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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 November 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 novembre 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLAN TO BUILD ONTARIO
TOGETHER ACT, 2019

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 26, 2019, I am now required to put the question. Mr. Phillips has moved second reading of 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 some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Second reading vote deferred.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the order of the House dated October 22, 2018 amending the standing orders be rescinded, and that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly be amended as follows:

The following new standing order is added:

"1.1 The Speaker may alter the application of any standing or special order or practice of the House, other than those that deal with number of times or duration of time a member may speak, the timing of proceedings or the time allotted to proceedings, in order to permit the full participation in the proceedings of the House of any member with a disability."

Standing order 2 is amended by adding the following:

"'Board of Internal Economy' means the Board of Internal Economy established by the Legislative Assembly Act.

"'Orders and Notices paper' means the paper printed and distributed on any one sessional day."

Standing orders 6(a) and (b) are deleted and the following substituted:

"6.(a) During a Parliament, the House shall meet:

"(i) In a spring meeting period from the Tuesday following Family Day to the first Thursday in June; and

"(ii) In a fall meeting period from the Monday following Labour Day to the second Thursday in December.

"(b) During these meeting periods, the House shall not meet during the following Constituency Weeks:

"(i) The week prescribed by the regulations made under the Education Act for the school holiday in March;

"(ii) The week in which Easter Monday falls;

"(iii) The week in which Victoria Day falls;

"(iv) The week in which Thanksgiving Day falls;

"(v) The week in which Remembrance Day falls, except that if Remembrance Day falls on a Saturday or a Sunday, the House shall instead not meet the week preceding Remembrance Day, nor on the Monday immediately following Remembrance Day.

"(b.1) With notice, the government House leader may propose a motion to extend the hours of meeting during the last 18 sessional days in the fall and spring sessional periods provided for in clause (a), and during any extension thereof."

Standing order 6 is amended by adding the following clause:

"(c.1) At any time prior to the commencement of an evening meeting scheduled pursuant to this standing order, the government House leader may indicate to the House that the evening meeting is no longer required, and it shall thereupon be cancelled."

Standing order 8(a) is deleted and the following substituted:

"8.(a) The weekly meeting schedule for the House when it is in session shall be:

Day	Time	Proceeding
Monday	10:15 a.m.	Morning routine: Members' statements Introduction of visitors Question period Deferred votes
	Following morning routine	Recess

	1:00 p.m.	Afternoon routine: Introduction of visitors Reports by committees Introduction of bills Statements by the ministry and responses Motions Petitions
	Following afternoon routine	Orders of the day
	6:00 p.m.	Adjournment

“ Tuesday	9:00 a.m.	Orders of the day
	10:15 a.m.	Morning routine: Members’ statements Introduction of visitors Question period Deferred votes
	Following morning routine	Recess
	3:00 p.m.	Afternoon routine: Introduction of visitors Reports by committees Introduction of bills Statements by the ministry and responses Motions Petitions
	Following afternoon routine	Orders of the day
	6:00 p.m.	Adjournment

“ Wednesday	9:00 a.m.	Orders of the day
	10:15 a.m.	Morning routine: Members’ statements Introduction of visitors Question period Deferred votes
	Following morning routine	Recess
	3:00 p.m.	Afternoon routine: Introduction of visitors Reports by committees Introduction of bills Statements by the ministry and responses Motions Petitions
	Following afternoon routine	Orders of the day
	6:00 p.m.	Adjournment

“ Thursday	9:00 a.m.	Orders of the day
	10:15 a.m.	Morning routine: Members’ statements Introduction of visitors Question period Deferred votes
	Following morning routine	Recess
	1:00 p.m.	Afternoon routine: Introduction of visitors Reports by committees Introduction of bills Statements by the ministry and responses Motions Petitions
	Following afternoon routine	Private members’ public business
	Following private members’ public business	Orders of the day
6:00 p.m.	Adjournment	

Standing order 8(b) is amended by deleting “and at 10:25 a.m. every day.”

Standing order 8 is amended by adding the following clause:

“(c.1) Following prayers on the first sitting Monday of each month, the Canadian national anthem and the royal anthem shall be sung in the chamber.”

Standing order 8(d) is deleted and the following substituted:

“(d) When the Speaker calls orders of the day the government House leader may indicate that no business, or no further business, as the case may be, is to be called, whereupon the Speaker shall recess the House to the next daily proceeding, or adjourn the House to the next sessional day, as the case may be.”

Standing order 8(e) is amended by deleting “3:15” and substituting “4:00” and by deleting “10:30” and substituting “10:15.”

Standing order 9(c) is amended by deleting the words “the House or.”

The following new standing order is added:

“20.1 The use of laptops, tablets and smartphones is permitted in the chamber and committee rooms provided they are operated silently, do not impair decorum and are not used as a telephone, recording device, camera or prop.”

Standing order 25 is amended by deleting the first paragraph and substituting the following:

“25. Following the speech of each member, 10 minutes will be allotted for members to ask questions on matters relevant to the speech. A member may ask a question for up to one minute and the member originally speaking will

then have up to one minute to reply, in the following circumstances:

“Standing orders 25(a), (b), (c) and (d) are amended by deleting the words ‘and comments’ in each clause.

“Standing order 28(i) is amended by deleting the words ‘for closure’ and substituting ‘subject to standing order 9(c), for closure.’”

The heading of Section VIII is renamed “Daily routine.”

Standing order 30 is deleted and the following substituted:

“(a) The proceedings in the morning and afternoon routine shall be conducted at the times and in the order set out in standing order 8(a).

“(b) The time allotted for the afternoon routine each day shall not exceed 90 minutes. At the end of that time the Speaker shall interrupt and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the proceeding currently occupying the House, and thereafter immediately call orders of the day.”

Standing order 33(c) is amended by deleting the second line.

Standing order 36 is deleted and the following substituted:

“36. Up to five minutes shall be allotted during both the morning and afternoon routine for members to recognize guests. Members may introduce visitors by stating only their name, title, organization and/or riding. No member shall seek to introduce a visitor at any time by way of a point of order.”

0910

Standing orders 37(e) through (i) are deleted and the following substituted:

“(e) Any member of the executive council or any parliamentary assistant may respond to any question during question period and may, in their discretion, decline to answer any question.

“(f) Parliamentary assistants may direct questions only to ministers other than their own.

“(g) The Speaker has the discretion to permit an independent member to place a question and one supplementary question during question period. In exercising his or her discretion, the Speaker shall have regard to the opportunities that members of recognized parties, other than the leaders of opposition parties or members who place questions instead of the leaders, have to place such questions.”

The following new standing order is added:

“38.1 Any divisions deferred under standing orders 9(c) or 28(h) shall be disposed of consecutively during this time and the bells shall be rung for five minutes prior to each division.”

Standing order 40(b) is amended by adding at the end, “and such distribution may be done electronically”.

Standing order 42(a) is deleted and the following substituted:

“(a) There shall be 12 hours allotted to the debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne and any amendments thereto, at the end of which time the Speaker shall without further debate or amendment put every question necessary to dispose of the motion.

“(a.1) The debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne shall be completed before the presentation of the budget.”

Standing order 46(a) is amended by deleting all the words following “interrupt the bell,” and substituting “deem the debate to be adjourned and call the next proceeding pursuant to standing order 8(a).”

Standing order 47(c) is deleted and the following substituted:

“(c) A time allocation motion may not be moved until second reading debate has been completed or six and a half hours of debate have taken place on second reading consideration of any government bill or on a substantive government motion. Upon completion of six and a half hours of debate, the Speaker shall deem the debate to be adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.”

Standing order 47(d) is deleted and the following substituted:

“(d) A bill, and a time allocation motion applying to that same bill, may not be considered on the same calendar day.”

Standing order 48 is amended by adding at the end, “Except as provided by standing order 9(c), the vote on a motion for closure shall not be deferred.”

Standing order 54 is amended by deleting the word “government”.

Standing orders 60(a), (b) and (c) are deleted and the following substituted:

“60.(a) The Standing Committee on Estimates shall select for consideration the estimates of not fewer than six and not more than 12 ministries and offices.

“(b)(i) The estimates of the ministries and offices to be considered by the committee shall be selected by members of the committee such that the members of the party forming the official opposition shall select first, followed by the members of the other recognized parties in order of their representation in the House, and the members of the party forming the government shall select last.

“(ii) With each turn, the members of each party may choose the estimates of one or two ministries or offices to be considered.

“(iii) If, when their turn to select occurs, the members of one party decline to make a selection, the selection passes to the members of the next party in the rotation as provided in (i).

“(c) The estimates of the ministries and offices shall be considered in the order in which they were selected.”

Standing order 60(d) is amended by deleting the word “round” and substituting the word “turn” in each instance.

Standing order 69 is amended by deleting the words “up to one member from each of the recognized parties, and by any independent member” and substituting “up to four private members of the House”.

Standing order 71(a) is amended by deleting the words “and distributed and marked ‘printed’ on the Orders and Notices paper”.

Standing order 71(b) is amended by deleting “12:00 noon” and substituting “8:30 a.m.” in each instance.

Standing order 79(b) is amended by deleting the words “and marked ‘reprinted’ on the Orders and Notices paper”.

Standing order 81(c) is deleted.

Standing order 98(a) is amended by deleting the first line and the substituting the following:

“Three items of private members’ public business shall be considered each Thursday, and the time provided for each shall be allotted as follows:”

Standing order 98(e) is deleted.

Standing order 136 is deleted.

Standing order 137(a) is amended by deleting the words “placed on the Speaker’s table and on the desk of each member a copy of” and substituting “published”.

The following new standing order is added:

“146. For greater certainty, the proceedings of the Board of Internal Economy are proceedings in Parliament.”

And that for the duration of the 42nd Parliament the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly be amended as follows:

Standing order 35(e) is amended by adding at the end “and an independent member or members may comment for up to a total of five minutes.”

Standing order 43(a)(iv) is deleted and the following substituted:

“(a)(iv) shall be taken up upon the commencement of orders of the day in the afternoon on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, as the case may be, the time available being apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House, after first allotting time to the independent member(s) of the House, if any; the time for a reply by the mover of the motion shall be included in the time apportioned to the party of which the mover is a member;

“(iv.1) the time allotted to independent members referred to in (iv) shall be three minutes per independent member up to a maximum of 12 minutes, which may be shared among the independent members;”

Standing order 47(b) is deleted and the following substituted:

“47(b) Two hours shall be allotted to the debate, apportioned equally among the recognized parties, after first allotting time to the independent member(s) of the House, if any. At the end of this time the Speaker shall without further debate or amendment put every question necessary to dispose of the motion. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, the division bells shall be limited to 10 minutes.

“(b.1) The time allotted to independent members referred to in (b) shall be three minutes per independent member up to a maximum of 12 minutes, which may be shared among the independent members.”

Standing order 66(a) is deleted and the following substituted:

“66(a) On the first item of the first vote of each set of estimates, a representative of each recognized party may speak for not more than 30 minutes and the minister or person answerable for the estimates is allowed not more than 30 minutes for a right of reply. Thereafter, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates shall ensure that the

members adhere strictly to the vote and item under consideration and shall apportion the remaining time among the recognized parties after first allotting time to the independent member(s) on the committee, if any.

“66(a.1) the time allotted to independent member(s) referred to in (a) shall be 15 minutes.”

Standing order 113(e) is amended by adding the following at the end:

“In the case of independent members, the notification must be signed by the independent permanent member and the independent substituting member. If a committee meeting is divided into morning and afternoon segments on the same sitting day, this clause applies to each segment individually.”

And, that the Clerk is authorized to re-number standing orders 30 to 39 and to order them as the daily routine proceedings are set out in standing order 8(a), and to make such other consequential, editorial or other minor changes as may be required to ensure a consistent form of expression throughout the standing orders; and

That in exercising his discretion under standing orders 31(c), 37(i) and 98(a)(iv) the Speaker shall recognize independent members for the duration of the 42nd Parliament as follows:

—during members’ statements: one per day

—during oral questions: two questions per day, each followed by one supplementary

—during private members’ public business: five minutes for each item of business, which may be shared.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 73.

Mr. Calandra, back to you.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you to the House for your patience in allowing me to read that fairly lengthy presentation. I do appreciate it. At the outset—I will be splitting my time with the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Again, I do appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House to speak to some of the changes that we are proposing to the standing orders. This is something that we have been working on and consulting with all parties since July.

0920

Some of the amendments that we have put in here are obviously common sense amendments that I’m sure all members of the Legislature will agree with. The use of laptops and cellphones, which is commonplace and most members are doing already—the changes that we’re putting here just allow that to be recognized right in the standing orders.

Obviously, the changes that allow for people with disabilities to more fully participate is something I’m sure all members will agree with and will not be a cause for much debate.

Some of the other things that we’re doing in here are aligned around helping debate move faster and making debate more relevant to the members of the House and to the general public.

We are making some changes that will allow members to debate back and forth when it comes to the defence of a

speech that is made in the House. Members will know that the current practice is, when you give a speech in the House on a particular bill, you have what we call here the hits; it's a two-minute discussion on a member's speech. We are eliminating that, and we are asking that members, in essence, defend the speech they have made on a topic, instead of the two-minute hits. As we outlined in the changes, a member will give a speech and, following a similar rotation that we do right now, will be questioned by other members in the House on the contents of the speech that they gave. That member will then defend their speech, in essence, for five minutes, with questioning that will go back and forth. I think that will make for a more lively debate and will increase accountability in the House. I think it will also lead to more consistency in the speeches, because members, as I said, will have to defend the speech that they are making, and the questions that come from our side and from the opposition side will have to be based on the speech that the member has given.

The other benefit of that change: It does allow the Speaker to have a bit more of a role to play in ensuring that debate focuses on what we're speaking about on any given day, on the bill that is before the House. So I think that is a positive change.

One of the other changes, of course, is to allow night sittings in the final 18 sessional days. I know that some changes have been made on this in the past, to try to eliminate some of the night sittings. But what we're trying to do is make it so that there is less packed into the last 12 days by providing more opportunities for there to be night sittings. I suspect what it will result in is, actually, fewer night sittings, because there will be more opportunities in order for the government to proceed and get its legislation through and we won't have to pack it into those last 12 days, as so often is the case.

There are a lot of minor changes here.

I think one of the other good changes that colleagues will have noticed is that members' statements will be changing from where they are now to before question period. They will happen at 10:15 every day. One of the reasons we're bringing that forward is, we heard from a lot of members, as we've consulted on this, that this—in their opinion, and I agree with it—will allow for the elevation of the importance of members' statements because it will happen in front of a full House, when all of the members are coming into the chamber for question period. They will all be here. We will be able to hear about the important things that members are doing in their communities and in their constituencies. The galleries will be full with a lot of the people members are actually speaking about in their statements. We thought it was a good opportunity, so when the proposal was brought forward to us, we thought that we would add that into it.

Another change is to limit the length of time for introduction of guests. I have taken the opportunity myself to introduce guests who have been here, but it has taken on a life of its own, and has gone from what was a five minute—the inspiration of it is good. The introduction of guests was to stop members rising on points of order to

introduce guests. They thought by bringing it in that it would work better, and it does work better. But because it's not codified in the standing orders, as opposed to being five minutes, it can go for 15 minutes or 20 minutes.

As excited as we all get—I have done it too, so this is not a criticism of anybody—we sometimes welcome the same guest three or four times, which delays us getting into question period and really focusing on the things that we are supposed to be doing, Mr. Speaker. So that change has been put in there. We've allowed for a firm five minutes, as I said, before question period, and then another firm five minutes in the afternoon. I think that will help us move debate along a little bit better.

We also have obviously made some changes that will allow for the independent members to better participate in debate both here in the House and at committee, to make things run a little bit smoother. We are cognizant of the fact that this House probably has larger numbers of independents than we are used to, so many of those changes will be in effect for the duration of the 42nd Parliament. We did not think it was appropriate to tie future Parliaments to the reality of this Parliament, Mr. Speaker. I think that that will certainly—one of the things that we did hear, and we have heard, is that we have to do a better job of allowing more voices to be heard in the Legislature. With such a large group of independents in this Parliament, we felt that it would be appropriate to give them more of a voice both in question period and in some of the debate that happens in this place.

The other thing that I think might cause some people to question is the referral. When I say the referrals during question period, this happens in all Legislatures. Most of the questions in this House are asked of the Premier, and the practice is that the Premier—or the Deputy Premier or the House leader in their absence—will rise and refer the question to the appropriate minister. Ontario is the only Legislature of the provinces—and that includes the House of Commons—that has this rule. In consulting with colleagues, I believe that this was a change in—if I'm incorrect on this, I will apologize to the House later, but I believe this was a change that was brought in in the late 1990s. In consulting with individuals, it was deemed to be a bit of a time-waster, so we are eliminating that referral. That doesn't mean that people can't ask questions to who they want. If they want to ask it to the Premier, they can certainly do that, but the Premier can choose or the minister can choose, without a referral, who will be answering the question. Again, I think that just allows for the question period to run a bit smoother.

One of the final things I'll touch on: There has been a change to a practice that was left over from the last time the standing orders were changed in a big way. We have this awkward scenario where we have something that can be debated in the morning and then cannot be debated in the afternoon. It causes for disjointed debate in the House. We are making changes that will allow an order that is called in the morning to continue to be debated in the afternoon.

In response to criticism—or concern; I don't want to say criticism. In response to concern from people that this

might mean that the government can move legislation through this chamber quicker than we already have the legislated right to do, we have made it very clear that a time allocation motion cannot happen on the same day that a bill has been proceeded with in this new fashion. We have not taken away the ability of the opposition to bring forward reasoned amendments, which function to help delay the passage of bills, Mr. Speaker.

