your needs, or try to address your needs. And they're actually looking to do some research. That would be a really good piece for the government to get involved in, doing some research around that diversion, how that helps to reduce emergency room visits, but also, more importantly, how that helps people defeat their addiction or overcome their mental health challenges, deal with their mental health challenges.

I'm going to talk very quickly, because I don't have a lot of time, about two things that happened in Ottawa that I'm very proud to have worked with the community on. The first thing is something called Project Step, which is addictions treatment and counselling in all the high schools and middle schools in Ottawa. One of the boards was doing this already. I think the Catholic school board was doing this—this was about 10 years ago—and they were providing the service through another provider. They found that the kids were just dropping out. Potential was lost. So what happened about 10 years ago is, we worked with the boards. We worked with the city of Ottawa public health, who wanted to be a partner. The government was a partner through the Ministry of Health, and then the United Way came in as a partner.

I encourage members of this House to go and take a look at Project Step. What happened was, it made sure that kids overcame their addiction. It made sure they stayed in school and increased graduation rates. That was because

there were four partners who came around the table and said, "This is important, so we're all going to put some skin in the game."

I think when we're looking at the issue of mental health from this Legislature, we have to look at the fact that there are partners in our communities, and those partners understand the needs, they understand what leadership they have, and they understand the capacities and the resources that are available to them. And they are partners. I don't see partnership in this document. I'm not saying it has to be there, but I think the government has to talk about that. If you're going to put out a document that talks about foundations, that's something that has to be part of it.

Again, I encourage you to go and take a look at Project Step. It's something my colleagues from Ottawa here in this Legislature are probably aware of. It's not happening across Ontario, but it's happening in Ottawa and it has made a difference. They have the metrics there. That's another really important thing for governments to look at: How do you measure it? You've got to be able to measure it. That's why with things like what's happening in London and with Family Services Ottawa and family services across this province, we have to be able to help them show how they're helping people, so we can look at what is a much better and less expensive intervention. I just encourage the government to do that. It's not a criticism of the bill, it's not saying that everything has to be in the bill, but that piece has to be there in the government's approach.

The second thing is, in our community we had a challenge with suicide among youth. The community came together about eight years ago, nine years ago—people like CHEO, the Royal Ottawa and the Youth Services Bureau. We had a lot of suicides and we had some very high-profile suicides as well. It really touched the community. People came together and they said, "We've got to do something to address this issue with our youth." What the group came up with—first of all, people don't know where to go. They don't know where to get access; they don't know what the resources are. So four community partners came together, \$25,000 a year for each of them, not a lot of money: CHEO, the Royal, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services at the time, and Ottawa Public Health. It was really progressive, Ottawa Public Health. When we talk about cutting public health—these are the kinds of things that public health can do.

What's happened? The organization has now moved beyond that. It grew. We hired one position. We created navigation for parents. It created peer support. So now we have more resiliency and services in our schools just because we made that small commitment, and we knew that we needed to work with our community partners to get it done.

I'm going to repeat: I support this bill. I'm going to vote in favour of this bill. It's important. I urge the government to make sure that they provide communities with the support to come to community-based solutions. All the communities we live in are different. There are different resources. There is different leadership. There are different

needs. The needs in Thunder Bay are different from the needs in Ottawa, which may be different from the needs in Kitchener. And the resources are different, and we have great people there.

Those are the solutions that will last. Those are the solutions that work, because it's not just the provincial government coming in and saying, "Here's a cheque. Go and do your work." It's saying, "Here are some resources. We'll partner with you and you and you, and we're going to make it a priority."

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I'm looking forward to questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I listened intently to the member from Ottawa South's speech, and I'm happy that he is going to be supporting this bill, because it's very important.

I wanted to comment directly with reference to some of the organizations he mentioned in the Ottawa area.

On July 2, 2019, our government issued a press release stating that we are making an additional investment, on top of what was already promised, of more than \$5.1 million this year alone, to support people, families and caregivers in the Ottawa area.

The press release lists 19 organizations. For example, Bruyère Continuing Care's rent supplement supportive housing program is receiving \$2,530. Canada Mental Health Association Ottawa is receiving \$625,968 this year alone. The Centre Psychosocial is receiving over \$100,000.

We also have Centretown Community Health Centre; Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario; Crossroads Children's Mental Health Centre; Jewish Family Services Ottawa; Montfort Renaissance Inc.; Ottawa Hospital—Champlain; Ottawa Hospital—we're giving them 10 more in-patient mental health beds; Ottawa Inner City Health Inc.; Psychiatric Survivors of Ottawa; Robert Smart Centre; Royal Ottawa Healthcare Group; Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre; Shepherds of Good Hope; Somerset West Community Health Centre; Vanier Community Services Centre; and the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa are all receiving additional funding on top of what was already allotted to them this year.

So I'm glad that the member is supportive. I think that our government is taking the right steps in providing resources, as mentioned, to support these organizations so that they can protect what matters most, which is the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I appreciate the thoughtful approach of my friend from Ottawa South, and also the mention of AMO's provincial coordinator recommendation from my friend and colleague from Waterloo.

Just to go back, we're not criticizing this bill for not having everything in it. There are precisely two things in it. There is the creation of a mental health organization,

and strengthening Ontario's ability to sue opioid manufacturers.

There's a lot missing in the bill. One of the obvious things that I was really surprised wouldn't be in here is: If you are going to strengthen the government's ability to sue opioid manufacturers, why not have the proceeds of those suits go to the front line? That was something that we've discussed in this place before. Why not make sure that the proceeds—that's a recommendation of AMO. It's something we've talked about, and it's something that would be a direct benefit, right off the bat.

Just to pick up on some comments from my friend from Ottawa South talking about coordination: AMO's recommendation of a provincial coordinator does something really important. It talks about best practices so that approaches from across the province can be coordinated, and something in one municipality that works really well can be taken to a similar municipality and used to help people suffering from mental illness and addiction there, and municipal government approaches can also be shared so that best practices can be shared all across the province and we can come out with the best possible outcomes. That's a really important strategy that came right from stakeholders to AMO and from AMO to the government, and yet the government has not really taken those recommendations to heart and done anything practical, so that's what we've criticized

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I'm so glad to hear today that all of us agree that there is a need in mental health that we need to support and do a lot of work on.

I appreciate the suggestions from the member from Ottawa South. Let's work together, not so much as critics. I really appreciate it, and I want to let all of us know that our government is determined to work on mental health as well as supporting this bill on addiction services.