In total, we have consulted broadly on this. We've worked with many of the members opposite. I am pleased that both the Liberal and Green members and the independents will be supporting it. I look forward to the debate that occurs throughout the next few days.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing on with debate, I recognize the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

0930

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Speaker. It's not often that I get to participate in debate with you in the Chair, so this is very exciting.

Of course, I am happy to be here this morning to speak to this motion. As the House knows, I'm always eager to participate in debate. I'm passionate about the issues that are debated in this place on a daily basis, and I consider it a great privilege and honour to participate at every opportunity.

My constituents elected me to come to this place and represent them. They did not send me here expecting me to be a bump on a log, and I work every day to live up to their expectations. The reason I mention this is because I know all members in this place feel the same obligations to their constituents. This Legislature is a place of passion and thorough debate. One of the things that I'm most excited about are the many measures in these changes to the standing orders which will enhance debate and enhance participation, especially by our independent members.

I will get into the many ways these changes to the standing orders will make this place work better, but first, I think we should talk about how we got to this point. The government House leader has taken time to do this the right way. This is a collaborative and inclusive approach to modernizing the rules of this Legislature. The government House leader reached out proactively to the opposition and to the independents in this place to make sure that we were updating the rules with an eye to fairness and genuine improvement of the way this place works.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that consultation was a success. Many of these changes included in this motion originated with the independent members in this House. The independent members who sit in this chamber, no matter which political party they identify with, are here for the same reasons as the members of the Conservative Party and the NDP, my friends across the aisle: They want to positively effect change here in Ontario. Yes, of course, we disagree, probably fundamentally, on the politics, and we have varying views of how this should be done, but when it comes down to it, we are all here to do our best to contribute proactively to our great province.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the people of Ontario may not know the limits and the extent of this place. For example, when a government minister stands to make a formal statement in the Legislature, right now independent members do not have an opportunity to split their time for a response. We are changing that. We heard from our independent members, and we recognize that this is a unique Parliament, with a particularly large number of members who are not part of recognized parties.

It's important to note that what we are doing is formalizing. Right now, with unanimous consent, we know that in this House we can make exceptional accommodations, but we know that, in this case, the ability to participate should be predictable and consistent.

I mentioned ministerial statements. These are formal occasions for a government to express an opinion in this Legislature, but there is more. We also have opposition motions. The opposition in here in this place get regular opportunities through the course of a legislative sitting to bring motions to this House and have them debated. Right now, opportunities for debate are not necessarily afforded to the independent members. If passed, this Legislature will be changing that. If this motion is passed, independent members will get a fairer chance to participate here in this chamber, and I think that is a good thing.

Like I said earlier, we members who sit in this House have an obligation to our constituents to be active, engaged and involved. While there are many ways to do that behind the scenes, to have your words and opinions transcribed into Hansard and broadcast, probably around the world, is an indelible contribution to our democracy. I know that when I stand here, the words I speak will be printed in books which will be stored in our library and posted on the Internet for as long as this province and country exist. That gives me great pride.

As many of you here know, my father was also a member in this place. When I think that these very words, or the speech I gave last week or may give next week, will sit printed forever next to the words of my father, that means even more.

I explain this because it is with that context that I consider the words I say in this House, and I know that my constituents will hear me, that my family will hear me—they're actually watching right now; I got a text a little bit earlier; hi, Gemma—and I want them to be proud of what I stand up for here, and that it's honourable.

But I am just one member in this place. We have colleagues in this House who also understand the importance of the words they speak here, except the extent to which they are allowed to participate is limited. Let's change that. Let's recognize that in this Parliament we have nine members who are not affiliated with a recognized party. I think those members should have more of an opportunity to participate in debate here.

If passed, this motion would allow time for independent participation in debate on opposition day motions, debate on time allocation motions, enhanced participation in the estimates process, enhanced participation in the committee process and the simple ability to substitute for other

independent members at committee if their schedules get a little too tight.

Now let me get to what I consider the most exciting changes for independent members. Question period: While we can all argue about just about anything in question period—and we usually do—I think everyone in this place agrees that it is the most passionate time of day in the Legislature. Emotions run high. There's heckling. Forgive me, Mr. Speaker; I think I can admit I have maybe heckled once or twice. But I think we both know that heckling does not come from a place of disrespect for this chamber, but it comes from passion. This is the same passion that got us all here. I promise I will try to hold myself back. I respect that our fellow members care so much about what they have to say here that they can't help it sometimes; they also need to interject.

That is why I am excited that we are formalizing independent participation in question period, members' statements and private members' business. With these changes, the Legislature will allow two questions and supplementaries for independent members each day, as well as one member's statement. The independent members of this place have much to contribute, and I am excited to see that that will happen, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to mention to you as well—I'm not sure if I have to do this. I may also be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, I believe, Kaleed Rasheed. Quickly, what's your riding?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Mr. Mike Harris: Mississauga East–Cooksville—in case I needed to do that. I'm not 100% sure.

There are also changes proposed to participation in debate on private members' business. I know you are aware, Mr. Speaker, but for the benefit of those watching at home: Private members' business is a very important part of this legislative procedure. I would say that this is especially true for those members who are not part of cabinet. Private members' business is the only opportunity for a member who is not a minister of the crown to directly propose legislation in this place. We go out into our communities, we speak to our constituents and we develop and introduce legislation which is debated in this House and can pass into law.

In October of last year, I introduced Bill 50, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act. This bill serves to allow motor vehicle dealers to apply for permits and licence plates and complete various other applications online. I developed and tabled that bill, Mr. Speaker, because I know our small business auto dealers spend their day trying to be productive and contribute to the economy, and that standing in line for something that can be ordered with a click of a mouse was not productive.

When I debated my private member's bill at second reading, I was very happy to have the support of the whole House and for it to pass. We heard many passionate speeches from both sides of the aisle, but we did not hear from an independent member. While I hope that the independent members in this place also supported my bill, I would have welcomed their comments and feedback during second reading debate.

If passed, these changes to the standing orders will allow just that. While the independent members will not get quite as much time as a recognized party, they will have time to contribute productively and collaboratively as, I think, all members of this House seek to do, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure that, in the coming debate, other members will highlight the many other positive changes this motion seeks to make, but there is one other item that I wanted to take the opportunity to discuss. If these changes are accepted by this Legislature, we will also be adding a new standing order. To summarize that: "The Speaker may alter the application of any standing order or practice of the House ... to permit the full participation in the proceedings of the House of any member with a disability."

Mr. Speaker, our province has proudly advocated for the accommodation of people with disabilities. We have an entire piece of legislation dedicated to it: the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. In this place, if a member is elected who has a disability, the Legislature must specifically, and usually unanimously, agree to provide that member with accommodations to allow them to fully participate in legislative business.

Now, I know that members in this place would not have an issue with making these kinds of accommodations, but I think that in 2019 we shouldn't need to provide special permission for an elected member of this place to do their job. Imagine a member who required an electronic device to assist them in speaking or a member who required a person to provide medical assistance on an ongoing basis. These should not be things requiring special attention of this House. They should be left to the Speaker to ensure that all members have an equal opportunity and ability to participate. It should be left to the Speaker to decide which rules might need to be waived for a particular member given their special needs.

0940

Mr. Speaker, if passed, this motion would allow that. It would bring the Legislature into the 21st century and say to all those Ontarians with a disability who are passionate about public service, "Nothing should hold you back," certainly not a physical barrier or an outdated rule.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I move that the motion be amended by adding the following at the end:

"And that the terms of this motion shall come into force at 12:01 a.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2020."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Harris has moved that the motion be amended by adding the following at the end:

"And that the terms of this motion shall come into force at 12:01 a.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2020."

Debate on the motion? Back to Mr. Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to finish up by saying that it has been an honour to be able to speak here in the House this morning. I'm looking forward to hearing the continued debate on this.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: It is absolutely an honour to speak on this motion this morning. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I

would like to thank you for the opportunity—this motion that has been proposed by the government House leader and the proposed changes to the standing orders of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, these are the rules by which we operate, the rules that govern our debate, the passage of bills, and the consideration of important issues of the day. This is why it is so important that we approach these proposed changes in a thoughtful, respectful and collaborative way. I'm so pleased to hear that that is exactly what has been done, that the government House leader began studying the standing orders this summer. I know his approach was collaborative and sought to include the NDP, Liberals, independent members and the leader of the Green Party. Mr. Speaker, that collaboration goes a long way. The proposed changes this Legislature is considering have been consulted on and revised, and now they are here before us as the outcome of a collaborative process.

Mr. Speaker, I am actually disappointed that the NDP had decided to withdraw from the consultation process, especially because what has been presented to this Legislature is ultimately an objective improvement upon the rules that govern this place. I hope that through this debate, NDP members will see the value in these proposed changes and support our motion.

We all know in this place that there is plenty of time for spirited debate on policy and politics, and that will not change. What we are debating today is the best way to structure the rules and procedures of this place to encourage positive, constructive debate. How can we best make this democratic institution function for the people of Ontario?

Mr. Speaker, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga spoke to this House about the passion that we feel as members to represent our constituents. I can confirm what the member told the House. Every day, I consider how best I can leave a lasting impact here that benefits my constituents for years to come. When I go back to my riding, I want to be able to tell my constituents and my family and friends about the good work our government is doing and how I'm contributing as a member of provincial Parliament.

In my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville, I received almost 18,000 votes in the last election. But I know that I'm not here just for those people who checked my name on the ballot; I'm here for all 120,000 people who call Mississauga East–Cooksville their home. I mention this because I consider my role as MPP to be a responsibility more than a job. I'm here to serve the people of Ontario. That is why I'm standing to support this motion that is brought forward by the House leader. I firmly believe that the changes this motion makes will make this Legislature more productive and more encouraging of passionate debate and engagement.

As much as I know it is my responsibility to serve the people of my riding, I also know that this Legislature has 123 other seats, each represented by people with the same mandate of public service. These proposed changes to our standing orders mean that all 124 MPPs in this place will have a better opportunity to participate and involve themselves in legislative business.

More than our individual duties to our constituents, we have a collective duty to the people of Ontario to ensure that this place can carry out business in the best way possible, in the most efficient way possible, in the most inclusive way possible, in the most inspiring way possible.

These changes are not, as some have claimed, an effort to pass legislation faster. Instead, we want to use the time we have efficiently and effectively, and we want to put in place processes that encourage debate and allow the engagement of as many MPPs as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing this motion will do is to allow the complete participation of members with disabilities. Right now, members with disabilities may be constrained by any number of rules, traditions or practices of this Legislature. While the Legislature can grant special consent to accommodate a member, we think that a person who has put their name forward to serve their province and their country should not need to jump through hoops just to do their job. By making this change, the Speaker of the House would be empowered to alter the application of the rules and practices of this place to accommodate members with disabilities. A member with a speaking disability who requires an electronic assistive device to communicate would not need the unanimous consent of this House to participate in the debate. A member in a wheelchair who cannot stand in their place to vote would not need unanimous consent of this House to cast a vote. A member who requires a personal assistant in the chamber to support their medical needs would be able to receive this support without needing to ask 123 of their colleagues.

It is obvious to me that we should not allow procedure to stand in the way of public service and democratic participation.

Mr. Speaker, there is another part of these proposed changes which is very exciting to me: The time of the day for statements by members will be moved from the afternoon to first thing in the morning. All members in this place know the value of being able to rise and highlight local events, the accomplishments of constituents or even some important initiative of government. Right now, these statements take place in the afternoon around 1 p.m. or 3 p.m., depending on the day. These statements are very important to members, but I think we can all agree, most people watch this place for the most exciting part of the day—that is, question period—and may not always tune in throughout the rest of the day.

0950

When the House first meets at 9 a.m., most days of the week, members are assembled and ready for question period; the media is nearby, waiting to report on important exchanges; and visitors flood into our galleries. When I rise in this place to discuss the problem of cyberbullying during Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, as I did last week, or to discuss the Mississauga Cooksville Lions Club, which has been doing community work since 1983 and just recently donated \$231,000 to the Trillium Health Partners Foundation, I want these statements to be heard by as broad of an audience as possible.

As private members, this is a unique opportunity to directly represent or advocate for your community. I hope all members would agree that elevating the profile of these statements and moving them to a time where they may better be heard is only a good thing. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will admit that we are piggybacking on the excitement around question period, but this is one example of how we are trying to use our time more efficiently. While it is important to me and, I'm sure, to other members to know that my words are being permanently transcribed in Hansard, if we have members of the general public, the media and television audiences all assembled ready to hear question period, let's also use this as an opportunity to promote our communities and talk about the work we are doing locally and advocate for the things we are passionate about.

The people of Ontario sent us here and placed their trust in us to represent them, but that doesn't mean that we cannot work to promote public engagement in the democratic process. Enhancing the profile of members' statements might be a small part of that, but I think it is a positive step in the right direction.

While I'm on the subject of the responsibilities of members, I would like to speak a little about other responsibilities of members, those outside of this chamber. You know very well, Mr. Speaker, that there is an ancient custom which we follow closely in this place in which the absence of a member from this Legislature cannot be discussed. I think this is paramount to our ability as elected representatives. While we would all like to spend all or most of the day in the chamber, not all of us are whips or deputy whips, and even those of us who have obligations which take us back to our offices, to local events, to meetings and to any number of other places—which might not allow us to be here all day every day. This is why the custom of not mentioning an absence is so important. A member may be working on behalf of his constituents but not sitting in his place in the Legislature, and that is not the implication when an absence is discussed.

I mention this, Mr. Speaker, because I believe one of the proposed changes to the standing orders will help to resolve the struggle between being in the Legislature and attending to other duties as MPPs. The motion we are discussing proposes, for the first time in our history, that we formally allow the use of electronic devices in this chamber in a non-disruptive manner.

Now, Mr. Speaker, no one is suggesting that MPPs should be allowed to make phone calls, take photographs or watch music videos while seated in the chamber. The point of being in the chamber is to be able to monitor and participate in the debate. I know you are liking this, Mr. Speaker, but as we all know, there may be long periods of time in which a member is not required to speak and could be answering emails or doing research for a constituency case.

Mr. Speaker, you may have noticed that some members already take advantage of electronic devices, even though the rules do not yet allow it. By adopting this motion as a Legislature, we would be signalling that we understand

that members have other obligations, and that where possible these obligations should not force a member to leave the chamber.

When the rules of this place relating to use of technology were written, the world was a different place. A constituent might mail a letter and hope for a response in two weeks or longer. Now constituents reach out to me through Facebook Messenger and expect a response in minutes, not weeks, Mr. Speaker. It is actually true: They sometimes text-message you, or WhatsApp or Messenger—there are so many forms of communication now, and the expectation is that we will get back to them as soon as possible. Passing this motion will help us do our constituent work, as well, which I think is a great step.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be able to serve my constituents as effectively as possible, and for me that means being responsive. Ultimately, this chamber is a place for debate, but allowing quiet, non-disruptive, complementary work could help us all to be better public servants, and if this also allows members to more actively participate in debate, then this is a change we should support.

With this privilege, there would be an expectation of responsibility. Included in the language of the motion, it clearly states that electronic devices may only be used “provided they are operated silently, do not impair decorum and are not used as a telephone, recording device, camera or prop.”

It will be incumbent upon all members to ensure they continue to respect the rules of decorum in this place and use this privilege wisely, but I think the benefits outweigh the risks here, especially in 2019. In 1920, I would imagine that members brought their correspondence into this House to read and to write replies, as some members still do. This motion simply updates the rules of this place in recognition of the fact that much of our daily business is now on a computer rather than on paper.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me turn to another part of the proposed changes which would change the way debate happens here. As you know, Mr. Speaker, debate on a bill is done in rotations. A member from one side of this place has the opportunity to speak to an item of business for 10 minutes. Eight minutes are then allotted to four members to pose a question or to make a comment, not exceeding two minutes each. And then the original speaker has two minutes to reply.

1000

While I have enjoyed participating in debate this way over the past year and a half, I look to our sister Legislatures and to the House of Commons in Ottawa for other ideas. Our format of debate is very constrained. It gives members an opportunity to voice their opinions, but I don't believe it is used the way it was intended. The two-minute segments following a speech are called “questions and comments,” but it is rare that we see genuine questions during this time. The fact that we rotate through four members to ask questions or comment, and only then return to the original speaker, means that if there are questions posed, it is difficult to properly answer them.

The motion we are considering proposes that we do things a little more like the House of Commons. A member would still make their initial 10-minute speech; however, the member would then take questions from other members of the House. Other members would be permitted up to one minute to ask a question, and then the member who originally spoke would immediately get one minute to reply.

I know you're liking this, Mr. Speaker, because it's going to make your job a lot easier as well.

I think this back-and-forth question-and-answer format will encourage thoughtful debate. It will make debate more interactive and it will encourage members to actively consider and respond to what other members are saying.

This House is a place of debate first and foremost. The rules of this place should reflect and encourage the best possible quality of exchange of ideas and opinions. I'm extremely excited to try this new format if this motion is adopted by this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to discuss the proposed changes to private members' public business. I recently introduced Bill 146. When developing this bill, I had considered, as all members do, whether I wanted to seek co-sponsors. As the standing orders are written now, if I wanted to include a co-sponsor, it could only be a member from another party.

While I have the utmost respect for my colleagues across the aisle, I thought this rule was very strange. Without assuming the opinions of any other member, I think it is fair to say that people generally do not support cyber-bullying or bullying of any kind. So when I considered whether to invite members to co-sponsor my bill, my mind first went to many members of my own caucus who I knew would be eager to show their support. Unfortunately, we know this was not possible.

Members on both sides of this House work hard to develop private members' legislation. If something can be broadly supported even from the outset, I think there should be fewer barriers to demonstrating this.

Our proposed changes to the standing orders would remove these barriers. If passed, this motion would make it possible for any four members to co-sponsor a piece of legislation, regardless of their party. This way, members have more freedom to develop private members' business in whichever way may best work for them.

For example, I think of the possibility of a bill which may have a particular impact on a municipality or a region. In this case, if consultation had been done and a member had developed a possible resolution to a regional issue, it might be helpful for the member to work on it with other members affected and for there to be a demonstration of broader support through co-sponsoring. Under the current rules, this could only be possible if members from various parties represented the region. In a case where all members representing a region also represent the same party, this would not be possible. It is time we change this.

Private members' business is an incredibly important tool for most members to directly contribute to or develop a legislated solution to an issue. By passing this motion,

we can modernize our rules and encourage the broadest possible engagement.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken about only a few of the proposed changes within this motion, and I know my colleagues on both sides of the House will offer impassioned opinions as well, but we have a unique opportunity here. We can work across the aisle to pass this comprehensive and collaborative package of amendments to the rules of our Legislature and by doing so make this a better-functioning democratic institution. I know all members of this place work every day to be the strongest possible advocates for their constituents and these proposed changes only unleash the full ability of members to do this important work.

Let us work together to update our rules for members with disabilities. Let us work together to enhance the profile and awareness of members' statements. Let us work together to allow members, in 2019, the ability to answer emails while at their desks in the chamber between rounds of debate. Let us work together to make the format of debate more engaging and productive. Let us work together to give members more freedom when it comes to developing private members' bills.

Mr. Speaker, in this place, we always have the opportunity to argue and fight about politics. Let's work together and across the aisle on this initiative to improve the Legislature, for us and for future Parliaments.

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

Mr. Harris has moved an amendment to government notice of motion number 73 that the motion be amended by adding the following at the end: "And that the terms of this motion shall come into force at 12:01 a.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2020."

Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr. Harris's motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being no further business, this House now stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1008 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd like to begin by introducing some special guests who are here with us today from the riding of Wellington–Halton Hills, friends of ours: Christine Kerr, Pat Kerr, Bob Kerr and James Kerr. They're in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We're delighted to have you here.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to wish my beloved Clare Roscoe a very happy birthday today. She's tuning in from home.

I want to also thank John Sobey, who's here from the International Association of Fire Fighters, for keeping our city safe. We've had a rough go with bus crashes, tornadoes and floods. Thank you, John, for everything you do to keep people in our city safe. Cheers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to intrude again on this process and also welcome to the Legislature the longest-serving Speaker in the history of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: Dave Levac. Welcome back, Dave. It's always good to have you here.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to introduce, in the gallery today, from the Sarnia Professional Fire Fighters, Matt Bedard, here from Sarnia-Lambton.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Today I'd like to welcome John Whitehead from the juvenile diabetes foundation, from St. Catharines.

Also, I'd like to welcome, with the international firefighters' association, from St. Catharines, Dean Stoltz and Ryan Madill. Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you to the men and women of St. Catharines fire who keep our city safe. When we're running out of a building, you're running in and making sure we are safe. Our hearts are with you.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to give a warm welcome to a personal friend and colleague of mine, John Sobey, president of the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association; as well as Vic Dillabaugh; Erik Leicht; and Mark Lalonde, president of the Chalk River professional firefighters' association. Welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting with you later.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome the leadership of OPFFA, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association: their president, Rob Hyndman, who is from Local 527 in Sudbury, as well as Mark Train and all the other professional firefighters representing their locals.

November is also national Diabetes Awareness Month. I would like to welcome 20 volunteers who came for their advocacy day, as well as some of the staff from the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation of Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature, from the Whitby Professional Fire Fighters Association, Bob Brandon, Jason Swail and Mike Tucker. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to do my daily introduction of parents and advocates for autism. Today we have with us Stacy Kennedy and Angela Brandt. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I wanted to welcome the Barrie professional firefighters who are here with us today: Steve Pomeroy, Kevin White, Eric Webster and Bill Banting. Welcome.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I'd also like to welcome to the Legislature the Ontario professional firefighters from Peel region and right across all of Ontario. Enjoy your lobby day today. I'm sure we'll have a lot of frank discussions.

Mr. Stan Cho: I have a number of guests to introduce today, including my friend Kevin Vuong, who is here with his mother, Belinda. Welcome.

On behalf of the Minister of Finance, I am pleased to have joining us today, from the Ajax Professional Fire Fighters Association, Dan Bonnar, Clive Deonarine and Kyle Chamberlain. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome Christi Webster and Maya Webster, who are here with the juvenile diabetes foundation. Maya is going to present a petition this afternoon at 3 o'clock.

I'd also like to welcome, from my riding, Kari Everson, Jason Everson, Ava Everson and Eliana Everson.

Also, I'd like to welcome, with the Niagara Falls professional firefighters, my good friend Tim Lea, and Justin, who is stuck in traffic. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I want to recognize Dan VanderLelie, president of the Burlington Professional Firefighters Association.

I also want to thank Jessica Plume. I lost my ring this morning and was in tears, and she found it for me. Thank you so much, Jessica.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There appear to be a number of members on both sides of the House who want this to continue, so I'm happy to continue.

The member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome folks from the Oshawa Professional Firefighters Association, Local 465. We've got President Peter Dyson, Cory Devereaux and Nathan Langille here with us today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As has been mentioned, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association is joining us today. Personally, I would like to welcome Dan VanderLelie, Rob Hyndman and Mark Train, who I met with earlier today.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm proud to welcome two firefighters from the great city of Waterloo: Chris Hicknell and Rich Fedy. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I would like to welcome Clarington firefighters Michael Kalita and Dan Worrall.

I'd also like to welcome representatives of the Ontario community newspaper publishers: Colleen Green, Gordon Cameron, Dave Adsett and Pamela Portt.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to welcome Eric Nordlund from Thunder Bay Fire Rescue.

I'd also like to welcome members from the Scleroderma Society of Ontario that I met with this morning.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I too would like to welcome firefighters from my riding, those from Chatham-Kent, who are here today. On behalf of the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, I'd like to welcome all firefighters from across Ontario.

Ms. Doly Begum: I'd like to welcome some wonderful constituents from Scarborough today: Kingsley Kwok, Michelle Spencer, Ashwinder Suden, Justin Kong, Yan Chen, Aysha Sonna, Felicia Samuel, Faiz Kamal and Wai Kat Tang. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I also want to welcome Future Possibilities for Kids in the gallery this morning, a wonderful organization that inspires and empowers kids to become community leaders. I would also like to thank and welcome Rickesh Lakhani, the executive director, and all of the young future leaders in the gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome friends from Windsor fire and rescue: Wayne Curry and Sean McNamara, as well as members of the Ontario community news association: Colleen Green, Lori MacDonald and Alexandria Shannon. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I too would like to welcome firefighters to Queen's Park today, especially Colin Hunter and Andy Sanvido from the Guelph professional firefighters association. Welcome.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I have two groups of people to welcome today. We have members of CJPAC Women in Politics here in our gallery.

Also, I'd like to welcome the advocates and volunteers with JDRF, including a constituent of mine, Lorne Shiff, as well as some great advocates: Anne Pettigrew and her mother, Cathy; Teagan Hulse and her father, Derek; and Tilly Stimpson and her parents, Matt and Joanna.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association to Queen's Park today, including Central York firefighter delegate Kevin Saxton and Andre Bourrie. Thank you for all that you do to keep our community safe, and welcome to Queen's Park.

I would also like to welcome as part of Scleroderma Advocacy Day the following guests who are in the members' gallery today: John Malcolmson, Lacey Battaglio, Maureen Worrone-Sauve, Susan Docherty-Skippen, Jennifer Botelho, Donna Giles, Silvia Petrozza, Vicki Breech, Jeanne Monteiro, Clarissa and Mike Launder, and Keshini Devakandanc. Thank you very much, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to welcome Andrew Rogerson and Brett Fairweather from the Stratford Professional Fire Fighters Association.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to welcome three residents of my riding: Matt, Jo and Tilly Stimpson. Tilly is here; she's a young lady with juvenile diabetes and she's here to talk to us about that.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'd also like to welcome some visitors here from the Scleroderma Society who are here to speak with us later on this afternoon: Rosemary Vincec, Mary Realejo, Pauline Brousseau, Wendy Vujacic, Marty Edwards, Suzanne Zandbergen, Mike Occomore, Kevin Vuong, Belinda Vuong, David Chung and Aldo Wright. Welcome, and I look forward to meeting with you later on this afternoon.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I just wanted to introduce Kevin Saxton, president of the Central York Professional Firefighters Association, and Andre Bourrie, secretary-treasurer. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to make a couple of introductions today. It gives me great pleasure to welcome Sean Beer from the London Professional Fire

Fighters Association today. Thank you for your service. I look forward to meeting with you.

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I also would like to point out that London North Centre is the birthplace of insulin, Banting House. Fittingly, I would like to welcome members of JDRF for your lobby day today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to welcome the Jewish women in politics, once again coming down to Queen's Park to visit all of us and do some chatting. Hopefully, you'll all say hello.

Mr. David Piccini: I would like to welcome one of the hardest-working guys I know and our new federal member of Parliament for Northumberland-Peterborough South, Philip Lawrence. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I would like to recognize a firefighter from my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, a firefighter in Deep River, Mark Lalonde, and also Harold Calla, who is the executive director of the First Nations Financial Management Board in the province of British Columbia.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I would like to introduce my firefighters from Orillia: Leona McAusland, Brett Eeles and Moira White, and also from Midland, Doug Ward.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to welcome Jeffrey McIntyre from the Ontario professional firefighters in Cornwall.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: I would like to welcome Tamara Kronis to the House, a long-time political powerhouse and mentor to many women who are looking to get involved in politics. Thank you for being here.

WEARING OF PINS

Mrs. Robin Martin: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent to allow members to wear pins from the Scleroderma Society of Ontario during question period today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I deal with that matter, I just want to remind the House that there were members on both sides of the House who wanted to introduce guests, so we allowed them to do so even though the standing orders provide for only five minutes.

The member for Eglinton-Lawrence is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear pins and ribbons today for scleroderma awareness. Agreed? Agreed.

DEATH OF MEMBER'S FATHER

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I just wanted to thank the members of this House, the media, and all those who reached out to share their compassion with the loss of my father last week. It's very heartwarming, and it shows that even though we do bicker back and forth, we're still a family here. We all want what's best for Ontario; we just take different routes to get there.

My ask for you today is to just take your time and think for a minute of those who helped you in life, only wanted the best for you and helped make you who are you today. Thank you.

Applause.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Earlier this morning, government members on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts voted down a measure to have the auditor conduct a complete review of the Premier's plan to scrap renewable energy contracts. Conservative members have also blocked efforts to have the assembly request a review, and the Premier himself has refused to make the request.

The price tag for this mess has already ballooned from zero to \$231 million. Why is the Premier unwilling to allow a transparent review?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: When the government tabled the 2018-19 public accounts, the auditor, in fact, reviewed our allocation for the wind-down of these projects. In speaking to the media yesterday, she stated that her office "already looked at the costs associated with the cancellation of the contracts..." The audit looked at all of the big contracts and a sample of smaller green energy deals to determine whether the government's calculations were 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 reaffirmed her position this morning at committee.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: It wasn't that long ago that now government members were sitting in the public accounts committee demanding the auditor look into the Liberal gas plant scandal. At the time, the now Minister of Economic Development said, "The auditor needs to have that opportunity to let us know what's going on." At the time, the now Deputy Premier was on hand in that same committee echoing those same concerns. And at the time, the now Premier was calling into AM radio stations saying, "They're hoodwinking the people of Ontario."

Now, just like the Liberals, the Conservatives seem to prefer hoodwinking over transparency. Why—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): —and place his question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Now, just like the Liberals, why is it that the Conservatives prefer the Liberal method of dealing with these questions? Why is that?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Here is some interesting context: The Green Energy Act, of course, which gave rise to the

750 projects that we cancelled—it turns out the NDP voted in favour of the Green Energy Act that forced unnecessary renewable projects onto unwilling communities at a price that they couldn't afford.

Ninety communities passed motions to declare themselves unwilling to host the Green Energy Act: Billings township in Algoma-Manitoulin, LaSalle in Windsor-Essex, the entire region of Niagara. The former mayor of Warwick, Todd Case, declared his community an unwilling host, then retired after 18 years to run for the Ontario NDP in the 2018 election. Sadly, he lost. He didn't get elected. His party didn't stand for what he believed in.

Why won't they support us in getting rid of expensive contracts that made our system more complex and more expensive, 100% of the time?

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: At a time when the rest of the world is rushing to embrace renewable energy, the Ford government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars tearing it down, and quoting climate change deniers while they do it. If that wasn't bad enough, they are doing everything they can to ensure that families stuck with the bill don't know the real cost.

If the Premier is proud of this mess, why is he afraid of a review?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Wow. We spent last week and the early part of this week going through all of the increases from 2005 to 2015, a whopping 22% in one year that nobody knew about. The thing is, the former Liberal government was in cahoots with the NDP, and nobody could see this on their bill. That's why we followed the Auditor General's recommendations, to ensure that it was very clear on people's bill how much this subsidy costs, moving forward in a fully transparent manner. We're moving forward, ensuring that we remove all the pressures on this incredibly complex and costly system, all because of the official opposition and their support for the previous Liberal government.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to Premier: For over a week, the Premier has insisted that the hundreds of millions of dollars he spent cancelling clean energy contracts and tearing down wind farms would bring down hydro bills. It was only last year that he promised to reduce rates by 12%. Can the Premier explain why the rates keep going up?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the opposition leader and the Liberals that they put us in a spot where we have the most uncompetitive energy costs in North America. Three hundred thousand manufacturing jobs left Ontario because of the NDP and the Liberals.

As I said the other day, there has never been a larger transfer of wealth from the hard-working taxpayers, the ratepayers of this province and small businesses than from this Green Energy Act. I call it the "green energy scam." People made hundreds of millions of dollars off the backs of this big scam they came up with. We're saving hundreds

and hundreds of millions of dollars on energy right across the board. That's why we've created 252,400 jobs since we've been elected.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, I'm sure the Premier was of the same opinion when he promised to reduce rates by 12%, which he has not done.

Throughout the week, we've been raising concerns of Ontario families feeling squeezed by high hydro rates: Glynnis Hill, the senior from London–Fanshawe who reads by candlelight and wears a coat inside her house to avoid using electricity, and Dawn Van Nostrand, a retiree on a fixed income who has seen her bills climb by 7% when the Premier promised they would come down by 12%. When will we see the reduction that the Premier promised?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, I just want to remind the opposition: The reason hydro rates are at the rate they're at right now is because of them, because of all the backroom deals and all the political insiders making hundreds of millions of dollars on the backs of the ratepayers. That's the reason this happened.

We will make sure we hit our 12% reduction before the end of this term, as we promised. We're driving efficiencies through this province. Our province is booming. We're leading North America in economic growth, in jobs. Our province is booming. We don't have enough people to fill all the jobs we have here in Ontario because of the policies that we put forward in the House here. But we're going to continue to make sure people thrive, prosper and grow in Ontario.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: Unfortunately for the Premier, denying climate change and tearing down wind farms is not an effective way to drive down hydro bills. In fact, it wastes hundreds of millions of dollars and has left seniors like Dawn and Glynnis paying more. Is the Premier ready to admit he has no plan to deliver on his promise of a 12% reduction?

Hon. Doug Ford: Let me first address his first question, Mr. Speaker. We're leading Canada in emissions reductions at 22.5%. Because of the great environmental plan we have, we're going to make sure we have clean air, clean lakes, clean rivers, clean parks. We're leading the country. We're going to hit our 30% and, hopefully, we'll exceed the 30% target of the Paris accord 2030. We're well on our way.

Again, I'm so proud of our environmental policies. You don't have to tax the hard-working people of this province to be environmentally friendly. That's what they believe in, Mr. Speaker.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is to the Premier. On Monday, this Legislature unanimously passed an important motion declaring Ontario's opposition to Quebec's Bill

21, a ban on religious symbols in the public service that is discriminatory and violates people's basic human rights.

The motion calls on this government to formally inform the government of Quebec that this is a discriminatory bill, and it must be repealed. The Premier will be meeting with Quebec Premier François Legault this Friday. Can the Premier assure us that this motion, which was passed unanimously here in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, will be a topic of discussion?

Hon. Doug Ford: Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question from the honourable member. Mr. Speaker, this House has spoken unanimously on two occasions on this matter. The Premier has spoken on behalf of the government on multiple occasions on this matter. I think our opinions on this were very clear during the debate, I thought it was a very respectful, remarkable debate, really, in many aspects.

We're not going to continue to play politics on this. The House has spoken clearly, and I think that message has gotten through.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Speaker, through you to the government House leader: The question is for the Premier; the House has spoken, but we need the Premier to speak up. The Premier's office has informed reporters that the Premier has no intention of discussing this Legislature's concerns about Bill 21 when he meets Premier Legault this week.

Silence is simply not an option when basic human rights in this country are at stake. The Premier knows this House unanimously passed our motion to condemn Bill 21. The Premier should also know that religious discrimination in all its forms has no place here in Ontario or anywhere else in this country.