Right from the very beginning, we are already determined to put \$3.8 billion into this, and our member also reminded us of the additional funding that we are going to give to Ottawa as well. We are working together. Not only that, but we also have an associate minister just to work on mental health as well. I still remember him reminding us that mental health is really happening at all ages, not only in youth. I am reminded that it is also happening with seniors, and we're talking about it happening in the police force—and actually in the workforce and everywhere. There are a lot of leads, and we need to work together on that.

I am thankful that our Minister of Health has already led us and also that we have an associate minister to work on this. I believe that this is the beginning of making that transition. Of course, there will still be a lot of work to be done. We appreciate the suggestions, but we will continue to work on this and make a difference and correct this mental health problem.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the member from Ottawa South: He touched on a couple of key points that are obviously not involved in this bill, but the housing piece is so key to mental health.

When I referenced earlier in Waterloo region—the Out of the Cold program is full, but what the safe consumption site does provide is a safe place where education can happen and where health care can actually be shared with those who are using the site.

When I referenced Peterborough earlier—Peterborough now has the highest rates of opioid deaths in Ontario. I think that takes people by surprise. The stat—I think it's 26 deaths so far; I could be corrected because this was from the Peterborough Examiner from a few weeks ago. But what that medical officer in Peterborough, Rosana Salvaterra, is recommending—she is saying that we need wraparound services, we need primary care, we need mental health supports, we need housing, we need harm reduction—and you need leadership and you need resources, because right now an organization called Ptbo Strong is actually fundraising for harm reduction services. That isn't a sustainable plan.

What is a sustainable plan is what BC did. BC, in 2019, estimated to have saved 4,700 lives. They said, “We boosted support for our overdose response ... to expand access to naloxone kits and increase paramedics in rural and remote areas”—that's working.

“We're integrating access to addictions treatment across our new team-based primary care system....

“We're supporting community innovation projects in 27 communities—focused on local action to save lives, address stigma, and connect more people to treatment and recovery”—and that has a \$1.7-million price tag.

So you have to have the strategy and the will to make the change, but you also have to put some dollars attached to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Ottawa South now has two minutes to wrap up what he has just heard during questions and comments.

Mr. John Fraser: I want to thank the members from Carleton, Niagara Centre, Richmond Hill and Waterloo.

Just to wrap up, I know that the member from Carleton, as I believe do all members of this House, wants to make sure that we do what's needed in our communities, because they're our neighbours' families, they're our families. That's the part we're from.

We have to look at the dollars, but you've got to be careful. It's a bit of a mug's game. I know, I've been in government. I've been on the other side. When you use numbers and people say “additional”—I'll give you an example. About three weeks ago, the Minister of Education said, “We've doubled the funding for mental health in schools. It's \$40 million now, compared to 2017-18.” What he didn't say is that in 2018-19—in 2017-18 it was \$20 million, but actually they hadn't doubled it from the previous year, which everybody assumed. It was an increase, but a minor increase.

We can play with numbers and it happens. Governments do that. It's about what we do in our communities.

It's about the services people are delivering. It's about how we ensure that when people have an idea and identify a problem, we partner with them; that we're open to that and we're flexible and we're trying to do that work. That's the point I'm trying to make. It's not easy to do in government. I know; I have been on the other side. That's why I'm encouraging the members on the other side to look at things in that way. In my experience, when we were able to do those things, we made things that lasted and helped people. And I'm not criticizing or chiding you; I'm just saying that you need to do that. It's hard work. It's not easy to do in government.

I appreciate the members' time. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's an honour to rise in this House today and speak to Bill 116, the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act, 2019. I'd like to begin by thanking the Minister of Health and her parliamentary assistant for introducing this critical piece of legislation that, if passed, will enable the government to finally create a world-class mental health and addictions system. Not only is this long overdue, Mr. Speaker, but this is something that all Ontarians desperately need, especially given the ongoing opioid crisis that has unfortunately affected every corner of the province.

Members of our government travelled the province speaking with front-line workers with first-hand experience, as well as caregivers, family members, educators and numerous other service providers who work with mental health and addictions services. There's an overwhelming consensus that it is time for much-needed reform. Bill 116 is not just for those who have experienced mental illness and the crippling grip of addiction, but also for every Ontarian who may need help in the future, whether it's for themselves or their loved ones.

Our government was elected on a commitment to put people first. When the data show that one in three Canadians will experience a mental health and addictions issue within their lifetime, it's critical that these services be in place and easily accessible, especially when Ontarians need them the most. Our government will not ignore the fact that mental illness accounts for about 10% of the burden of disease in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, by the time Canadians reach 40 years of age, half of them will be struggling with or will have previously struggled with a mental illness. For 15 years under the previous Liberal government, we saw the number of people visiting Ontario's emergency rooms due to a mental health or addiction-related issue continue to rise, and yet the previous Liberal government did absolutely nothing to deal with this influx.

In their time of need, these people, who were at their most vulnerable and needed help, were ignored. For too long, the lack of attention to and investment in the mental health and addictions system led to unnecessary delays due to red tape and over regulation in accessing high-

quality mental health care or addictions support. Poor coordination across the care continuum resulted in inefficiencies, poor service and negative client experience as patients, their loved ones and their caregivers struggled to navigate this complex system.

Service providers and system planners do not have access to information that they need in order to properly diagnose patients and to ensure that they are receiving the proper health care services that they require. What we need is a holistic approach.

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Our plan provides investments to remove barriers to access and reduce wait times, and it will finally give health care providers the tools and resources they need to provide the services that Ontarians not only need, but deserve. It is essential that we provide resources and support to health service providers and integrate care delivery systems that work with today's modern, technological and fast-paced society.

Mr. Speaker, supporting those who provide these essential services is equally as important as supporting those who need access to these services. I am pleased to support Bill 116, the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act, because these changes that our government is proposing will bring much-needed reform to upgrade the system as a whole.

Je sais que les stratégies du gouvernement sont solides car au coeur de cette approche se trouvent les besoins des patients et des travailleurs. C'est un exemple de l'engagement de notre gouvernement à investir 3,8 milliards de dollars sur 10 ans pour élaborer et mettre en oeuvre une stratégie complète et connectée en matière de la santé mentale et la lutte contre les dépendances.

Nous devons assurer que les services vitaux de santé soient financés de manière durable et à long terme, afin que ceux qui ont besoin de ces services puissent y avoir accès et recevoir du traitement de la plus haute qualité. L'Ontario a la capacité d'être un chef de file en matière des services de santé mentale et des dépendances, et notre gouvernement veut investir nos ressources pour que cela devienne une réalité pour les Ontariens et les Ontariennes.