Speaker, the Premier needs to take a stand. This Legislature unanimously demanded that he take a stand. Why won't he do that?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The Premier has spoken multiple times on this and has expressed our opinions very clearly on this matter. The Premier has said on multiple occasions that a law like this would never have a place in the province of Ontario. I'm not sure how much clearer he can be than that. This House has spoken on two occasions unanimously, and we are now going to move forward. The opinion of this House on two occasions and the opinion of this Premier on multiple occasions on this topic have been well known.

At the same time, we heard a number of remarkable speeches. The minister of small business talked about being the first turban-wearing Sikh to be in Cabinet. We heard from the member for York Centre, who fled the Soviet Union to come to Canada. Those are the types of people that we have in this caucus. We heard from the member from Milton, who talked about his family leaving to come to a free place.

That's what we want to talk about. We want to talk about what unifies the country, not what divides the country. We hope that the opposition would actually join us—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I apologize to the government House leader for having to interrupt; I couldn't hear what he was saying.

Start the clock. The next question.

SENIORS' DENTAL CARE

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's a pleasure to speak here today and to ask a question to the Premier: Premier, recently our government made an announcement in support of dental care for seniors. In my riding, many seniors whom I have spoken with have raised concerns: For the last 15 years, the previous government neglected them, ignored their contributions and made life harder, whether it was increasing electricity costs that forced many individuals to choose between heating and eating, or long-term-health-care wait lines.

Our government values the contributions that seniors have made for the betterment of our province. Can you elaborate on the support we are providing for seniors as part of this new dental program?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our all-star MPP from Oakville. He's as popular as anything out in Oakville, by the way—leading the province. I also want to thank the great leadership from our Minister of Health and our Minister for Seniors and Accessibility on this file. They're doing an incredible job.

As part of our plan to end hallway health care, we're investing in programs that keep seniors healthy in their communities longer. Each year, more than 60,000 seniors show up at emergency departments for help on dental pain and infection. That's unacceptable. But, Mr. Speaker, we're changing that. We're going to make sure that we deliver a great dental plan for over 100,000 seniors of low income. We're spending over \$90 million to help seniors so that they don't have to show up to the emergency room. They can go to their dentist and actually get proper dental care and not worry about a whopping bill.

Anyway, we'll talk more on the second question.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Again, my question is to the Premier. I thank the Premier for that answer. As has been previously reported, at least two thirds of low-income seniors do not have access to proper dental insurance. As a result, untreated oral health issues can lead to chronic disease and lower the quality of life. This is a shocking statistic and speaks to the immediate action that needs to be taken by our government. For far too long, seniors' health care concerns were considered an afterthought by the previous government. I am proud of the actions and the investments that our government is making to lead the way on this very important issue.

Premier, can you describe further what is provided in this program and other supports our government is committing to the seniors of this province?

Hon. Doug Ford: I'd like to thank the member for his question.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what's ironic? What's ironic is that the NDP voted against the seniors on this bill. It's

absolutely staggering. They don't want to take care of seniors. We want to take care of seniors. I was shocked, actually, that they voted against it.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we're delivering to 100,000 low-income seniors \$90 million of dental care. The services covered will include examinations, oral surgery, X-rays, and repairs for broken teeth and cavities.

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This builds upon the other supports we're providing for seniors, which include the Seniors Community Grant Program funding. That's an important funding mechanism where seniors can go out and have programs—up to \$25,000 per project that encourages activity. Seniors active living centre programs: again, community-based, non-residential programs that promote active living. There are now over 300 programs—

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

EDUCATION ISSUES

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. Since day one, this government has tried to drive a wedge between parents, students and the people who deliver their education. This week, as teachers take job action, parents and students are showing that that tactic won't work. Parents in Ottawa told the CBC, "I think there are many other areas where the government could explore if it wished to do so, not least of which would be not cancelling a bunch of green energy projects [at a cost of] hundreds of millions of dollars."

Speaker, parents and students are standing shoulder to shoulder with teachers to defend public education. Why won't the Premier do the same thing?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to renewing schools in this province. The member will know that of the green fund that was created, 97 cents on the dollar was expended to help improve public schools. That was left out of the question. What was also left out of the question is the fact that our government has invested \$550 million this year alone to improve schools and to build new schools, in addition to maintaining over \$1 billion in renewal funding.

After 15 years of the Liberals having left so many schools in a place of disrepair, we are investing in our schools, we are updating our curriculum and we are giving hope to young people to achieve their full potential in this province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go back to the Premier again. Parent organizations are springing up across the province. Groups like the Ontario Parent Action Network, which started right here in Toronto, are helping to push back against the government's agenda of cuts, breaking down misinformation and distributing information online. As one parent in my community put it, "If you care about your kids, you need to care about their teachers."

With 10,000 teaching positions on the chopping block and the 60,000 courses that are going to go with them, it is

no surprise that Ontarians are pushing back. Will the Minister of Education and the Premier take a break from their daily press conferences and start repairing some of the damage that their failed policies have caused?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, the government's aim is to keep kids in class by getting good negotiated settlements.

This morning, the press conference that was noted in a pejorative way was actually to announce five steps we're taking to counter the scourge of bullying in this province. We announced that Christina Mitas, the MPP from Scarborough Centre—a former teacher—will lead initiatives and work to counter bullying in our schools. We announced a province-wide survey to empower students to have a say and to share their voice and their narrative. We announced new training for education workers, professional development to help reduce the scourge of bullying and de-escalate these situations. We announced a review of school reporting practices of bullying in public and Catholic schools. And we announced an evaluation of the definition of bullying.

These are the initiatives we're taking to improve safety. I would hope that every member of this Legislature would stand with our government to keep our children safe.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. Climate scientists have long estimated that Canada is warming at a rate twice as fast as the rest of the world. Yesterday, the UN released an even further damning report on the inaction of G20 countries, including Canada. It is now clear that the targets set in 2015 will be insufficient to prevent catastrophic warming.

Our communities are already feeling the effects of climate change. Flooding due to rising lake levels, extreme weather and fires are undermining the well-being of our communities. Yet we're the lucky ones. In the global south, it is estimated that due to heat, drought and rising sea levels, these places will become uninhabitable by 2050.

Speaker, through you to the Premier: We are global citizens and it is our civic duty to take action. Do this Premier and his government believe that climate change is real, and what are they going to do to respond?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Before I answer the question, I just want to say hello to Warren Scott and Daryl Smith, who are here from the St. Thomas Fire Department. Thanks for being here today.

But listen, Mr. Speaker: I'm not sure where the member opposite is coming from. Her government set the targets that were agreed upon in Paris for 2030 targets, and we're on our way to making sure we reach those targets. We have an environment plan in Ontario that we've put forward, a living document that we're hoping for others to join in.

The member from the Green Party has, numerous times, spoken to us about helping us develop a plan for the environment. The NDP have yet to come forward with a plan; they said that maybe sometime next year they might

have something. It's 2019, Mr. Speaker. It's time to have action on climate, and that is what we're doing through our environmental plan. By increasing the renewables in our fuels and having an impact assessment across this province to see how climate change is going to affect our province, we can take hold and take focus on how we're going to deal with that.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Indeed, we did commit to the Paris agreement. In 2016, Canada affirmed its commitment, and yet this government has put our plans in reverse. By its actions, it has weakened our commitments to those targets.

Today the youth of this province are taking this government to court because of its inaction on climate change and its refusal to acknowledge that we are in a climate crisis and we must respond now.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Will this minister take these ambitious targets seriously and make sure that Ontario does its part once again to address the issues of climate change, stop denying that it's occurring and make sure that we take this seriously in our policies and in our programs and in our response?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I thank the member opposite again for that question. I advise her to google or Internet-search—contact my office; we'll send you a copy of our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan, which is doing just that. It's taking action, working on the success of our goals to reach the 30% targets. Ontario leads the way. We're already 22% below the 2005 emissions targets in this province.

Again, I'll add in: We've added working towards 15% renewable content in our gasoline, which will lower emissions. We have finalized our emissions performance standards for large industrial emitters, to ensure polluters are accountable for greenhouse gas emissions; we're waiting for the federal government to act and approve that. We have issued green bonds, \$1.7 billion to capitalize on the province's ability to raise funds to deal with climate change. We have announced \$30 billion to build new subways in the city of Toronto. That alone will reduce emissions by a million tonnes when working.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing our work. Bring us more ideas. That's what I ask the members opposite. Let's work together in a non-partisan fashion and clean up our environment and—

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

Interjections.

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Mr. Speaker, agriculture creates amazing opportunities for economic growth and innovative ways for farmers to create economic solutions for a variety of issues. I'm encouraged that our government is supporting these opportunities through the proposed changes and rules surrounding the biogas sector.

Last week our government launched consultations to identify ways farmers in Ontario can expand the emerging renewable natural gas market. Can the minister explain why he is looking at making these changes?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for that great question. Agriculture in Ontario is an exciting frontier for innovation and creative economic and environmental solutions. That's why we announced that our government will launch consultations to identify ways in which farmers can expand the emerging natural gas market that would make Ontario a North American leader in the biogas sector.

These consultations will focus on identifying potential changes that would enable the biogas sector to access new markets for renewable natural gas through red tape reduction. We want these consultations to pinpoint the potential changes that could enable Ontario's \$35-million-a-year biogas sector to grow by 50% over five years.

Mr. Speaker, this is an exciting time for agriculture in Ontario.

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

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the minister for his response. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing the many innovative ways in which Ontario can expand its biogas sector. The best part is that we can stimulate economic growth in this sector by cutting red tape and helping the environment. These consultations are a great first step, and I trust we will receive many valuable suggestions over the next while.

Will the minister please tell us more about some of the proposed changes our government is considering?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for the excellent supplementary question. Our government is proposing new rules for on-farm anaerobic digesters to unleash the economic opportunity of the biogas sector while protecting the environment. This means economic solutions for food and organic waste, encouraging the recycling of nutrients including organic matter, and reducing greenhouse gases.

The proposed consultations will include discussions about enabling new on-farm anaerobic digesters to be approved faster, easier and at less cost, giving farmers a new source of revenue in the emerging renewable natural gas market. These proposed changes would help make Ontario a leader in the biogas sector. This would cut red tape, make life easier for farmers, expand their economic opportunities and help provide solutions to some of the challenges outlined in our government's Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Ian Arthur: Speaker, through you, my question is to the Minister of Energy. For the last two days, the minister has quoted a climate-conspiracy website that denies the scientific evidence of the climate crisis. In fact, he called it his favourite periodical. Now, I understand that the

Toronto Star, which once referred to him as an "unctuous bloviator" probably isn't his fave. But this—

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: I withdraw, Speaker.

But this, a website that has called climate science dishonest, has said that global warming has nothing to do with pollution, has called Greta Thunberg mentally ill? It's a conspiracy website that no one has ever cited in Parliament, in the US Congress, in the US Senate, but that didn't stop the minister, who told the media he reads it to support "both sides" of the climate change argument.

Would the minister clarify his position to the House?

Hon. Greg Rickford: As a well-studied person, I take every opportunity, whether it's on the Internet or sources of literature, to consider different points of view, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, when we think about Ontario, thank goodness that we have those differing viewpoints, because in reality, while the NDP were busy supporting the previous Liberal government to put some of the most expensive kinds of projects into our system, making it more complex and, more importantly, more expensive, we took the right path. We followed all of the Auditor General's recommendations. We now see a clear path to be able to offer rate-payers a reduction. It started out with taking down 750 projects, which had a net present value of \$790 million today. That's what "net present value" means, for the benefit of the NDP. That's supported by communities across this province, and I'll be happy to share in the supplementary just how many of those communities there were.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: I wonder what the political inspiration was for claiming that there are both sides to an issue when there is really only one.

The minister defended this government's scrapping of clean energy contracts by quoting this blog that compares those who believe in climate change to Nazis. Ontarians know that hate-filled conspiracy theories are the wrong foundation for public policy, and the minister should know better than to look to climate-change-denial websites to get—I can't say "facts" here, but whatever it was.

When every other Ontarian is looking for leadership to combat the effects of climate change, this government is undermining progress at every step of the way. When is this government going to stop defending their policies, which are based on climate change denial?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: The member opposite—that was just basically untrue, what he put forward at this Legislature.

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

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I'll take that back, Mr. Speaker, and withdraw.

Listen, it's coming up to a year now that we've put forward a plan for the people of this province and the government of Ontario to work towards reaching our goals, our Paris targets of 30% below 2005 emissions. We're at 22%.

We have spent the last year beginning implementation that will reap rewards down the way. I've already made mention that we do have that impact assessment, the first of its kind in Ontario, much like the one that happened in the United Kingdom, Mr. Speaker. This will be an analysis of what is occurring in Ontario due to climate change so we can become more resilient and respond to the changes that are going on, Mr. Speaker, and those municipalities and communities and Indigenous communities can focus in on how best to deal with this climate action. We're going to continue to fight—

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

OPIOID ABUSE

Mr. Billy Pang: My question this morning is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Minister, communities across Ontario continue to be affected by the ongoing opioid crisis. The recent report co-authored by Public Health Ontario, the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario and the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network revealed that between July 2017 and June 2018, there were over 1,000 confirmed opioid-related deaths in the province of Ontario. We also know that 90% of these opioid-related deaths were accidental. These are staggering numbers.

Constituents in my riding of Markham–Unionville are concerned about the ongoing opioid crisis. Minister, could you please update the members of this Legislature on what our government is doing to address the ongoing opioid crisis in Ontario?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I want to thank the member from Markham–Unionville for his important question. Mr. Speaker, our government continues to take the opioid crisis seriously. Our government has conducted extensive consultations spanning the entire province that have directly informed our new consumption and treatment services model. These consultations saw the participation of experts, health care workers, first responders, community leaders, business owners, and stakeholders including the opioid task force.

To date, we've approved 16 CTS sites in communities with the highest needs across the province. This new model saves lives by helping to reverse and treat overdoses, and it connects people who use drugs to primary care, treatment and rehabilitation, and other health and social services.

Mr. Speaker, since the very beginning, our government has remained committed to investing \$3.8 billion over 10 years to build a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions system in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Billy Pang: I want to thank the minister for this response. This is reassuring to hear that our government is continuing to take the ongoing opioid crisis seriously. I know that residents in my riding will be pleased to hear that we are taking real action to fight the opioid crisis and are providing the necessary services and supports to individuals living with an addiction.

Minister, could you please explain to the members of this Legislature about the investments we are making this year to address the ongoing opioid crisis?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Again, I want to thank the member for that great question. Mr. Speaker, based on extensive consultation with experts, we're confident that the model that's brought forward is the right approach to connect people struggling with addiction to the care they need and deserve. In addition to our commitment to invest \$3.8 billion over 10 years, our government is investing an additional \$174 million this year to address the critical gaps in our system, to support patients, families and caregivers in their communities struggling with mental health and addictions.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we don't truly save a person's life until we help them beat their addiction. Our overriding priority—to ensure that all efforts to combat the opioid crisis are being done—is something that we take very seriously and that we need to do. I want to assure all members of this Legislature that our government is working tirelessly to ensure that we are able to create a connected, comprehensive and integrated mental health and addictions system for the province of Ontario.

1120

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Today we're joined by professional firefighters from across the province, including two from my riding of Niagara Falls. None of us here will dispute that they've got just about the toughest job around. As the first on the scene for anything from major fires to a fatal car crash, our firefighters have to be at their best when often we're at our worst. Then they're left to process what they've experienced.

Presumptive PTSD coverage legislation, championed and first introduced by the New Democrats, passed in 2016. Municipalities are now required to submit PTSD prevention plans but not necessarily to follow through on those plans.

Will the minister tell the House what concrete steps, including funding, the government has taken to ensure that our firefighters receive the same standard of post-traumatic stress care no matter where they serve?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: First, I'd like to, on behalf of the Premier, on behalf of the government of Ontario and on behalf of every member of the provincial Legislature, welcome our professional firefighters who are here with us today, as well as to, on behalf of every single person in Ontario, every family and every community across the province, sincerely and truly thank them for everything that they do to protect our families across the province.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with every first responder in the province of Ontario. I know that my office and I have had a number of conversations with the professional firefighters. We continue to work with them and to send that message that we're going to stand with them every step of the way.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier: Firefighters find themselves exposed to toxins that can cause cancer at higher rates than other members of our population. These exposures don't just happen at the scene of the fire but continue on their gear and the equipment firefighters use, at the fire station, and even back in their homes, potentially to affect their families.

We know that firefighters and first responders are heroes in all of our communities. Right now, guidelines are being created that will help protect the health and safety of firefighters. This is good, but only if this government follows through.

Will the minister commit today to implementing through regulation any recommendations this committee makes to keep our firefighters safe, on and off the job?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Again, I want to thank the professional firefighters, the leadership and their members, for being here today.

Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite likely knows, our ministry, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, is currently reviewing occupational cancers. In fact, our ministry has commissioned international, world-renowned expert Dr. Paul Demers. I met with Dr. Demers last night, Mr. Speaker, actually, at MaRS.

I join the medical community and many of our friends in the building trades when it comes to cancers related to asbestos. When it comes to the section 21 committee that the member opposite referenced, I've been attending section 21 committee meetings.

We're going to continue to work with professional firefighters, continue to demonstrate leadership and continue to tell them and show them that we stand shoulder to shoulder and to thank them for what they do.

TOURISM

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. First of all, I want to thank the minister for coming to my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka to speak to tourism operators last week. I know that they appreciated speaking with her first-hand about the challenges they face.

The minister often says that Ontario offers the world in one province. During the summer, this is true: You can take part in festivals celebrating any culture on any weekend in Toronto, Ottawa and many cities. For example, I know that the minister went to a Highland games, a Caribbean festival, a South Asian festival and a Chinese event all in one weekend in her riding of Nepean.

Minister, while that's great in the summer months, many people see winter as a time to hibernate. I know there are great things to do around Ontario in the winter, but how do Ontario communities encourage more people to get out and enjoy our province in the winter?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much for an outstanding question from the outstanding member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I want to say thank you to him for his

wonderful hospitality last week when we took in some local sites and had some great meetings. I went to Bracebridge with him where they shot the Netflix original *The Knight Before Christmas* and screened it last week. I encourage all residents of Ontario to check out some of our wonderful film-friendly locations. In addition, we learned of a wonderful skating opportunity for Ontarians if they'd like to visit the Muskoka Lakes Farm and Winery. Their acres' worth of skating on the cranberries is amazing.

The truth is Ontario tourism represents about a \$34-billion economic imprint in the province of Ontario, with over 142 million visitors taking in our sights year-round. And I'd like to point out that we are open for business, we are open for jobs and we are open for visitors 365 days of the year. That's why our tourism strategy will focus on making sure that that \$34-billion economic imprint continues to grow as we work with the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario and the wonderful—

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

Mr. Norman Miller: It's great to hear that Ontario is open for visitors 365 days of the year. Winter is a great time to travel around Ontario to ski, skate, see Santa and to attend winter festivals.

In my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka this weekend, the CP Holiday Train visits MacTier. At the end of January, Bracebridge hosts their Fire and Ice Festival, featuring fire artists, fireworks, a skating trail and the legendary downtown tube run that turns the main street into a tubing hill. In February, Gravenhurst hosts the North American Cup original Pond Hockey Classic tournament, where four-on-four hockey is played on the pond where the sport was born.

Can the minister tell us how she's working with the tourism industry to support winter tourism in communities that traditionally rely on summer tourism?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: The truth is, whether you're in the Thousand Islands, whether you go to Niagara Falls or whether you go to Muskoka, you are looking at the most beautiful and picturesque places in the entire world, regardless of which season we're operating in. That's why our tourism strategy that we will move forward with will ensure that we're open for business, open for jobs and open for visitors, 365 days of the year, so that we can take in those wonderful opportunities.

The truth is, also that, in this ministry, Speaker, we host a number of sporting events that we'll continue to roll out in the winter months as well as in the spring and in the fall. We're going to continue to work with our film and television operators right across this province to ensure that they're going to film-friendly locations not just in Ottawa and in Toronto, but elsewhere in our wonderful province. And through Celebrate Ontario, we'll continue to fund excellent events like Winterfest in Vaughan, the festival of lights, which is happening right now in Niagara, and the Twenty Valley festival that's happening right now.

Mr. Speaker, we are a province that is the world in one province, but, at the same time, we are making sure that we are a four-season destination, the world over.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario appeared before a legislative committee to warn about the consequences of Bill 132. He said that if the Premier is going to weaken protections for drinking water while reducing penalties for polluters, then municipal officials should not face prosecution for any harms caused by the Premier's short-sighted decisions to scrap important water protections.

Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable that in 2019 we are rolling back water protections to the point that municipal leaders are fearful that they will be held liable for a future disaster that is made almost inevitable by this government's short-sightedness. Will the Premier withdraw schedule 9 of Bill 132 and stop risking the safety of Ontario's drinking water?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member for the question. I can tell you that, from the ARA's—Aggregate Resources Act—point of view, we are making changes that are going to ensure that Ontario has an adequate supply of aggregates over the next 15 years to 20 years, when there's massive growth taking place in the province.

Protection of water is a paramount responsibility and of paramount importance. That's why we have ensured, through changes to the act, that the ability to go below the water table will rest on the province's shoulders, not the municipalities', so that we'll have one source point for responsibility for those actions.

1130

But I want to point out that anyone who does go below the water table, if they're approved, will have to go through a more rigorous environmental assessment than they had to before. Protection of water is paramount in this province.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, I don't understand why this Premier is so determined to repeat the same mistakes that led to the Walkerton disaster. He tried to do an end run around the Clean Water Act with Bill 66; he repealed the Toxics Reduction Act; he's scrapping nine regulations that limit discharges of industrial water pollution; he's overruling municipal plans that protect threats to groundwater due to aggregate extraction; and he's reducing penalties for polluters.

Will it take another Walkerton for this Premier to realize that protecting our drinking water is not red tape?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Listen, I take objection to the member's question there. We have not lowered any fines to any polluters. In fact, we have tremendously increased our ability to oversee facilities across this province. We have increased the amount of monetary penalties that can be enforced on those that are polluting our environment.

Under previous governments since the beginning of time, there have been so many facilities that have been

allowed to pollute, with no tools available to the environmental officers to deal with them. We are adding in those tools to deal with monetary penalties. In fact, if a business or an individual is being economically benefited by their polluting the environment, not only will they be charged a monetary penalty, but they could also be charged for the economic benefit that they received from polluting the environment.

We are holding polluters accountable. We are going to be tough with polluters. I assure the member opposite we are keeping our environment, water, land and air—

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

FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question today is for the Solicitor General.

Protecting citizens is a fundamental responsibility of government, and part of that responsibility is the continued support of the hard-working fire services and firefighters from across Ontario in the work they do keeping our community safe.

There are a number of different tools and resources that fire services rely on when ensuring the safety of the communities they protect. These aren't always top of mind for everyone, but they have a big impact on fire services' ability to do their job.

Could the Solicitor General please let us know how our government is supporting firefighters in Ontario in their vital work of keeping the people of Ontario fire safe?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Oakville North–Burlington. She's absolutely right: It is an issue that the members who have joined us here from the OPFFA understand, because they deal with it every day; but, frankly, the general public just assumes that when there is an issue, those firefighters are going to come to protect their homes and their families. To them, thank you for your engagement and thank you for your participation in your lobby day today.

Earlier this summer, our government announced \$2.5 million in funding for urban search and rescue, and chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive teams, more commonly referred to as hazmat teams.

Support for HUSAR and hazmat teams across Ontario ensures that our brave firefighters have the tools they need to keep our communities safe. I think these are important tools that, when we work together, can make our communities safer.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I thank the Solicitor General for her response.

Firefighters are truly everyday heroes who put themselves in harm's way to keep our loved ones and our communities safe. When you or I might run away from danger, they run toward it. That is why it is critical that our government continues to support them in their fight to keep Ontario fire safe.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General please tell us more about how our government will continue supporting firefighters across Ontario in improving fire safety?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, our government values the important work that firefighters do as they place themselves at risk every day to protect our communities across Ontario. It's why we will continue to work with our first responders on the front lines of community safety in order to create a public safety regime that puts people first and provides our front-line officers and heroes with the tools and resources they need to keep our communities safe. That's why I was pleased to speak at the OPFFA's recent legislative conference, and this morning continued that conversation with members of their executive.

As Solicitor General, I look forward to continuing our strong relationship with our firefighters to continue working with them on their essential work in our communities.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, you would know that your government tabled yet again rule changes that are, quite frankly, going to consolidate even more power into the government's hands. Despite your current record, you have used time allocation over 90% of the time that legislation has come through this House. You have used the "notwithstanding" clause in order—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the member to address his comments through the Chair.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Speaker. The government has used time allocation over and over again in order to speed legislation through this House. The government has even used the "notwithstanding" clause in order to change the electoral process in the city of Toronto in the midst of an election.

The question I have is a very simple one: How does consolidating even more power in your hands enhance the democratic process?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The changes to the standing orders that we're proposing do no such thing. As a matter of fact, we've been consulting with all members in all parties, including the NDP, the Liberals and the Green Party, who are supporting the proposed changes. It's about making the Legislature work better. It's about allowing the independent members—we have a large independent members core here. It's about allowing them the ability to participate more often in debate in this place. I suspect that's part of the reason why the NDP is not in favour of some of the changes that we're bringing forward.

I think that when members take a look at the package in front of them, they'll be happy about it, Mr. Speaker. It's about allowing members to defend the speeches that they make in this place. It's about making it open. It's about making debate more active. It's about transparency. It's about giving independent members a larger voice.

This side of the House will always stand up for all members in making this place an even better place for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Through you, Speaker, to the Acting Premier: This does no such thing as what you're just trying to say. All this does is it allows the government to move legislation through the House lickety-split—even faster than you did before. If the Liberals and the Greens are happy with that and are prepared to support you, well then, shame on them. But I can tell you that New Democrats will fight you on this because this Legislature is the Legislature of the people and at no time should the government consolidate power in such a way that takes the power away from the people.

I ask you again: How does this enhance the democratic process when it comes to the people of this province?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, the standing order changes do no such thing. As a matter of fact, the NDP was co-operating in changing the standing orders and agreed with most of them until they didn't get their way on something and decided to withdraw support entirely.

What the member says is absolutely completely wrong. We do not give ourselves more powers to pass things any quicker. What we've done is give the Legislature more power to debate bills and to question each other back and forth.

The member opposite said to the media on a number of instances that somehow the changes we're making will do that, will allow us to pass a bill all in one day. Well, it's completely wrong. We haven't removed the power of the opposition to bring forward reasoned amendments. We haven't said we will allow debate and time allocation to happen on the same day. We've added no such thing.

What we've done is give the independents an opportunity to participate more frequently. We've changed the rules so that members' statements can be viewed by all members of this House. We've increased accountability for the government and for all members of this House.

I would hope that the opposition would join with us and join with the independents in making this place better for the people of Ontario.

ADOPTION

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. This month is Adoption Awareness Month, a month to celebrate the families that have opened their hearts to children and youth in need of forever homes. It's also an opportunity to raise awareness and let more people know about adoption as a way to expand their families.

1140

Just last week, I was pleased to co-host, with my Durham colleagues, a round table on the state of adoption in Ontario. It was a moving experience to hear first-hand from adoptive families, and their struggles in particular. We also heard from many other organizations. They provided their input as well on this important topic.

Can the minister please tell the House how she is modernizing the child care system to help more children find their forever home?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the whip from Whitby for that great question. The Adoption Council of Ontario's theme this year is "Answering the Call." Those to step up to care for children have answered the call, and it is our duty as government to do the same. That is why we have committed to re-examining the adoption system to protect the interests of children and youth and make adoption easier for those involved. We know that children and youth are not being matched with families as often as they should. For example, in 2018-19, there were over 4,000 children and youth in the permanent care of children's aid societies in Ontario who were eligible for adoption. Yet only 800 of those children and youth were adopted.

We can do better and we must do better. Our government is proud to support the great work done by groups such as the parent support network, Adopt4Life and the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Whether it is adoption or kinship care, creating permanency for children and youth in Ontario is a goal that every member of this Legislature supports.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the minister for her response. I agree with the minister that we all want children and youth to find their forever homes. Children and youth have better outcomes when they're in permanent homes rather than group homes. They're more likely to finish high school, seek higher education and be more emotionally secure than peers who remain without a permanent family.

Adoption is not just for children. Teens, although more independent, still need the love and support that a family can provide to help them navigate life's challenges. We also know that children with special needs are also in need of homes and that they need some support to help them reach their potential.

Can the minister please tell us what steps the ministry is taking to ensure that the voices of children are heard on this issue?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you again to the member for the question. I would like to thank the member and our Durham colleagues for hosting an adoption round table. Back in September, my parliamentary assistant, the member for Ottawa West-Nepean, made a call to all members in this House to host round tables as part of our child welfare review. I want to thank him for all the work he has done so far and the continued work he is doing on this file.

When it comes to adoption, we'll be hosting a round table comprised entirely of youth to hear their thoughts on the challenges they face. Our government continuously engages with a variety of voices, including current and former youth in care like Jane Kovarikova from the Child Welfare PAC, who was here yesterday to make sure all voices are heard. For too long, adults and those who have been in the system have made decisions impacting

children without seeking their input. We know we must do better, and we are committed to doing just that.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier. London students are struggling to access French classes. The London District Catholic School Board recently announced that they will not be offering French classes until students enter grade 4, due to a shortage of qualified teachers. Jean-Pierre Cantin, executive director of Centre communautaire régional de London, stated that "a lack of resources in French education programs will hurt our francophone community badly." For students, learning the language of their culture also benefits brain development, concentration, memory and intelligence.

The Thames Valley District School Board may end their French immersion kindergarten programs, and could scrap the French immersion program currently offered to students in grade 7 altogether. The earlier a young person is able to learn a new language, the more successful they will be. Learning a new language strengthens the student's other language. Literacy skills are universal.

We should be encouraging young people to learn French, but this government is letting them down. What will the Premier do to ensure that London's francophone and francophile community can continue to learn French during their early years?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. The way we ensure that the linguistic duality in English and French is provided for every student is to invest in the school board. The London District Catholic School Board funding is up over \$5 million because of our government's commitment to public education in London, in Middlesex and in every region of south-western Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to French-language education, it is this government, under the leadership of this Premier, that is investing more in French-language education and preservation than any government in the history of Ontario, a \$16-million net increase year over year. We're going to continue to invest, working with the Minister of Francophone Affairs, to protect French language, identity and culture in this province now and into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning.

DEFERRED VOTES

PROVINCIAL ANIMAL WELFARE SERVICES ACT, 2019

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

Deferred vote 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

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

On November 6, 2019, Ms. Jones moved second reading of Bill 136. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gretzky, Lisa	Pettapiece, Randy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Piccini, David
Arthur, Ian	Harden, Joel	Rakocevic, Tom
Baber, Roman	Harris, Mike	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Hassan, Faisal	Rickford, Greg
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Roberts, Jeremy
Barrett, Toby	Hogarth, Christine	Romano, Ross
Begum, Doly	Hunter, Mitzie	Sabawy, Sheref
Bell, Jessica	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Berns-McGown, Rima	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bisson, Gilles	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Sattler, Peggy
Bouma, Will	Ke, Vincent	Scott, Laurie
Bourgouin, Guy	Kernaghan, Terence	Shaw, Sandy
Burch, Jeff	Khanjin, Andrea	Simard, Amanda
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova, Natalia	Singh, Gurratan
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Singh, Sara
Cho, Stan	MacLeod, Lisa	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Mamakwa, Sol	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Smith, Todd
Coteau, Michael	Martin, Robin	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Crawford, Stephen	Martow, Gila	Stiles, Marit
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McDonell, Jim	Tabuns, Peter
Downey, Doug	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	McNaughton, Monte	Taylor, Monique
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norman	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Paul	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Mitas, Christina Maria	Tibollo, Michael A.
Ford, Doug	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fraser, John	Morrison, Suze	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Mulroney, Caroline	Wai, Daisy
Fullerton, Merrilee	Natyshak, Taras	Walker, Bill
Gates, Wayne	Nicholls, Rick	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gélinas, France	Oosterhoff, Sam	Yakabuski, John
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Yarde, Kevin
Gill, Parm	Park, Lindsey	Yurek, Jeff
Glover, Chris	Parsa, Michael	

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 107; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 25, 2019, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

PLAN TO BUILD ONTARIO TOGETHER ACT, 2019 LOI DE 2019 SUR LE PLAN POUR BÂTIR L'ONTARIO ENSEMBLE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1155 to 1156.

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

On November 19, 2019, Mr. Phillips moved second reading of Bill 138. All those in favour of the motion will please now rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

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

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 67; the nays are 40.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 26, 2019, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote now on the amendment to government notice of motion number 73, relating to standing order changes.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1159 to 1200.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On November 27, 2019, Mr. Harris moved that government notice of motion 73 be amended as follows:

That the motion be amended by adding the following at the end:

“And that the terms of this motion shall come into force at 12:01 a.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2020.”

All those in favour of Mr. Harris’s motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

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.	Glover, Chris	Rakocevic, Tom
Arthur, Ian	Gretzky, Lisa	Sattler, Peggy
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Hassan, Faisal	Singh, Gurratan
Berns-McGown, Rima	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Sara
Bisson, Gilles	Kernaghan, Terence	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Mamakwa, Sol	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique

French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France

Monteith-Farrell, Judith
Morrison, Suze
Natyshak, Taras

Vanthof, John
Yarde, Kevin

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 72; the nays are 35.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Are the members ready to vote on the main motion, as amended? I heard some noes. This item will therefore remain on the Orders and Notices paper.

This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1204 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I would like to introduce my guests from Future Possibilities for Kids in the gallery: Abiran Suriyekulenthiran, Mathana Suntharalingam, Nilana Suriyekulenthiran, Adith Mathew and Rickesh Lakhani. I hope you have enjoyed the day today at Queen’s Park. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Also, I have my two wonderful staff from the constituency office here, Jennifer and Nathaniel. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to tell members of this House about two men from my riding of Essex county: Tim Papineau and Curtis Appleyard. Tim was a firefighter with Windsor Fire and Rescue Services and Curtis was an ironworker who was working on the job in Welland. Both men were young, both men were loved and loved their families, both men had so much more to offer, and both men died as a result of the work that they did: one from what could not be foreseen and the other because of something that he could not see. I talk about these two gentlemen today, Speaker, because I think both of these deaths were preventable.

I think that, in this House, we can make all the overtures that we want, we can pass all the bills that we want, we can impose all the regulations that we want, but unless there is a concerted effort to enforce those laws, to put the resources behind the health and safety legislation that has a real effect in our communities, unless we put the enforcement measures in place, we’ll continue to see these deaths. And I’m tired of it. I don’t want to hear a roll call of people we’ve lost in our communities because they went to work. We have to do better, Speaker. Dedicating a day of the month as health and safety day does not go far enough. We have to impose and implement the resources that are available to ensure that these workers are safe and have protections when they go to work.