As the member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Carleton, I am proud to promote this bill on behalf of the people that I've sworn to represent and serve, a bill that, if passed, will provide them and all Ontarians with a world-class mental health and addictions service.

Notre gouvernement a déjà fait un investissement supplémentaire de plus de 5,1 millions de dollars cette année pour soutenir les personnes, les familles et les fournisseurs de soins de la région d'Ottawa aux prises avec des problèmes de santé mentale et de dépendances. This funding is part of the additional \$174 million that our government is providing this year alone to address critical gaps in services across Ontario and support patients and families living with mental health and addictions challenges. To ensure mental health and addictions service providers have stable, long-term funding, the government will be making this additional funding available every

year. So this additional funding is not just for this year; it's for every year moving forward.

Notre gouvernement croit que tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes méritent de recevoir les services appropriés où et quand ils en ont besoin. Je sais que le gouvernement s'est engagé à promouvoir la santé mentale et le bien-être positifs. En mettant en oeuvre des services plus inclusifs et accessibles à tous, nous pouvons fournir aux Ontariens et Ontariennes ce dont ils ont besoin.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there is a crisis and we know that the situation is urgent. As recently as March 27, 2019, the Ottawa Citizen wrote a story about overdose deaths spiking in the Ottawa region. Three Ottawa men were pronounced dead of suspected opioid overdoses, one of them from a home on River Road just south of Manotick in my riding of Carleton. Just today, the Ottawa Citizen published an article by Bruce Deachman, entitled "The Shame of Opioids: Confronting the Crisis by Addressing Stigma." He references data from Public Health Ontario that shows the number of opioid-related deaths in Ottawa has been on the rise. Opioid-related deaths in Ottawa, by year: The graph shows that in 2010, it was 2.4% of deaths; in 2018, that number rose to 8.1%.

The previous Liberal government might have been willing and content to ignore these numbers, ignore the people of Ottawa and turn a wilful blind eye to the harsh and ugly reality faced by Ontarians. However, our government was elected on a mandate to put people first. That is why I am proud to support Bill 116 and ensure that we are finally taking the necessary steps to address years of neglect by the previous Liberal government. Not only do we want to ensure that everyone in Ontario has access to these important services, but our government wants to combat the opioid crisis that has added to the drastic increase in mental-health- and addictions-related issues. Those with substance-use problems are up to three times more likely to have a mental illness and more than 15% of people with a substance-use problem have a co-occurring mental illness.

Our government wants to go to the source to ensure that opioid manufacturers and wholesalers are held accountable for their role in this crisis. If passed, this act would give Ontario the right to sue opioid manufacturers and wholesalers for their alleged wrongdoing in order to recover health care costs that have been paid for by the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario due to opioid-related disease, injury or illness.

It would also support Ontario's participation in the national class action lawsuit that our friends in British Columbia launched last year against more than 40 opioid manufacturers and wholesalers on behalf of the provincial, territorial and federal governments. We want to join them to not only reform this broken system left behind by the previous Liberal government, but to recover the money spent by hard-working Ontarians for something that should have never been their problem in the first place.

This is an example of how our government is doing exactly what we campaigned to do: stop useless spending and change the previous processes to save Ontarians the money they earned and keep it in their pockets.

Notre gouvernement prend ces mesures pour aider tous les Canadiens et Canadiennes et pour protéger les plus vulnérables. Comme gouvernement de l'Ontario, c'est notre obligation de protéger tous les citoyens et de mettre en oeuvre des mesures pour que les plus en péril ne soient pas exploités.

Canadians in the lowest income group are three to four times more likely to report poor to fair mental health, and we know that those with poor mental health are more likely to develop an addiction. This is a very dangerous situation. Among Ontarians aged 25 to 34, one of every eight deaths is related to opioid use. Again, Mr. Speaker, I reference the article from the Ottawa Citizen which indicated that of the three deaths in the Ottawa area related to the opioid crisis, one of them was in my riding of Carleton, unfortunately.

We cannot stand by and let large opioid manufacturers have free rein with no penalties. They must take responsibility for the damage caused and the burden they have placed on every single Ontarian. This is an obvious initiative that we need to take, one that will change so many aspects of this situation for the better and one that our friends in British Columbia have made a priority. We need to make combatting this crisis a priority as well, and joining this lawsuit is the first step for change.

This is not a single-pronged problem, either. Poor mental health and addictions services are a catalyst for many other issues as well. This is why our government has taken the only rational decision and introduced a multi-pronged approach. We want this bill to be the catalyst for positive change. The opioid crisis is putting more people at risk of homelessness. In fact, yesterday there was talk on the news in Ottawa about the city of Ottawa declaring a state of emergency due to the increase in homelessness in our city. People who suffer from mental health challenges are at a greater risk of homelessness, and we already know the unfortunate correlation between mental health and addictions and homelessness. People with lived experience of mental health issues and addictions are disproportionately affected by homelessness.

While there are many factors that can lead to homelessness, mental health plays a significant role. An estimated 25% to 50% of homeless people live with a mental health condition. In order to solve this social crisis, it will require new ways of helping these critically vulnerable citizens. The consequences of homelessness tend to be more severe when coupled with a mental health condition. Those who suffer from mental health and addictions issues remain homeless for longer periods of time and have less contact with family and friends. They encounter more barriers to employment and tend to be in poorer health than others who are homeless for other reasons.

If we want to keep Ontarians safe and off the streets, combatting this crisis is an important part of the equation. The Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence, proposed in this legislation, will lay the strong foundation we need as we develop and implement our mental health and addictions strategy. Solving the challenges in this complex system requires detailed information, collective

infrastructure and the ability to disseminate evidence and set service expectations throughout the entire province. Our centre of excellence will provide us with these exact tools.

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This piece of legislation is also so important, not just because it is a catalyst for change, but because it is the catalyst for discussion. Talking about mental health, and the importance of taking care of your mental health, is the first step on the path to improvement. This government is committed to promoting the discussion on mental and addictions and letting Ontarians know that we are here for them. Our government cares, and our government wants everyone to know that it is not just okay to talk about your mental health, but it is encouraged.

Legislation like this is key to ending the stigma. Legislation like this is key to making mental health discussion part of our daily lives. We want the young girl who struggles with anxiety to feel comfortable and seek help. We want the 82-year-old veteran with depression to know that these services exist for him. We want the 45-year-old mother of four to know that there is a safe place for her to get help, so she can continue to be a role model and a hero for her children.

These things take courage to discuss, and even more courage to do something about and act upon. We want to help give people that courage, to start them down the path to a healthier and more fulfilling life.