SENIORS' DENTAL CARE

Mr. Mike Harris: Like so many of my fellow members, I was absolutely thrilled when our government committed to providing low-income seniors with access to publicly funded high-quality dental care. Over the past year and a half, the low-income seniors in my riding have made it clear to me that financial obstacles are preventing them from visiting the dentist regularly. I've heard from Pauline and her husband, seniors in Baden, who reached out to me to tell me how much they could use these services. Sandy from Kitchener told me how relieved she is that her mother will finally be able to get the dental care she needs. For the first time ever, eligible seniors will have coverage for a comprehensive range of preventative and restorative dental services.

We all know how much pain something like a cavity can cause if left untreated. I don't think I need to remind the members in this chamber that untreated cavities can lead to chronic diseases.

I was happy to be able to share with my constituents last week that seniors can now apply to our government's new Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program through their public health unit and at ontario.ca.

On behalf of my constituents in Kitchener–Conestoga, I would like to thank the Minister of Health, the Honourable Christine Elliott, and the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, the Honourable Raymond Cho, for all their hard work on this file. With our government's record spending in health care and education, we are protecting what matters most for the people of Ontario.

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This government's decision to slash conservation authority flood control budgets by 50% while also directing no increases to municipal levies is putting Ontarians' lives and property at risk. In my community, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority has warned that it is simply not possible to absorb the loss of half of its flood control budget without cutting key flood management services such as flood forecasting and warning systems.

In the face of a climate emergency that is increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, it is incomprehensible that this government is cutting funding for essential flood control. But it gets worse, Speaker. Conservation authorities have also been directed to stop all non-mandatory programs, even though these programs receive no provincial funding whatsoever. For Upper Thames River, this means the loss of programs on water quality monitoring and improvement, on tree planting and woodlot management, on invasive species, on species at risk, on curriculum-based environmental education, on trail development and programs in support of local environmental initiatives.

Instead of listening to climate deniers, I call on this government to join the fight against climate change, help protect Ontarians from flooding and support the vital work

of local conservation authorities like Upper Thames River to protect our communities and preserve our planet.

CLAUDE BENNETT

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I am pleased to rise today to recognize the accomplishments of a dedicated public servant, mentor and friend.

Last week, Claude Bennett, the former member for Ottawa South, was awarded the Order of Ottawa. Claude has had an impressive career of public service. He served on Ottawa city council from 1961 to 1971, representing Capital ward and serving as acting mayor. He was elected to this Legislature in 1971 and served until 1987. During that time, he spent 14 years in the cabinet of Premier Bill Davis, filling the roles of Minister of Tourism and Recreation, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Minister of Industry. His accomplishments are numerous and include getting the Ottawa Heart Institute and the Ottawa courthouse built, and securing funding for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario's expansion.

On a personal note, I will say that Claude has been an invaluable source of wisdom and advice to me as I start my political journey, and for that I am eternally grateful to him. Please join me in warmly congratulating Claude on this very well deserved honour.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Right this very minute, so many people in Ontario are experiencing water issues. We have lead in our schools, continued mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows and carcinogens in Tottenham. Nestlé continues to drain our aquifers, producing over three billion plastic water bottles in Aberfoyle since 2016.

Every day in this House, my colleague and my friend MPP Mamakwa raises the appalling lack of clean drinking water in First Nations communities, and now in Hamilton, in my riding of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, a truly heartbreaking environmental disaster: 24 billion litres of raw sewage seeped into our beautiful Cootes Paradise.

I'd 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 water protectors is that of Kristen Villebrun and Wendy Bush, Oji-Cree women. In November 2015, these women staged a protest to address sewage waste in Hamilton's harbour and the lack of governmental action to address it. These women sounded the alarm, yet their voices went unheard and unheeded.

It is time for all of us to listen to the voices of those on the front lines and commit to protecting our water. Ontarians deserve to know what's in our water.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Today I met with two of the youth taking the government to court over its withdrawal of climate solutions, which jeopardizes our charter-protected rights of life, liberty and security of the person.

Zoe and Madison came to my office this morning to share their concerns about the future. I want to quote what Zoe said: “I’m afraid that so many species that I love will go extinct, and that children in the future won’t be able to enjoy nature the same way I do”—a future this government is actively working against by tearing down wind turbines and relying on climate denial blogs to inform policy. This week, scientists issued their most urgent warning yet that we’re headed for 3.2 degrees Celsius of warming if we don’t triple our efforts.

These kids should not have to resort to the courts to compel this government to act. No matter how many times the minister invokes my name in this House when talking about the government’s environment plan, the bottom line is that it’s not going to deliver the solutions this province needs and our children deserve. For the sake of these young people, I will continue to keep fighting and pushing for climate action, and I want to thank Sophia, Madison, Alex, Shelby, Zoe, Shaelyn and Beze for having the courage to stand up and take this government to court demanding climate action.

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FUTURE POSSIBILITIES FOR KIDS

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I’m very happy to rise today to speak about Future Possibilities for Kids, an organization in my riding that empowers youth and teaches leadership skills to children aged nine to 12.

Since 2001, over 5,000 youth have participated in this amazing organization. They provide year-round leadership programs, helping children to build self-confidence, creative thinking and a positive outlook on their life.

At Future Possibilities for Kids, youth work one-on-one with coaches to develop personal goals that will make an impact on their community. One example that stands out for me is how a group of children made their summer goal to deliver get-well cards to sick patients at Markham Stouffville Hospital. Another youth began an anti-bullying campaign at their school, while another student created a plan to clean up a local park. This program shows kids that they can be change-makers and an inspiration to others.

Organizations like Future Possibilities for Kids are an inspiration to all of us. I hope that my colleagues and I can lead by example and inspire youth to reach for their goals.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Ms. Marit Stiles: I’m grateful for the opportunity to rise today to salute one of our province’s biggest creative hubs, my riding of Davenport.

Davenport is home to thousands of workers in the creative sector, from fine artists and musicians to production designers, writers, actors, directors and game designers. We are proud that a vibrant arts corridor has grown along the West Toronto Railpath, anchored by the Museum of Contemporary Art and cutting-edge private galleries like Scrap Metal, TPW, Daniel Faria and Clint Roenisch.

In the Junction Triangle, the Inuit Art Foundation operates in a new home just down the street from galleries including Erin Stump Projects, Angell Gallery and Cooper Cole. Renowned artist-run centres Mercer Union and Art Metropole also call Davenport home.

But while creative workers in our community contribute so much, they remain some of the most vulnerable workers in our province. They face challenges finding and keeping affordable places to live and work as rents keep rising and development pushes them out of our neighbourhoods. This government’s \$10-million cut to the Ontario Arts Council will mean fewer jobs, smaller grants and less opportunity in the sector.

Artists and cultural workers deserve a provincial government that invests in them by making housing more affordable, by extending benefits and workplace protections to contract workers and by supporting the institutions that show their work. It’s time for a government that shows up for artists.

SLEDGE HOCKEY CHALLENGE

Mr. Dave Smith: The United Way Peterborough and District provides funding for 46 different programs and services within the city and county of Peterborough. Some of the organizations that receive their support are Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Youth Emergency Shelter and the Canadian Mental Health Association.

On November 17, I had the opportunity to partner with the United Way and one of our local sledge hockey organizations, the Kawartha Blazers, to hold the first-ever Dave Smith United Way Sledge Hockey Challenge. This event featured a number of MPPs, local politicians, Blazers players and some other celebrities from our community.

It did two things for us. First, we were able to raise close to \$20,000 that will be directed back into our community in support of the great work of organizations I’ve already mentioned. Secondly, this provided us with an opportunity to raise awareness about the struggles that someone with a mobility issue has when they’re trying to play Canada’s favourite pastime.

For those of you who have never tried sledge hockey, let me describe it to you: You play while seated in a sledge. It’s a specially designed sled with two blades on the ice. You propel yourself around the ice using picks that are attached to the ends of your sticks.

As the goalie, I was quite effective in “stacking the pads” by flopping onto my side. Unfortunately, I wasn’t as successful in getting back upright once I had flopped over, and I daresay that fact was reflected on the scoreboard.

SCLERODERMA

Ms. Donna Skelly: I’m rising today to speak to the reason that many of us are wearing these ribbons today: scleroderma. Scleroderma affects approximately 6,000 Ontarians. It’s a rare, chronic, multi-symptom autoimmune disease that affects the body’s connective tissue.

The cause of scleroderma is unknown, and currently there is no cure. There are treatments that can help slow the process down and improve the quality and quantity of life for persons who are affected by the disease, but they can be costly and difficult to access.

Ontarians living with this rare and debilitating condition face significant physical and emotional challenges, often resulting in feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and being a burden to society. But with despair there is hope. The Scleroderma Society of Ontario is an organization that is focused on raising awareness, raising funds and raising support for those with this disease in an effort to find a cure.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank John Malcolmson, Maureen Sauvé and the entire team at the Scleroderma Society of Ontario who are here at Queen's Park today. They are dedicated leaders in the fight to find a cure for this little-known but disabling disease.

Finally, I would like to invite all members in this House to drop by the scleroderma reception at 5 o'clock this afternoon in the legislative dining room.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

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

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr19, An Act to revive 1549408 Ontario Inc.

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

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

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

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

Bill 6, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario in memory of Gord Downie / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant à créer la charge de poète officiel de l'Ontario à la mémoire de Gord Downie.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT (VAPING IS NOT FOR KIDS), 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE (LE VAPOTAGE N'EST PAS POUR LES ENFANTS)

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017 with respect to activities related to vapour products / Projet de loi 151, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2017 favorisant un Ontario sans fumée en ce qui concerne des activités liées aux produits de vapotage.

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 Nickel Belt care to explain her bill?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The bill is called Vaping is not for Kids. The explanatory note is quite long, so I will shorten it.

The bill basically does six things:

- (1) It bans all advertising of vapour products.
- (2) It bans all flavours of vapour products, except those that will be prescribed.
- (3) It regulates the amount of nicotine in the vapour products.
- (4) It limits the sale of vapour products to specialty vape stores and requires the approval of the board of health before such a store can open.
- (5) The act is amended to provide that the ministry may direct that tax revenue generated from the sale of vapour products be used for the purpose of educating the public about the health risks associated with vaping, and other health promotion activities.
- (6) The act would require Ontario Health to prepare an annual report to the minister respecting youth vaping that sets out information and recommendations to assist the minister in developing policies to reduce youth vaping.

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OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH DAY ACT, 2019 LOI DE 2019 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET DE LA SANTÉ AU TRAVAIL

Ms. McKenna moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 152, An Act to proclaim Occupational Safety and Health Day / Projet de loi 152, Loi proclamant la Journée de la sécurité et de la santé au travail.

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 Burlington care to explain her bill?

Ms. Jane McKenna: The bill proclaims the first Tuesday in May in each year as Occupational Safety and Health Day.

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES
AMENDMENT (TILL DEATH
DO US PART) ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS
DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE
(JUSQU'À CE QUE LA MORT
NOUS SÉPARE)

Ms. Fife moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide spouses with the right to live together in a home / Projet de loi 153, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les foyers de soins de longue durée afin d'accorder aux conjoints le droit de vivre ensemble dans un foyer.

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 Waterloo like to explain her bill?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This bill amends the Residents' Bill of Rights, set out in section 3 of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, by adding the right of residents not to be separated from their spouses upon admission, but to have accommodation made available for both spouses so that they may continue to live together.

And the bill is called Till Death Do Us Part.

PETITIONS

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Wayne Gates: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Canadians living with diabetes have the right to affordable and timely access to prescribed devices and insurance coverage, and that governments have the responsibility to guarantee fair access to devices and supplies to all Canadians, no matter what their income or where they live; and

"Whereas government coverage of continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors is increasing internationally but is not available in Canada; and

"Whereas the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee (OHTAC) has made final and draft recommendations for continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors respectively;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure advanced glucose monitoring technologies such as CGM and FGM are affordable and

accessible in Ontario through the appropriate provincial government program."

ACCESS TO PERSONAL HEALTH RECORDS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour to present this petition. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Canadians living with diabetes have the right to affordable and timely access to prescribed devices and insurance coverage, and that governments have the responsibility to guarantee fair access to devices and supplies to all Canadians, no matter what their income or where they live; and

“Whereas government coverage of continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors is increasing internationally but is not available in Canada; and

“Whereas the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee (OHTAC) has made final and draft recommendations for continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors respectively;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure advanced glucose monitoring techniques such as CGM and FGM are affordable and accessible in Ontario through the appropriate provincial government program.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Daniel to deliver to the Clerks.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Julian.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Joel Harden: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas Canadians living with diabetes have the right to affordable and timely access to prescribed devices and insurance coverage, and that governments have the responsibility to guarantee fair access to devices and supplies to all Canadians, no matter what their income or where they live; and

“Whereas government coverage of continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors is increasing internationally but is not available in Canada; and

“Whereas the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee (OHTAC) has made final and draft recommendations for continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors respectively;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure advanced glucose monitoring technologies such as CGM and FGM are affordable and

accessible in Ontario through the appropriate provincial government program.”

I’m pleased to sign this, and I’ll be giving it to page Alexandra for the Clerks’ table.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I, too, have a very, very important petition to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

“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;

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

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

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

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

This has been signed by my constituents. I will affix my signature to it as well and give it to page Visakan to bring to the table.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Canadians living with diabetes have the right to affordable and timely access to prescribed devices and insurance coverage, and that governments have the responsibility to guarantee fair access to devices and supplies to all Canadians, no matter what their income or where they live; and

“Whereas government coverage of continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors is increasing internationally but is not available in Canada; and

“Whereas the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee (OHTAC) has made final and draft recommendations for continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors respectively;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure advanced glucose monitoring technologies such as CGM and FGM are affordable and accessible in Ontario through the appropriate provincial government program.”

I support this petition, I’m happy to affix my signature and I’m going to hand it to page Luke to table with the Clerks.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Mike Harris: I have a very important petition to read to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario today.

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

“Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (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’ve already affixed my signature to this and will pass it to page Julian to bring to the table.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I would like to read a petition about juvenile diabetes. I’d like to thank Kari Everson and her daughter, Maya, for signing the petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Canadians living with diabetes have the right to affordable and timely access to prescribed devices and insurance coverage, and governments have the responsibility to guarantee fair access to devices and supplies to all Canadians, no matter what their income or where they live; and

“Whereas government coverage of continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors is increasing internationally but is not available in Canada; and

“Whereas the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee (OHTAC) has made final and draft recommendations for continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors respectively;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure advanced glucose monitoring technologies such as CGM and FGM are affordable and accessible in Ontario through the appropriate provincial government program.”

I fully support the petition, will sign my name and send it to the Clerk with page Daniel.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Ms. Christine Hogarth: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the current law in the province of Ontario does not require amber warning lights on school buses as part of an eight-lamp system, despite every other province in Canada requiring their use by law;

“Whereas motorists are educated and experienced with the use of amber lights meaning ‘caution’ and red lights meaning ‘stop’;

“Whereas the current law makes the use of buses from Ontario less safe when travelling out of province or into the United States since motorists in those areas are familiar with amber warning lights;

“Whereas all buses manufactured since 1 January 2005 are equipped with an eight-lamp system which can transition to amber lenses with very little cost;

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

“That the Highway Traffic Act, section 175 and regulation 612, be amended to require the use of amber lights as part of an amber and red eight-lamp system in school buses in the province of Ontario and that amber lenses must be installed in all school buses as soon as practical after coming into law” in Ontario.

I’ve already affixed my signature to this, and I’m going to give it to Isabella.

DIABETES TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to present this petition that was gathered by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. Their task line is “Improving Lives, Curing Type 1 Diabetes.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Canadians living with diabetes have the right to affordable and timely access to prescribed devices and insurance coverage, and that governments have the responsibility to guarantee fair access to devices and supplies to all Canadians, no matter what their income or where they live; and

“Whereas government coverage of continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors is increasing internationally but is not available in Canada; and

“Whereas the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee (OHTAC) has made final and draft recommendations for continuous glucose monitors and flash glucose monitors respectively;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure advanced glucose monitoring technologies such as CGM and FGM are affordable and accessible in Ontario through the appropriate provincial government program.”

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

ADDICTION SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I'll sign my name to the petition and give it to page Visakan.

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 26, 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): When we last left off debate, we left off with the member from Beaches–East York. You still have time, so back to the member from Beaches–East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you, Speaker. It's an honour to be able to continue to address the House on this incredibly important issue.

For those of you who weren't watching yesterday or weren't in the House yesterday, let me briefly recap. As a nerd and an academic, I am all in favour of centres of excellence. I think they're crucial. They bring together

people who have different perspectives. They allow different perspectives to come to bear on crucial issues, and you end up with better outcomes.

I'm also all in favour of holding opioid companies to account for the deaths and the harm and the pain and suffering that they've wrought on up to millions of people at this point. However, the point that I was making yesterday, and I want to pick up on it, is that it's not enough to do that and to not take care of the carnage that is occurring on the front line. So for me, it's absolutely imperative to get in there and to triage the deaths and the heartache and the pain that is happening right now across the country and across the province.

1540

I want to say that over the last months as part of the Black caucus, we were doing deputations in the summer and really listening to what it is that people need and want. Often it goes beyond the reports that we've seen for years and years and years. Just last night, I was with my colleague the member for Toronto–St. Paul's in her riding, where she did a healing call-in for the community after a number of deaths by gun violence that have taken place. Just last week, I was in London for a panel on the crisis that we're seeing in homelessness.