Ontario's mental health and addictions system is disconnected, with uneven access to quality services, making it challenging for patients, families, caregivers and loved ones to navigate a very confusing system and get the services they so desperately need.

Service standards vary throughout the province, with increased wait times and poor-quality service all over the province. It is often harder to access quality treatment in northern communities, on our reserves and in rural areas, such as in rural Carleton.

First Nations youth die by suicide about five to six times more often than non-Aboriginal youth. It is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, that we do not have proper services in place to combat one of the leading causes of suicide.

Suicide rates for Inuit youth are among the highest in the world, at 11 times the national average. This is not a record that we should hold, especially not in a First World country like Canada, and changes need to be made.

Our plan will ensure that patients and families all across the province are able to access integrated, standardized, evidence-based care and services, no matter where they live.

Suicide is something that no person, no family, should ever have to experience, and it is our duty to ensure that anyone who needs help not only knows how and where to access it, but knows that they will actually be able to get that service in an efficient and effective manner.

Nous sommes un gouvernement pour le peuple et nous savons que l'un des meilleurs moyens d'aider les personnes est de rester au courant des problèmes les plus

importants et de mettre en oeuvre des pratiques efficaces qui fonctionnent dans la société actuelle. Notre système de soins de santé mentale est dépassé; il a besoin d'un moteur central pour fournir des informations et des ressources aux points de service partout en Ontario.

If we want to see our health care system actually work for Ontarians, we need legislation that gets the ball rolling on modern, practical and sustainable solutions to our mental health and addictions issues. We know that promotion, prevention and early intervention can not only deter the onset of mental illness and addictions, but can also deter the great costs and burdens that come along with it.

When mental health problems and illnesses cost the Canadian economy at least \$50 billion per year, these pre-emptive measures are essential to reducing the financial and emotional burdens of mental health and addictions issues.

That is why I am so pleased to see that our government wants to implement effective and efficient measures from the ground up, to ensure that no one slips through the cracks and that we can help people live healthy, complete lives.

Mr. Speaker, this is why I am so proud to be part of a government that has taken action on so many important issues affecting Ontarians and, since we were elected in June 2018, has delivered on initiatives that the people of Ontario wanted. We have listened to the people of Ontario and we have put what matters most first: the people of Ontario.

The extensive consultations done by the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions are evidence that this legislation is based on real conversations with the people of Ontario, and that this legislation tackles the issues they face concerning mental health and addiction.

The people of Ontario expect us to listen to them and to consider their priorities in order to make laws that ultimately respect their needs. Bill 116, the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act, does exactly that.

Nous avons écouté attentivement et nous continuerons d'écouter les Ontariens et Ontariennes pour savoir ce dont ils ont besoin pour créer un système efficace de santé mentale et de lutte contre les dépendances.

We are committed to the people of Ontario. We are committed to helping our citizens by providing them with the quality mental health and addiction services they deserve. Mr. Speaker, as a member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Carleton, I am personally committed to ensuring that the people of Carleton, the people that I'm here to represent and to be a voice for, have access to the services that they need, because far too often in rural Carleton, people are ignored.

We are committed as a government to providing these services within a sustainable framework so the system does not deteriorate as we have seen in the past. I am proud to support this bill that puts the people first and ensures that they have quality mental health and addiction services for years to come.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'm pleased to add comment on Bill 116, on mental health and addictions. Mental health and addictions issues are disproportionately high in northwestern Ontario, and the clients that come for help have complex needs.

There are good people in Thunder Bay working on this issue. In Thunder Bay, the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and the Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research at Lakehead University hosted a northwestern Ontario engagement and met to discuss the needs of the north. I was happy to hear the member from Carleton say that everyone in Ontario will have access to services, because in Thunder Bay we have recent data from Public Health Ontario that shows we have the distinction of having the highest per capita rate of opioid overdose deaths in the province.

That group met and came up with recommendations. One issue that they were talking about is all the unmet needs. People are waiting for treatment or they have to go out of town for treatment, and when they come back from out of town, there are no supports in place for them. In the worst-case scenarios, they're losing their lives. That is just unacceptable.

The other thing is that the systems in northern Ontario need to be fixed. It's clear we need a made-in-the-north and a northern approach—an approach that is devised to be effective and sustainable. In northern Ontario, we live in a diverse region and supports need to respect that diversity, be culturally safe and age-appropriate—

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: I'm happy to stand here and speak to Bill 116. I just want to, while I have the floor, say to the member opposite from Niagara Centre, just to clarify, that our government intends to invest any award from this litigation directly into front-line mental health and addiction services. I just wanted to clarify that.

Applause.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you.

I'd like to speak a bit about Cambridge. We've talked about how the opioid crisis is affecting every community across our great province. I am seeing it, of course, in Cambridge; we're not immune to it. I want to give a little shout-out to my constituents, because these are people who care very deeply about helping others and things like not giving up on them. We meet regularly, a group of constituents and myself, and we talk about ways in which we can help those who are struggling with mental health and addictions.

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It wasn't brought up by an individual thing; they were so happy to see that this government is taking it so seriously, not only by having an Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, but also with this new legislation—to see that we are taking it seriously and we're trying to expand upon what we have already. They're very hopeful.

They understand that we are taking a multi-ministerial approach, that addiction is very closely related to mental health, and there's the homelessness piece. It's just so connected. Because we are looking at things with a multi-ministerial perspective, I do have hope that we will be able to tackle this problem in a very measured way, so that we can have lasting good effects and can truly help people, as the member from Ottawa South mentioned. That's a goal I know we all share.

I look forward to continued debate on this, but I do want to commend the Minister of Health and her parliamentary assistant, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. This is a very hard bill, and I think you've done very well with it so far.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It's always an honour to rise. I'm glad to be speaking to Bill 116, the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act. It's really heartwarming to hear a member of the Conservative government speak so well about the incredible leadership of the NDP government in BC. Truly, the NDP have always been leaders in health care and improving health care, and are the reason we have a public health care system in this country. In fact, it was in October 2018 when the British Columbia NDP government passed opioid legislation and brought in a class-action opioid lawsuit. It was the first of its kind in North America. So it's always great to see the Conservatives recognize that.

We are certainly facing an opioid emergency, and it's not just in the GTA; it's everywhere. It's in the north. It's all over Ontario. It is one of the most pressing issues that we are facing today.

One of the things about this job is the opportunity and the privilege to be able to learn from experts. We had individuals come and talk to us here about opioids and naloxone and how it's administered. I think that the fact that naloxone can now be administered through a nasal spray and not just a needle is a big deal. We need to continue to make that nasal spray available to people. We need to teach people about the important warning signs when someone is going through an overdose, because our intervention could save a life.

After all, what I learned was that many of these people—in fact, over 75%, if I remember correctly, of people who are facing an opioid addiction actually first got the drugs through a doctor and through a medical professional. So we have to really figure out how much we're making this available to the public, and we need to find alternate ways to deal with pain as much as possible.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm very honoured to be able to stand here this afternoon to speak to Bill 116. I actually missed question period earlier today because I was in my hometown of Hamilton with the health minister, Christine Elliott, and MPP Oosterhoff to talk about the unveiling or

announcement that Hamilton was one of the health teams in the province of Ontario. I'm very proud of that.

While I was there, I had the opportunity to speak to experts in the field—experts who deal with mental health and addictions on a daily basis. They are applauding this government because we are taking the approach to address mental health and addictions under a big, large umbrella. We realize that to solve this issue, we need to provide services that include housing. We need to provide services that include treating the actual addiction. We are taking an all-encompassing approach to fighting the crisis, an issue that truly is a crisis in Ontario.

These health teams are going to be leaders, and they're going to make huge progress. We are confident, and our stakeholders are telling us, that this is the right approach. What this government has recognized is that this crisis isn't new; it has existed in Ontario for years, but we have not tackled it by bringing people from all fields—whether it's housing, whether it's family physicians, psychiatrists, child psychologists, psychologists—together to fight it. The health teams that our minister announced today in Hamilton will be able to make significant progress in the fight against mental health and addictions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll now return to the member from Carleton to wrap up this portion of the debate.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I comment, I just promised my OLIP intern, Eric Osborne, that I would thank him in the House for helping me prepare my speech. He did a lot of excellent research and this was his first one, so thank you, Eric. That was excellent.

I also wanted to thank the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Cambridge, Humber River–Black Creek and Flamborough–Glanbrook for their comments.

To the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan: I'm sorry to hear that your area has the highest per capita rate of opioid deaths. I think that's terrible. I look forward to working with you in reducing those opioid-related deaths, not just in your area but all across the province. Areas in Carleton, rural Carleton, are underserved as well. I look forward to continuing this discussion in order to have some positive change and working together.

With respect to the comments made by the member for Humber River–Black Creek: Ultimately, mental health is a non-partisan issue. As a Progressive Conservative government, we are here to protect people and put people first, because that's what matters most. Ultimately, no party has jurisdiction over an issue. If there's another government that is taking the lead on something and we think it's a good idea, why not support it? I think our Premier has already shown leadership in that regard with respect to the Prime Minister and the more reasoned approach he has taken.

Having said that, given that you are happy with my speech and my comments, I fully expect the member from Humber River–Black Creek to support this motion and vote in favour of our bill, Bill 116. I hope that all members from the opposition will support it.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It's an honour to stand in the House and speak to this really important bill. I want to begin by saying that I'm an academic, so I think that centres of excellence that pull people from different areas together are always a good thing. I also think that it's a great thing to be holding opioid manufacturers accountable for their actions that have brought this crisis upon us.

But I want to make some points. I think that it's crucial to think about, when you're doing triage in what is effectively a crisis situation, where people are dying in significant numbers, people's lives are at risk every day—I think it's fine to have the academic structures in place, but you have to be out there on the front lines. You have to be out there interviewing the folks and talking to the folks who are dealing with the everyday crisis and you have to be triaging the problem. You don't start with an academic discussion about coronaries when somebody is actually having a heart attack. You get out there and you save their lives.

As the critic for poverty and homelessness, I spend a lot of time thinking about the systems that push people into poverty and that make it hard for them to get out of poverty. People don't end up in poverty and on the streets with mental health and addictions issues because they've made a series of bad decisions. They have invariably been pushed into the situation by various systems, depending upon what's been going on in their histories. A lot of the time it's trauma. It's really interesting that we're talking about this on days when we've just donned white ribbons for Woman Abuse Prevention Month, because a lot of the trauma that ends up pushing people into dangerous situations, onto the streets, comes from trauma at home. Frequently, it's gender-based violence. I have spoken and interviewed many people who have had those experiences. I think it's really important that we understand these underlying and interrelated issues.

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Whether it's trauma, whether it's some form of racism, whether it's stigma about mental health and addictions issues, whether it's a disability or whether it's a work issue, there are all sorts of factors, as people have been saying, that push people into poverty, into mental health and addictions issues, and sometimes onto the streets.

I want to talk a little bit more about a report that has just come out about Street Health, which is an overdose prevention site that opened on June 27, 2018, at Dundas and Sherbourne. As they describe themselves, they're really one of the epicentres of Toronto's addiction issues. They have the second-highest rate of overdose calls. I want to let you know some of the statistics they have reported.

In those 18 months, they have had 3,134 total visits—and this is just at one centre. Of the people who visited, 56% self-identified as women, 43.5% self-identified as men and 0.5% self-identified as transgender or gender-nonconforming. They overturned 50 overdoses. They get 272 visits per month. They have made 53 referrals to

health care, including for substance treatment. The average age of their clients is quite young: 36 years old. Of course, the primary drug they're dealing with, that they've had to overturn, is fentanyl.

These are folks who are worried that their funding won't continue—and this isn't just one site. If their funding doesn't continue, they're concerned that there will be increased drug use and overdosing in public spaces; that people will continue to use substances but will not have the opportunity to have safe injection sites or needles and will run the risk of all of the corollary health effects from that, including death. They're worried that people will not have accessible options, and they're worried that they won't have access to the wraparound supports that are there at centres like this.

I think it's crucial that we be listening to these folks who are on the ground. They desperately do not need the threat that funding might be taken away. We need more overdose prevention sites in Toronto. In fact, we desperately need more of them across the province.

The other thing they've asked for over and over again is a safe supply, because if people who already use these drugs know that their supply is going to be safe, if they know their heroin is heroin and that it's not fentanyl, they're much less likely to die and they're much less likely to be able to come to a point in their lives where they may be able to have the treatment for trauma and the treatment to actually get off of the addiction and be able to build their lives.

It's really, really important to understand the kinds of traumas that often push people into poverty and into homelessness. When people can't get the mental health supports that they need when they need them, that is when they often begin to self-medicate because the pain of these traumas is often just too terrible to bear.