On top of that, I've started a project that I'm calling Illuminating Poverty, where I've been asking folks who have experienced poverty in any way—and/or homelessness, up to and including homelessness—to share something about their stories with me in any way that they want, anonymously or using their names or using a pseudonym. It can be anything: It can be a rap, it can be a dance, it can be a painting, it can also be a poem or perhaps an interview, in which people share something of their stories in terms of wrestling with poverty, to illuminate the systems, the broader systemic factors that serve to push them into poverty and to make it difficult for them to get out.

While that project is in its early days, something that I am hearing over and over and over and over again—it's kind of like one of those studies that people do, those trials of new medications where the results are so absolutely startling that you can't wait until the whole study is over to talk about it. What people are saying over and over and over again, and they were saying it again last night, is that there are two things that are absolutely crucial: The first is affordable housing and the second is mental health supports. Those things are absolutely crucial in terms of keeping people out of poverty and of healing trauma when it first occurs or mental health issues when they first appear, so that they do not compound.

One of the things I was saying yesterday was that when people don't get the mental health supports that they desperately need, they will end up self-medicating, because as humans we do our very best to avoid extreme pain. So when we don't provide people with the mental health supports they need, when people experience trauma for any reason—including violence against women; I think that's really important to emphasize again, as we're in this time of year where we pay special attention to gendered

violence and violence that women experience as we're heading into the period up to the December 6 memorial. It's really important. When women do not get and people do not get the mental health supports that they need, then they spiral and then issues that could have been taken care of relatively easily quickly spiral very fast out of control and compound, and all of sudden you're seeing people who are into very deep poverty, people who are often experiencing homelessness, people whose mental health is made worse by addictions.

In my role as the critic for poverty and homelessness, I visited a lot of shelters and respite centres and drop-in centres, and they're all ostensibly different things, but given this crisis in homelessness that we're facing, they're all serving the same kinds of purpose. Everybody will tell me that most of their clients—or “guests,” as they call them—are facing mental health issues, and in the vast majority of those cases, those mental health issues are compounded by addictions issues. A lot of that has to do with the fact that those mental health supports that people need are just not available.

Once you compound all of this—homelessness itself creates trauma, and the trauma of homelessness compounds the whole issue—then it is that much more difficult to get people back onto a stable footing whereby they can conduct their lives housed and being able to take one of the jobs that the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services talks about all the time.

In short, we do ourselves a disservice as a province when we don't invest in those mental health supports up front. And of course, with the opioid crisis, I think it would really, really help if we did call it what it is, an emergency and a crisis, and did what we need to do, whether that's releasing additional emergency funds—treat it like a natural disaster, and release whatever emergency funds are necessary to make sure that we have the overdose prevention sites, that we are getting a clean supply out there so that people stop overdosing from fentanyl. Do the things that the people who are working on the streets and in the front lines are telling us over and over and over again we need to do. It's crucial in terms of fighting poverty. It's crucial in terms of fighting homelessness. It's crucial in terms of fighting gun violence. Again, folks who deal in the worlds where people are struggling on the ground with gun violence will tell you that these two things—getting people into stable, dignified housing and getting them the mental health supports they need—are absolutely crucial pieces. It doesn't help us to have more policing if we don't have these two crucial pieces in place.

Not only is it good for the individuals concerned, but of course it will help Ontario's economy, which right now is being hit by somewhere between \$27 billion and \$33 billion a year as the cost of poverty. We need to get people off the streets; we need to get them out of hospitals and we need to get them out of jails, which are really, really expensive ways of caring for them. We need to get them into stable housing. We need to get them the mental health supports that they need, and we need to make sure we have the resources, the overdose prevention sites and the harm

reduction methodologies to make sure that all of that can come to pass.

Thank you very much. It's been an honour to be able to lay these ideas out before the House. I look forward to the debate and hope that they will be taken up.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for her comments. I thought there were a number of interesting things that she mentioned.

I remember one of your first speeches. The member from Beaches–East York mentioned how refugees coming here often suffer from trauma because of their experiences. You mentioned trauma again—not today, but in the earlier part of your speech yesterday. It certainly is a significant issue. It does raise a lot of mental health concerns. I think being aware of that and trying to find the appropriate treatments to help people who come from a different background, perhaps—some people coming here are from war zones where they have been traumatized. I think that was the context that you had mentioned in one of your first speeches in this House, which I do remember because it struck me at the time that this issue is very important. It's one of those things we have to look at.

Some of the other things that you mentioned include supportive housing and how important it is to get people into a place where they can find some stability, so they can start to help themselves get better. We certainly recognize that, and we've put more money into supportive housing. I think there are many ministries that have a piece of that supportive housing issue, and we're all trying to work across ministries to make sure that we have the appropriate supportive housing available. There is never enough. Just like there's not enough affordable housing, there is never enough supportive housing. It is a very large, expensive thing to invest in. But we're trying to make sure that we maximize our investments by providing rent supplements when that is the way to assist, or actual designated housing which is supportive.

1550

Those are two very important points that I think you mentioned, and I just wanted to thank you for your comments.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Beaches–East York for her comments. I think her identifying that supports are necessary is so incredibly vital to this issue. When we don't have supports in place, we see lives that can spiral out of control and problems compounding and such things as poverty and homelessness. It's all related to addictions and to mental health.

But I would change one of your comments. You mentioned that the opioid epidemic is a natural disaster. I would say it's a human disaster.

It's absolutely unbelievable that we've seen this government talk about having a cap of 21 sites across the province and then dial that back down to 15, when we know that this is, like the member from Beaches–East

York has said, a public health emergency and needs to be named as one.

I think about a friend of mine—and I'm going to change her name because I do not have her permission to use it in the chamber. Her name is Louise. I used to work with her. She had a wonderful life. She had a loving husband. She had kids. She had a house. She was a nurse. She hurt her back, as many nurses do, with all of the heavy lifting that they do. She became addicted to opioids.

Opioids do not care about your address. They do not care about your name. They do not care about your postal code. Addiction does not care.

Really, we need this issue to not be a political kickball, but that's what we've seen in London North Centre—we've seen a permanent site that was approved, then it was removed, then it was brought back onto the table again.

I'd like to congratulate Regional HIV/AIDS Connection for their wonderful work within the London community, because we are struggling, and they're doing phenomenal, caring work. It is an example of exemplary leadership, something we should also see from this province.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's a privilege to be able to rise and speak in response to the comments from the member for Beaches–East York, who spoke quite passionately and eloquently about the importance of these supports. I want to thank her for her contribution this afternoon. It's so vital to hear from people who have a wide variety of perspectives and who come from different places, not only geographically, but from different backgrounds and lived experiences. The priority of having a Legislature is hearing from people who have had those different lived experiences.

I know from my family history, as well, that mental health can create significant challenges. It can have significant challenges for people's ability to work, people's ability to interact with their family and their friends, and people's ability to be engaged and have healthy lives.

We are realizing, of course, as we talk more and more about these issues, that it's only when we adequately address them through the types of increased funding and supports that our government is bringing into place—and also through structural changes. It's so important to address some of the structural issues, as well.

At the end of the day, we recognize that funds are important, but money doesn't solve everything. Throwing money at a situation without addressing the ways that those funds are being allocated efficiently, in ways that address the most marginalized in society and address the most significant challenges, especially when it comes to mental health and addictions, is not a wise way to proceed. That is why I'm proud to see this legislation that looks at centres of excellence and talks about ways we can address people when and where they're at, and makes sure that those funds are being responsibly allocated, and not just allocated in ways that might not help those who are most in need.

I appreciate that the minister has done so much work on this and that our parliamentary assistant has done so much work on this.

I want to commend the member opposite for speaking from her place about what this means to her and her community—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Further questions and comments?

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to thank my colleague from Beaches–East York for her very thoughtful remarks on this issue. She touched on a couple of things that I think are particularly relevant, and those are the intersections of poverty and housing with mental health and addictions.

My colleague and I were able to tour one of the respite centres in my riding together a few weeks back, and it was a heartbreaking tour. It was an organization that's doing absolutely fantastic work, but it's one of many of what we're now calling 24-hour respite centres that we're opening in our city because we have a housing crisis, our shelters are all at capacity and there's nowhere for anyone to go. So we are now warehousing people on—you don't even get a bed anymore. They're putting people in chairs and on tables.

When you think about what it's like to spend every night of your life sleeping in a room in a chair, where the lights are maybe a little bit dimmed but not all the way out, in a room with 50 to 80 people, and the kind of stress that that would put you under, and how tired you would be all of the time, and to be in those interpersonal conflicts that are inevitable when you're sharing a room with 50 to 80 other people every night—that's not real housing. It's not even a mat on the floor, is where we're at in this crisis.

Think about how that stress would compound your pre-existing mental health and addiction issues that you're dealing with, and how much worse it's making it, the trauma that people are feeling when they end up in these second-tier shelters that we've created, these respite centres that, like I said, are doing fantastic work and the best that they can with the resources they've been given. But we are at a crisis point.

It's not just services in mental health and addictions. We need to be addressing the housing crisis. There is nowhere for anyone to go, and it's making things worse.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Beaches–East York for her final comments.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you so much to the members from Eglinton–Lawrence, London North Centre, Niagara West and Toronto Centre for your thoughtful contributions.

I want to make a couple of comments to the member from London North Centre. Yes, of course, this is a human disaster. The reason I raised natural disasters is because sometimes it's easier for people to think about what does it mean to release funds when there's been a natural disaster. I think it's important to understand that we are dealing with human and human-made disasters that are of the same magnitude and require the same heartfelt, immediate response that natural disasters get.

With regard to the question of trauma, thank you so much to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for remembering those comments that I made. The trauma that people come with from conflict-afflicted areas is significant. They're incredible survivors, and they manage to get on despite that trauma. But it never allows them to come to their full potential. When you don't get that addressed, it does compound over time, even if you have built relatively successful lives and relatively stable lives.

As the member from Toronto Centre was just describing, that is exactly the kind of trauma that people experience when they end up homeless and on the streets. Those are the folks who are lucky. The folks that my colleague was describing are the lucky folks, because many people can't get into shelters or respite centres or drop-ins. They're afraid to, if they are women, and often are, there are extremely dangerous situations that occur outside. I also think that the trauma that people experience in violent, abusive situations that push them out onto the streets sometimes gets overlooked.

In short: housing and mental health; housing and mental health; housing and mental health.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise today to participate in the debate on Bill 116, An Act to enact the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence Act and the Opioid Damages and Health Costs Recovery Act.

I'd like to start by saying that, on principle, I support the establishment of a Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence, especially if the goal is to integrate mental health within our broader health care system. Mental health experts tell me, and people who are experiencing mental health challenges each and every day tell me, that this is an important step to providing wrap-around services at the community level. It's clear that mental health is health and should be part of our health care system. It can no longer be treated as a separate entity outside of our broader health care system. We have to break down the silos so that mental health is fully integrated into our health care system, especially at the primary health and community health levels.

So yes, let's establish a centre for mental health and addictions excellence, but we cannot allow this to become a symbolic move that sounds good on paper but does little for addressing the mental health crisis. The abysmal lack of mental health services pushes so many people onto the streets, putting pressure on our social services, our health care system, our police and our criminal justice system.

1600

Guelph's recently retired police chief summed it up well, I think, when he said that we will not arrest our way out of the mental health and addictions crisis. Rising levels of poverty and a lack of access to affordable housing compound the challenges people are facing. The lack of mental health services puts people on a ridiculous loop of being discharged and then readmitted to hospital on a regular basis, getting caught between the different systems and never actually receiving the treatment people deserve and need.

We've experienced a 54% increase in emergency room visits for children and youth seeking treatment for mental health issues just in the past decade alone, so we need to ensure that this centre of excellence is funded properly. Yet in this year's budget, the amount of money actually being allocated for mental health services was reduced by \$335 million compared to the 2018 budget. So while I support the government's efforts to increase funding for mental health services, they should do it within the time frame of their mandate and not stretch it out over 10 years.

Last spring I had the opportunity to meet a young man while I was canvassing the streets of Guelph. I asked him how he was doing, and he said to me, "You know, Mike, I'm actually doing well today. I received a call last night from a suicide prevention worker and I'm feeling okay today, but I really needed that call eight months ago when I was on a suicide watch list."

Speaker, it's unacceptable that 12,000 children in this province are on a wait-list to access mental health services. It's also unacceptable that people are dying due to increased rates of suicide and opioid overdoses. As a matter of fact, it breaks my heart that 459 people in Ontario died of an overdose in just the first eight months of this year alone.

So yes, let's give the government another tool to fight the overdose crisis by authorizing actions against opioid manufacturers. I support this, Speaker. But the government also has a responsibility to take action to save lives now. It can't make funding dependent on revenues from future court cases that are not guaranteed. The government must open new supervised consumption sites now and lift the caps on supervised consumption sites so that we can save people's lives now. I know the member from Peterborough–Kawartha just read a petition precisely on this issue preceding this debate.

I'm fortunate to live in a community, Guelph, where the community health centre has a consumption and treatment services site that is helping to save lives now. I want people in communities all across Ontario to have access to harm reduction services that provide them with access to treatment services for their addiction.

Mr. Speaker, I say that this bill does take us an important step forward. As a matter of fact, I want to give a shout-out to a young person in my riding, Noah Irvine, who has been a strong advocate for mental health services in Ontario and across Canada. He has been calling for a ministry of mental health and addictions, so the fact that we now have an associate ministry, that we now have a centre of excellence being brought forward—those are good steps forward, but it won't be enough if we don't adequately fund mental health services, if we don't provide funding for supportive housing and if we don't address poverty in this province, all of those linking together to contribute to the crisis that we're facing.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I appreciate the comments from the member from Guelph. I particularly relate to his comments about how mental health is an issue that spans so many different ministries within the government.

I had the chance last week to meet with representatives from university and college student associations, who talked about mental health challenges on campuses. I had the opportunity, through my role as parliamentary assistant, to meet with countless parents of children with developmental disabilities—either their children are dealing with mental health issues or they themselves as caregivers are dealing with mental health issues.

This is an issue that's going to require so many different pieces, and we need pieces of legislation like this to really take the lead. That's why I'm so excited to see us establishing this centre of excellence that will provide a hub to make sure that we're looking at best practices.

We're really fortunate to have a minister for mental health and addictions who has not only worked in this field for most of his professional career but who's also doing research in this field as we speak, looking into recidivism rates and studying the damaging impacts of addictions and how we can best support people to overcome these challenges. I'm incredibly confident with him at the helm of this ministry, working together across parties, across ministries and right across this province to make sure that the supports are there to help individuals dealing with mental health challenges and addictions.

Mr. Speaker, it's something that, right from the moment I started running for election—I remember that in debates, every single party got up and we all wanted to address this issue. It's good that now we're seeing this first piece of legislation that will set us on a strong path to tackle this.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: It is always an honour to rise on behalf of my riding of Scarborough Southwest. As I meet with constituents every week, mental health is one of the issues that comes up almost every week, at least once.

All the members who have been speaking in the House—I want to thank the member from Guelph for his comments because he really brought the idea of all ministries working together in terms of fixing this issue. This isn't just about one age group—especially youth—right now who are facing this challenge. It's a crisis, and we need to do a lot better.

We're also talking about mental health when it comes to the issues that we face, whether it's the crime in our cities and the way mental health intersects with that and how we can make sure we help people with the support they need so that they don't end up in places like prison. Sometimes that's not the place where they should end up because if we had provided the right supports, they would not be there in the first place.

The other issue is housing. As my colleague the member from Beaches–East York pointed out, housing is such a big problem, especially for people with mental health issues when it comes to a lot of people who end up in hospital sometimes and then don't have a place to go. We need to do a lot better in terms of providing housing, providing that support, because a lot of these people who don't get the mental health supports at the right time end up in hospital.

We know that the cost of health care is high. We know that we're already facing a crisis when it comes to hallway medicine, but if we are to actually be proactive and provide the support that we need for mental health, we would save costs when it comes to our health care.

Definitely this is a huge issue, and not just for Scarborough Southwest but province-wide and Canada-wide. We need to do a lot better.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I want to thank the member from Guelph for his comments that he made this afternoon in the Legislature. I want to point to one specific point that he raised, and that is that we have to break down the silos if we're going to make any progress treating mental health and addictions in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share with you a conversation I had with our own Minister of Health shortly after we were elected. She was telling me about the unique challenges that both she and her ministry faced as they worked towards designing a plan moving forward that would tackle all of these unique challenges that people who have addictions and people who have mental health problems face, and she shared with me conversations that she had with mental health professionals who insisted that the right approach must include a wraparound approach. It had to have multi levels of support. It couldn't simply be treating one aspect of mental health or just the addiction.

1610

Bill 116 does just that. This act is a broad approach to treating what is becoming a crisis in Ontario. Not only have we increased funding to the tune of billions of dollars—an unprecedented amount of dollars now allocated towards the treatment of mental health and addictions—but we are approaching it in a more fulsome way. We are going to be looking at how we can reduce wait times to access these services; providing adequate, affordable housing; expanding the number of beds that we now have available in our hospitals; creating additional support programs for people who face mental health issues.

That's why I stand here very proud and very much in support of Bill 116. I think it is the right approach, the wraparound approach, to dealing with mental health and addictions.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm going to talk about the addiction portion of this bill.

How we got to this opioid crisis is, I don't think the manufacturers of this drug did the proper research. I think there's a horrible, horrible neglect—that this drug was created and the education around it wasn't streamlined to medical professionals who prescribe this drug, and now people are experiencing addiction to the point where people are dying, people's lives are ruined. They've lost families. They've lost their homes.