This is where we get to the question of the availability of the mental health supports themselves. Again, this is a form of triage. While it's lovely to have a centre of excellence, we have people who are suffering, people who are ideating suicide, people who are self-medicating in ways that often lead to the danger that we've been talking about precisely because they don't have access to the mental health supports that they need. So it is a crisis, and it's a form of social triage to think about how we increase those mental health supports: How do we increase them for all the people who need them, and how do we increase them for young people? These things can't wait until we build intellectual structures to think about it. We actually know that this needs to be done. We know already. We have our mental health experts telling us that. We need to figure this out right now.

It extends to questions of supportive housing. We know that we desperately need supportive housing, and in the absence of having it, our hospitals are filled with people who shouldn't be there. They should be getting mental health support much earlier on and they should be getting supportive housing when they need it, which would actually alleviate the issue of hallway health care that we're all so desperate to deal with.

I think it's so important to understand the way that these things are interconnected and the ways that they will benefit the government to actively triage the front line, to put the extra funding into the mental health supports that people need, to make sure the overdose prevention sites have the funding that they need to be secure so that they're not always worrying, "Will we be able to continue?"—and to have sufficient numbers of overdose prevention sites across the province so that we don't have cities which don't have any.

I think it's also important to understand the ways that urban mental health issues are very different from rural mental health issues. A lot of mental health issues in rural areas go unheeded and uncared for. When I was out at the International Plowing Match both this year and last year, I spent a lot of time talking to farmers and people who live in rural areas about questions of mental health in rural areas, and all of the time I was hearing the ways in which these often go unreported and undiagnosed and uncared for, for a whole variety of reasons, but these issues are acute—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I am so sorry to interrupt the member from Beaches–East York, but we have run out of time this afternoon for the debate to continue.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

TENANT PROTECTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): However, friends, we have not one, not two but three late shows this evening. We're going to begin with the member for Toronto Centre, who has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member will have up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or his parliamentary assistant will have up to five minutes to respond.

So we turn now to the member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'm grateful to have the opportunity to voice my dissatisfaction with this government's policies and lack of foresight when it comes to tenants' rights in our province. On two occasions now I have asked for an explanation of why this government and this Premier think that there is any justifiable reason to exempt new rental units from rent control. I keep hearing that the supposed plan that this government has created—obviously on the back of a napkin—will increase purpose-built rental supply in Ontario.

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As the executive director of the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, Geordie Dent, eloquently put it, "There is no empirical evidence that rent control affects rental housing development one way or another."

I cannot stress enough how important it is for this government to understand the error of their ways. We are in a deep affordable-housing crisis in Ontario.

I have some statistics here from the CMHC for average monthly rents across Ontario for 2018. In Barrie, the average cost of rent is \$1,270; in Guelph, \$1,109; in Hamilton, \$1,077; in Kitchener, \$1,138; in Ottawa, \$1,174; in Peterborough, \$1,027; and in St. Catharines, \$979 a month. The lowest of these average rates is in St. Catharines, and that still represents almost 50% of the monthly gross income for a worker who is earning the minimum wage. It's simply unacceptable.

Here in Toronto, where the cost of rent for an average one-bedroom apartment has skyrocketed to \$2,260 a month, we are at a boiling point. Even the former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and the current mayor of Toronto, John Tory, agrees. He has said, "The housing affordability issue in Toronto is too serious to consider relaxing rent controls before increasing supply."

As a renter myself, I'm simply not able to understand how anyone in our city or in our province can afford rent as it currently stands. So many of my friends and colleagues are being priced out of the city of Toronto, simply because even with two incomes, people cannot afford the cost of rent. And when you start adding children into the mix, things just don't add up.

Toronto Centre is home to the highest per capita number of social housing units, as well as numerous rental buildings. Every day, I see my constituents struggling to make ends meet. Instead of improving on the Liberal government's failed policies, this government is taking things from bad to even worse.

The previous Liberal government spent years—almost the entire time they had in government, 15 years—trying to dodge the question of rent control. It wasn't until the spring of 2017, in the final moments of their mandate, that they finally succumbed to the pressure that housing activists and we in the NDP had put on the Liberal government for years and years to finally close the loopholes that were previously in our rent control system. So many tenants were priced out of their units by greedy rental increases that did not correlate with the market and were not realistic. Now this government has reopened that same loophole that we just fought so hard to get closed—again, further limiting protections for tenants.

Last week, I found out that tenants at 22 John Street in York South–Weston were faced with steep rental increases that were applied disproportionately. Some tenants were offered a two-tier option to sign up for another one-year-long lease, with a rental increase in the single digits, or, if they chose to go to a month-to-month lease, as is their right, they were going to be facing rent increases in the double digits.

As I mentioned earlier, some of these tenants were facing an increase to the tune of 25%. That's almost \$400 a month. I don't know who in this province can afford a rent increase of \$400. For low- and middle-income earners, it just doesn't add up.

This government needs to come up with a better plan to increase the stock of purpose-built rental housing, without

evicting half of the current tenants, potentially into homelessness, in the process.

I encourage my colleagues across the aisle to speak to the Premier and to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We need rent control in Ontario, and we need it yesterday.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Milton, now has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Parm Gill: I am pleased to have the opportunity to reiterate our government's commitment to ensuring that Ontario's tenants and landlords are treated fairly.

Under the Residential Tenancies Act, landlords are required to give at least 90 days' written notice to increase the rent. Rents may be increased only if 12 months have passed since the last increase and, unless the unit is exempt, may not exceed the rent increase guidelines.

The act establishes the Landlord and Tenant Board as an independent tribunal with the authority to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants. Landlords may apply to the board for a rent increase that is above the guideline in the following cases: an extraordinary increase in municipal taxes and charges, operating costs related to security services provided to a residential complex, or eligible capital expenditure. When a landlord finishes paying for the capital expense, tenants who have been paying above the guideline would have their rent automatically reduced.

Mr. Speaker, we know that too many people in Ontario are having a hard time finding affordable rentals. The way to fix that both in the short and long term is to create more housing. That's why we introduced More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan. Our plan will help build the right types of homes in the right places. It will make housing more affordable and will help Ontarians keep more of their hard-earned money. We want to make it easier to buy a home, and this will also free up existing rental units.

We are taking action to help stimulate more purpose-built rental construction. For example, we announced that new units occupied for the first time after November 15, 2018, would be exempt from rent control. It's one way to encourage developers to build more rental housing, and it's working.

When rent control was expanded to all units by the previous government in 2017, there were reports of planned purpose-built rental units being cancelled or converted to condominiums. But following our announcement of rent control exemptions for new units, there have been very promising signs of more rental construction. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., rental buildings composed almost 15% of all new housing construction in Ontario from December 2018 to October 2019. This is up from 10.3% following the previous government's introduction of rental control. Further, over the first 10 months of 2019, there have been more than 8,200 rental starts in Ontario. This is the highest number of rental starts for this period in any year since 1992.

Mr. Speaker, we're a government that listens. As part of More Homes, More Choice, our ministry consulted on

potential changes to the Residential Tenancies Act. We received over 2,000 submissions, 85% of which were from the public. We continue to analyze what we heard to look for ways to improve the Residential Tenancies Act.

We're taking action to help increase the supply of rental housing in Ontario. That's what Ontario tenants need. We will give renters more choice. We will build the right types of homes in the right places, and we will make housing more affordable for everyone in Ontario.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer given by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The member will have up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Barrie–Innisfil, will have up to five minutes to respond.

We turn now to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Since 2014, an estimated 24 billion litres of raw sewage has been seeping into Hamilton's water system. That's equivalent to Niagara Falls pouring into Cootes Paradise for over three hours.

Last Thursday I asked the Premier, when did he first become aware of this disaster and what steps did he take to directly inform the community of the dangers? The government's response was and continues to be wholly inadequate.

1810

On July 18, 2018, the city of Hamilton reported it to the ministry's Spills Action Centre. That means for over a year and a half—a year and a half—the ministry was aware that untreated sewage had contaminated Cootes Paradise and connected Hamilton water systems. This is nothing short of an outrage. Why didn't the minister immediately inform the people of Hamilton when they learned of this incident that posed not only a significant environmental risk but a significant risk to human health?

So many communities in Ontario are experiencing water issues. We have lead in our schools, mercury poisoning continues in Grassy Narrows—and now suspected carcinogens in Tottenham.

Every day in this House, my friend and colleague MPP Mamakwa raises the appalling lack of clean drinking water in First Nations communities. So it's no surprise, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this province simply don't trust this government when it comes to protecting our environment. This legacy of distrust dates back to the Mike Harris days of Walkerton, when the government's anti-environment agenda along with a lack of oversight was a key factor in that tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to use my time today to recognize and to thank Indigenous women, our water protectors, who have been at the forefront of these water issues. A poignant example of the power of protectors is that of Kristen Villebrun and Wendy Bush, both Oji-Cree women who, in November 2015, staged a protest to

address sewage waste in Hamilton's harbour and the lack of government action to address it. After they discovered hazardous waste along the shore of Bayfront Park, which included tampons, condoms and needles, they camped on a floating raft offshore to protest the lack of cleanup. These women sounded the alarm, yet their voices went unheard and unheeded. So it's time for all of us in this Legislature to step up, listen to the voices of those on the front lines and commit to protecting our water.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario has more than 250,000 lakes containing one fifth of the world's fresh water. The importance of rigorous standards for ensuring our water is protected cannot be overstated.

To my constituents and to the people of Hamilton: I share your rage and I share your heartbreak. Hamiltonians deserve to know what's in our water, Ontarians deserve to know what's in our water. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment to protect our water, but what has this government done? They have dismantled what meagre environmental protections we had, and instead of providing a climate change plan, they've introduced a litter day—a litter day, Mr. Speaker.

No one describes what has been lost better than Joanna Chapman, a well-known resident in my riding. She writes: "Thank you for standing firm ... on this sewage debacle.

"I noted that you did an on-site visit. What you cannot see is the water lilies that covered quite a large section of Cootes until a few years ago. What you cannot see are the frogs which seem to have disappeared. What you cannot see are the fish that died or ceased to spawn. What you cannot see are the many dozens of baby turtles which Dundas Turtle Watch released into Cootes and will not have survived. What you also cannot see are the birds, which seemed to be missing. What you also can no longer see are the thousands of native water plants, along with the millions upon millions of creatures which lived in the water."

This government's continued refusal to answer our questions and their failure to protect the people of Hamilton and Ontario is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I repeat my question: When it comes to our water, what protections can the people of Ontario and the people of Hamilton expect from this government?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Barrie–Innisfil, now has up to five minutes to respond.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'd like to thank the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for her question regarding the sewage leak in Hamilton.

Our government takes the health and safety of all Canadians very seriously. To ensure that this never happens again, we are keeping our made-in-Ontario environmental commitment to bring forward measures to make sure incidents such as these are reported and are made public by municipalities in a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, when the former Minister of the Environment, Minister Rod Phillips, and I had learned that such things are not reported—illegal sewage entering waterways—we took swift action by putting this into our Made-

in-Ontario Environment Plan. Even more importantly, most recently, under the leadership of the current Minister of the Environment, Jeff Yurek, we enhanced the administrative monetary penalties for those that spill illegal sewage into our waterways, who violate a permit to take water.

I know the member opposite had supported my private member's bill for a day of action, and I ask her, if she wants to take swift action on these matters, to support Bill 132, which makes sure that violators do pay their full penalty for the acts they commit, like illegal sewage dumping.

The current matter before us in this House is under investigation, so while I cannot comment on the subject of penalties or the fines and the timeline, what I can comment is that in the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks our top priority is ensuring the protection of human health and the natural environment. We are ensuring that the city of Hamilton is held to account and that they take all necessary steps to clean up the sewage spill to the natural environment, repair and fix the combined sewage overflow tank equipment and make sure they prevent future discharge.

I want to assure the member that staff and the ministry were on the scene as soon as we heard about the issue and we have been taking necessary steps since. Let me go through the timeline in terms of the necessary steps that have taken place. On July 6, 2018, the ministry received a public complaint regarding sewage odour and plastic debris in the creek. On the same day, ministry environmental officers responded to the area, with the city of Hamilton, to investigate the complaint and assess potential impacts on the environment. At that time, they could not determine the source of the material observed in the creek. The minister requested that Hamilton's conservation authority take samples at several locations in the creek to try and isolate the sections where the spill occurred.

On July 9, 2018, the ministry received an email from Hamilton public health regarding the potential health risks due to the high E. coli results in the water sampling taken at the outlet of the creek. Hamilton public health posted warning notices at access points to the creek. They issued a news release reporting highly contaminated water and advised the public to stay out of and not touch the water.

The city reported the source of the discharge to the ministry's Spills Action Centre on July 18, 2018, when it discovered a partially opened overflow gate on a combined sewage overflow tank. That same day, ministry environment officials attended the creek to assess the potential impacts to the environment. The ministry took swift action right away to ensure the city of Hamilton and other agencies carried out appropriate corrective actions to mitigate the impacts of the sewage discharge to the natural environment.

The city of Hamilton immediately began remediation efforts along the surface of the creek. This included the installation of booms to prevent surface contamination from moving downward and the removal of floating sewage by boat and hydraulic trucks. These initial

remediation efforts were completed on July 31, 2018. Since the completion of the remediation efforts, the city of Hamilton has completed monthly visual inspections for the presence of sewage.

On August 2, 2018, the ministry issued a provincial officer's order to the city of Hamilton to, among other things, do the following:

- quantify the amount of sewage discharge to the creek;
- identify the contaminants in the sewage;
- value the impact to the creek; and
- assess the need for remediation or mitigation to the creek.

The ministry—

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

POVERTY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Beaches–East York has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer given by the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. The member from Beaches–East York will have up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Ottawa West–Nepean, will have up to five minutes to respond. We turn now to the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you very much for this time. I'm really grateful for it. What I'm trying to do here is to actually change the perspective with which the government keeps viewing this particular question of poverty, and particularly in this case, where it intersects with Black, Indigenous and other racialized people in Ontario.

1820

A few weeks ago, a report came out, a report that was done by FoodShare in coordination with the University of Toronto, that showed that Black families are twice as likely as white families to experience food insecurity, even when they own homes and when they are employed. What that tells you is that there's something going on other than whether the parents in the family have a job. And that is the point that I was making in the question to the minister today.

The issue that I was discussing was that a report had come out today that showed that while racialized people in Ontario make up about 40% of the workforce, they make up 63% of the working poor. They already have jobs—sometimes, more than one job. But even then, those jobs are not enough to keep them above the poverty line. When that's happening, there is something going on that is not about them needing a job.

The reason that the minister's answer was unacceptable was that his answer was, "Look at all the jobs we are creating." But that's not the point. These folks already have jobs. They sometimes, again, have more than one. They are working their tails off and they still aren't managing to live that middle-class-prosperity life. So the point

that I'm making is that there's something else going on and we have to be able to understand the anti-Black racism, the anti-immigrant racism, the Islamophobia, the anti-Indigenous racism: those forms of racism that impact people's lives literally from the moment that they're born, up to and including when they get jobs and what kind of jobs they get and how much they are paid and whether they are able to get raises and whether they are able to rise in organizations and the kind of influence they are able to have. All of those things are affected by different forms of racism that manifest differently.

One of the things that this government has done is to turn the Anti-Racism Directorate into a shell. It was never an organization that had the teeth that it needed, but it has now been turned into a shell, and that shell cannot do the work that it needs to do.

So my question to the minister and to the Premier was: What's your plan? Because you cannot alleviate these kinds of incredible inequities unless you have a plan. And you can't have a plan if you don't understand what's going on. So when you keep standing up and saying, "Well, we need more jobs" and "the best social program is a job"—variation on a theme, "The best social program is a job"—you're completely misunderstanding the issue here.

The Daily Bread Food Bank report that came out recently mentioned that food insecurity is a symptom of poverty and that poverty is a public policy issue that cannot and should not be outsourced to charity. That just doesn't make any sense. We need to understand it deeply in the systemic ways that it develops and manifests, and we simply can't responsibly govern if we don't understand what we're talking about.

So I am begging the government to please do better: Understand the way that racism intersects with poverty, figure it out and then do something about it, because hundreds of thousands of Ontarians are begging you to do something about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Ottawa West–Nepean, now has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise for the first time in this House in my capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and to respond to the question from the member from Beaches–East York. We share one thing in common: We're both alumni of Carleton University—a proud day for Carleton to have two members here in the House.

I also know that the member's question today is informed by her passion and her work around diasporas in the past, and I appreciate that she brings that perspective and that experience here to the House.

As Associate Minister Dunlop said this morning, the report from the Metcalf Foundation highlights that there is more to do as we work to create a system that empowers all people in Ontario and gives them the supports they need to succeed. Despite making up 46% of the GTA's workforce in 2016, visible minorities accounted for 63% of the working poor. This is unacceptable.

What is even more concerning is that the report shows that between 2006 and 2016 this number actually increased over the course of that period of time. Too many people in Ontario live in poverty, and we know that this is even more true for Black children, Indigenous children and other racialized communities. History, economic data and recent experiences continue to remind us of the negative effects of systemic racism and the economic, social and mental health costs to us as a society.

As the report states and as the member opposite has raised, it is “concerning that the Black population has the highest percentage of working poverty among both the immigrant population and those born in Canada.”

Our government knows that we can do better and that we must do better. That’s why we’re investing more than \$10 million this year in community-based programs to contribute to the elimination of disparities for Black children, youth and families through the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan. These organizations are doing great work. They are providing key services in communities across the province, including the GTA, Hamilton, Windsor and my hometown of Ottawa.

Our post-secondary education connectors are supporting families as they pursue higher education and other skills development opportunities for their children. The industry-led career initiative is providing training and workplace opportunities that help Black youth who have recently graduated secure high-quality employment that will advance their careers.

We know that in order to effectively provide support, we must work with those on the front lines, which includes Black-led community agencies and the private sector. A great example of this is the local youth mentorship programs across the province that pair young people with successful role models. This program helps youth develop

useful skills and provides tutoring and creative opportunities. Not only do these opportunities empower young people, but they also help to build confidence.

We also know that low-income earners work hard for their money. That is why we announced the Low-Income Individuals and Families Tax Credit, known as the LIFT credit, which will ensure that more of those dollars remain in their pockets. This credit will result in Ontario personal income taxes being eliminated for about 580,000 taxpayers, while taxes will be reduced for an additional 520,000 individuals.

I also know that our Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development is working hard to help all Ontarians find and keep good jobs through programs like Skills-Advance Ontario and the Ontario Job Creation Partnerships. These programs help people build the right skills to improve their long-term employment prospects through opportunities like apprenticeship and job retraining. This ensures that they are prepared not only for the jobs of today, but also the jobs of the future.

With the support of many ministries, we are bringing real change that will help people access the jobs, education, health services and training they need. The people of Ontario deserve a system that is focused on lifting them out of poverty and, more importantly, stopping them from falling into poverty in the first place.

I’d like to thank the member opposite for her comments, and I look forward to continuing to work together on this very critical issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1830.

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Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Vacant	Orléans	
Vacant	Ottawa—Vanier	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Wayne Gates
Randy Hillier, Andrea Khanjin
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Peter Tabuns
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Kaleed Rasheed
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Daryl Kramp
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

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Rudy Cuzzetto, Parm Gill
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Marit Stiles, Vijay Thanigasalam
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
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Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Gurratan Singh, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
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Catherine Fife, John Fraser
Goldie Ghamari, France Gélinas
Norman Miller, Michael Parsa
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