I will give you an example. A woman came in, and her son is addicted. He's an adult, and there's nothing she can

do for him. When he was ready to go to rehab, he reached out to the mental health and addictions organization that helps people with addictions—and because there's a gap between when you're ready to get into rehab and when a bed is available, you lose people who are ready for treatment. It's a vicious cycle.

We need to do better. When people are on their addiction path, ready for that treatment, we need to have those services step up when they need them. Otherwise, we lose them and they're back in the cycle of addiction. It's sad because families are suffering, along with the people who have this illness. Addiction is an illness. It's a disease.

So this is somewhat of a step forward, but we really need to make sure the funds that happen through lawsuits that this government is exploring get put into front-line care, where it's needed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return to the member from Guelph for his final comments.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to thank the members from Ottawa West–Nepean, Scarborough Southwest, Flamborough–Glanbrook and London–Fanshawe for participating in the debate.

One of the common threads I heard throughout the responses is the need for integrated and wraparound services. I think that's something all parties can agree on. We probably disagree on how much funding and how accelerated that funding should be, but we need to take some moments to find common ground—and wraparound services, I think, is one of those.

I want to tell a quick story that, to me, highlights the fact that money invested in making sure those integrated services go beyond health care, but also include supportive housing and poverty alleviation, is so critically important. I'll give you a quick example of this. I was at the Drop In Centre recently, having a conversation, and the person said to me, "I'm facing addiction issues. I'm struggling with poverty because I've recently lost my job. I'm living in a tent, and it's starting to get cold. I'm going to deliberately commit a crime so I will go to jail, because it's warm there." The cost of dealing with somebody in the criminal justice system far outweighs the cost of dealing with poverty and providing supportive housing in the first place. There were others at that table saying the exact same thing.

If we're going to consider ourselves a compassionate society and a fiscally responsible society, then we have to provide the investments to alleviate poverty, to provide supportive housing and to address mental health and addictions issues.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: We've had a number of people talk so far today about Bill 116. If it's passed, one of the things that we're trying to do with this is to improve the mental health and addiction supports available throughout Ontario.

When you take a look at the situation that we are in now, this is not something that has occurred over the course of the last year or two; this is something that has

been building for a number of years, and it hasn't been addressed appropriately. I don't want to lay blame on anyone. I think that everyone comes into government trying to do the right thing, but the reality is we, as a province, have made a number of mistakes and we've had a number of different approaches that don't work.

One of the things we're trying to do with this is that we will establish a centre of excellence for mental health and addictions. I want to talk specifically about something that the Peterborough police chief talked about. Prior to becoming the chief in Peterborough, he was at 52 division. While at 52 division—that's the precinct that actually polices this area—he saw a lot of things happen and a lot of initiatives, and he described them as cylinders of excellence, not centres of excellence, because they were cylinders that didn't see outside of themselves. He talked about how in Toronto they would do things at different precincts differently, and they all thought they had the right approach, but none of them were really sharing their information, none of them were sharing what their best practices were, and they were duplicating a number of things, they were trying a number of different ways, and none of it was working.

With a centre of excellence, what it will do for us is it will open those avenues so that we have the ability then to share and have those best practices and do the research in one location so that we discover what is going to work well, and implement those things across the province. It's a novel idea, but it shouldn't be a novel idea. It should be something that we are doing and have been doing, but the reality is we haven't been.

I think that the approach that we're trying to take with this now with Bill 116 is we're setting the groundwork for that so that all the good work that's being done in different areas of the province, we can draw upon that and we can use that to help the people, because it really is all about the people.

I'm going to talk about a couple of things specific to my riding. The member from Guelph mentioned that I stood up and I read a petition on the consumption and treatment site for the city of Peterborough. As of this month, we have 26 confirmed opioid deaths. In a community of 85,000, it is a lot. Those are the ones that are confirmed. There are more that we suspect, but we have 26 that are confirmed.

The Hollywood image of the addict is that homeless individual who is a drug addict stuck in an alley someplace. That's not the reality in Ontario, and it is definitely not the reality in the city of Peterborough. Having the wraparound services, having a location that is inviting, that has treatment options, that's one of the ways that we're going to save people.

I've made this statement publicly a number of times, and I will stand behind it: No one ever got well by getting high. I think that sharing those best practices around treatment, discovering what works well, and giving people the ability to come and get that treatment is what's going to make the difference.

1620

The reason I brought up the Hollywood image of the addict—this is a scary statistic from my community: 26

confirmed opioid deaths. Twenty-one occurred in their residence—82% of the deaths were in their home. These are not people who would be going to a safe injection site, but if we had treatment options for them, we may be able to get them to go for treatment options, and that's how we're going to save people's lives.

I'm going to talk about one individual who passed away prior to me being elected; it was the month before I was elected. His name is Keagan Carson. Keagan was a teenager. Keagan had his whole life ahead of him. He struggled with addiction for a short period of time. Keagan was the nephew of a good friend of mine, Sally Carson. Keagan was the grandson of the chief of police of the Lakefield Police Service, when the Lakefield Police Service existed. If the grandson of the chief of police can find himself in a position where he is addicted and dies, anyone can find themselves in that position.

The second person I'd like to talk about is also the son of a friend of mine. Mitchell Pogue was in his mid-twenties. He was a volunteer firefighter. He had a wife and a child on the way. Mitchell struggled with some mental health challenges. He was a star athlete when he was in high school and he was your typical young male who didn't want to ask for help. He bottled it up, he kept it inside, because he was a guy and he could work through it. Mitchell committed suicide as a result of his mental health challenges.

We have a lasting impact from it, though. His father, Dave Pogue, started a program in Peterborough called Team 55. Mitchell played football; his number was 55. With that program, they have been doing work at the Peterborough regional hospital for people who are having mental health challenges, people who are having suicidal thoughts. When they're referred to that program, someone follows up with them the next day. They follow up with them immediately; there is a second phone call 24 hours later. They work with the individual and let them know that their life is valuable. One hundred and ninety-six people have gone through that program, and 196 of them are still alive.

Things like that, those types of stories, need to be told because it reminds us why we're here. We are here to make the lives of the people in Ontario better. We're here to serve them. We're here to find ways to improve their lives and let them know they're not alone, and we can do more.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sharing my time with the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. I don't want to eat into his time too much, so my last comment will be that I truly hope that everyone in this House stands in unity and recognizes that we need to do more. We need to start that process of helping those people and recognize that we can.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing with that debate, I recognize the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last few months, I have been dealing with the complex and heart-wrenching case of a 14-year-old child who was admitted to hospital for treatment due to an undiagnosed mental health condition. The constituent, who is a recent

refugee from Iraq, has been suffering in silence for years. She has been prescribed medication, treated without care, and sadly, even after admission to hospital, doctors and nurses dismissed the case as nothing but teenage angst. But soon after admission to hospital in north Toronto, this child lost 14 pounds in two weeks. She became very much uncommunicative with her family and the medical team taking care of her health. Most importantly, both the child and her family have lost faith in ever finding the help required to ensure that this young woman returns to her daily life.

Another difficult case I dealt with over the summer was of a middle-aged man who had for years suffered from mental health and addiction issues. He had been in and out of hospitals, homeless shelters and mental health facilities virtually his entire adult life. He had suffered along with his entire family. Eventually, his mother could not deal with the violent outbursts and other problems that came with his illness. She was forced to have the police remove him from their home in order to feel a sense of calm and security.

I stand in this House thinking of the two cases mentioned and the lack of support and vulnerability that the families of these sufferers felt as they attempted to navigate a system that was foreign and alien to most patients and their families, a system that has mixed results for Ontario patients. Sometimes families have felt hopeless and, sadly, without a way to find healing and stability for their loved ones. I mention these cases not to disparage the hard work and the dedication of health care professionals in Ontario, nor do I mention the stories above to highlight a case or two over many others; I mention the stories above to highlight the urgent need for change to ensure that people with mental health conditions do not fall through the cracks.

When elected, the government committed to the largest investment in mental health care in Ontario's history. Bill 116 is one of the ways in which our government is helping address some of the problems facing the most vulnerable in our society and in our province. The proposed Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence will lay the strong foundation we need as a province as we develop and implement our mental health and addiction strategy.

I know from personal experience that when dealing with families facing mental health and addictions, the system can seem daunting, and the complexity of these conditions puts a strain on those trying to take care of the individual patients. The families of these patients suffer along with their loved ones, and require the emotional and community support needed to ensure that everyone finds healing when seeking help from our system. This is why we are going to ensure that compassionate care is at the centre of our mental health system.

1630

We as a government committed to putting a plan forward that would invest \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years, to develop and implement a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions strategy to ensure that families and patients in Ontario are treated properly and

without the delays that we as a province came to expect from 15 years of failed policies from the previous Liberal government.

For example, in an opinion piece written for the CBC by Adam Kassam in 2018, he wrote, “The majority of our challenges are due to a combination of government inaction and a wilful go-it-alone philosophy. The growing need for mental health services has been addressed at a glacial pace....”

This government is acting, and acting quickly, to ensure that the failed policies of the previous government are not repeated. This government is listening to professionals, patients and families of those affected by mental health and addiction. We are also aware that those problems cannot be solved by waving a magic wand. As a result, we are working hard to ensure that, while we work to solve problems associated with mental health and addiction, we need to work on patient care and the experience of those seeking help from our health care system, regardless of where they might live in this province.

The first step to solving our challenges in a system as complex as mental health and addictions requires data, performance indicators and common infrastructure to share evidence and set service expectations. Our centre of excellence will provide us with these exact tools. The goal of this work is to standardize the quality and delivery of mental health and addiction services across Ontario, and to provide a better and more reliable patient experience.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to a centralized centre of excellence, we know that Ontario families are suffering from the opioid crisis, which has been harmful not only to those using the drugs but to our society as a collective. We have lost far too many individuals in communities around Ontario to the scourge of opioid addiction. I know that people in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt have spoken to me about their experiences as they navigated a system with their loved ones due to mental health and addiction illnesses. They have said it is not working for their loved ones.

We as a government have heard the people of Ontario loud and clear. They are demanding action against those who manufactured and distributed addictive opioids. It would allow Ontario to join British Columbia in legal action against those that manufactured and distributed those substances in our province.

Any award from these lawsuits will be invested in mental health and addiction supports in communities across Ontario. We are restoring respect to taxpayers and their hard-earned dollars, and we will ensure that the manufacturers and distributors responsible will pay for this litigation through awards and settlements.

Finally, I want to assure those living in Scarborough–Agincourt and everyone else in this great province that we are listening and we are taking action to help ensure that the most vulnerable in our communities are protected by the actions we will take if Bill 116 passes. To the child in the hospital and the family of the middle-aged man seeking support for their mental health conditions: We have heard you loud and clear, and we will help you find healing and support.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to join the debate, and I want to thank my colleagues.

I want to thank the member from Peterborough for relating those stories of young kids in his riding he has a connection to that have succumbed to mental health issues. I know that that hurts you and that hurts your friends and your community. Thanks for doing that.

I also want to thank him and congratulate him—we’ve chatted before—on his courage to stand up and to present petitions on behalf of his community to address the opioid crisis. I don’t know if he’s an outlier in his party, but I think he’s putting forward a pathway for other members to follow.

When we’re in our communities, we hear concerns from people about a whole host of issues, whether they be a cure for cancer or new technologies to deal with climate change or innovative new technologies and scientific advancements to deal with the world’s most pressing issues. Members of our community hope—and they say, “I hope somebody’s working on that. I hope they’re working on that. We all hope that they’re working on those issues.” When we talk about addictions and mental health, we’re the “they” that those people are referring to, in this House. It’s our obligation to do everything that we can and take these issues so seriously that they have a real, tangible effect on our community.

Unfortunately, Speaker, when I look at this bill, I don’t see those effects. I see so many gaps in the policies and the actions of this government when it comes to addressing the mental health crisis, when it comes to addressing the addiction crisis. It’s just even simply in their aversion to supporting safe injection sites in our communities—the cuts to funding to safe injection sites.

I hope the members will find the courage, as my colleague from Peterborough has, and not be outliers but join the mainstream in calling for what we know works, which is direct intervention from upper levels of government.

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: With pride, I stand to comment on the members from Peterborough–Kawartha and Scarborough–Agincourt.

It’s heartfelt when you hear some of the issues that he talked about, with the people he knows in his own riding. I would think that everybody in this House has a friend or a family member or knows of somebody who has serious issues with mental health. Unfortunately, it’s such a common issue, a common problem, these days that it’s hard to be involved in the community at all without knowing somebody who’s having serious problems.

I know that society is grappling with ways to actually have an impact and actually change the lives of people who are suffering—and families. These families are looking for help, and in this bill, we talk about a centre of excellence. I think that’s a great start. It’s going to share best practices around the province.

I know that in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, we built a centre for all of the mental health agencies to meet and to work out of, just north of the hospital, on McConnell. What a great idea: to bring all of the groups together, so that if you're dealing with a patient, it allows them to go down the hall. They've got the expert therapy that they need. It's not a matter of rescheduling in a new building in a different site. It was a model for the province that the former government actually put in place.

With that, I know that funding is an issue. I have friends who have come in and have looked for a solution, only to be turned down. So we are looking at it. We're matching the federal level for funding for mental health. We're really looking to making a difference. So I look forward to looking back in a few years at this centre of excellence just to see the positive impact it has on our society.

1640

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's really a pleasure to get up to speak today, on behalf of my community of Davenport, about the bill. I want to start by mentioning schedule 2 of this legislation, Opioid Damages and Health Costs Recovery Act, which really follows on the leadership of the NDP government in British Columbia in allowing Ontario to join in on a class action lawsuit. I think that's obviously a great direction for us to head in. I will mention, though, that, like a lot of this bill, words are just words, and unfortunately, although the Attorney General has made some comments to this effect, there really is no provision in this bill for the Ontario government to redirect compensation from any successful lawsuit to the front-line care and resources we are going to need to address the opioid crisis.

I've got to say, I'm past sad; I'm mad. My community is mad. We have people dying. I know that it's happening in communities across this province and we're all upset and we're all trying to do the right thing. I believe that. But this bill really just does not go far enough. I'm really disappointed.

Things that we should be talking about:

- restoring the \$330-million annual cut to mental health and addictions services;

- removing the completely arbitrary caps on overdose prevention sites and ensuring that all communities that want those life-saving services are able to apply for them;

- restoring funding for the six overdose prevention sites that had their funding cut;

- declaring the opioid crisis what it is, a public health emergency;

- consulting on and implementing an evidence-based pain management strategy for Ontario;

- reconvening the provincial Opioid Emergency Task Force.

These are tangible things we could be doing today.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: It's great to be able to stand up here and provide some comment today on this bill.

I wanted to thank the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for raising some important issues. This is something that affects everybody. We've all had friends, family, people who are close to us, who struggle with mental health issues. Often, those lead to addiction issues. To be able to make sure that people are getting the necessary treatment for these things is critically important. I've had some very close family members who have struggled with these issues. Often, they don't want to hear it from their family—you're not the ones who are going to help them. You need to have professional help that's outside the realm, that's going to be there to help support them, build them up and get them back to where they need to be. It's critically important.

I think we are all working towards the same path. Ten years ago, we wouldn't be standing here having these conversations in the Legislature. This is something that was swept under the rug for a very, very long time. So I think for us to be having legitimate, real, constructive conversation here today about this bill really lends to how we are all here—as government members, as opposition members, as independent members—to work for our constituents and do what's best for the people of this province.

I'm really happy that we are going to be moving forward in debate with this bill. Obviously, I want to see it come to fruition. A centre of excellence is something that we certainly need here in Ontario. When you look at centres of excellence in other jurisdictions and some of the other government agencies that these are modelled after, they've been really successful. So I'm very excited to see something like this happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for his final comments.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to start by thanking the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for sharing the 20 minutes with me. Next, I'd like to thank the members from Essex, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Davenport and Kitchener–Conestoga for their comments.

I'll start with the member from Essex. I appreciate very much his comments because, coming from him, it was almost a compliment, and I will take that as a major win. He's absolutely correct, though. We are the "they." When someone says, "They need to do something," they're talking about us.

The member from Davenport: You made reference to "words are just words." My office in Peterborough is not a constituency office. It's the action centre, because people come to me and they're looking for action, and that is exactly what we are doing: We are taking action.

We have not cut funding for consumption sites. I don't think that the member from Davenport was listening to me when I said, "No one ever got well by getting high." We're focusing on the treatment side, because treatment is what is going to help people. If we can get them to the point where they are no longer addicted, they will live long and productive lives. As long as they are addicted, there is the chance that they will overdose and die. We need to get

them to the point where they have treatment. Words do mean something when you're talking about treatment.

We know that one in five people experience mental health or addiction issues. With the number of people in this room right now, 10 of us—think about that for a moment—10 of us will have a problem in our lifetime.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: It's quite interesting, for me rising to speak to this legislation today. I'll make an attempt, as I've done before in this place, to try to be straight with everyone here.

This legislation hits me personally. It hits me personally because, like the Premier, and, as the member from Peterborough–Kawartha said, probably like other people in this place, I've had family members of my own pass away from drug overdose. This hits me personally. Ever since that happened to our family, our family has been having a debate about what happened, what went wrong, where did we fall short.

One of the reasons I'm happy that the government is following this recommendation to create a centre of excellence is, what I've learned in seven years is that everything I thought I understood about addiction is wrong, completely wrong.

Canada actually has some of the world's leading scientists in the study of addiction. I think about Bruce Alexander in BC. I also think about the great Dr. Gabor Maté, an emergency room physician who has written about the study and science of addiction. What they have said repeatedly in their work is that we have to get beyond the stigma of addiction and thinking that drugs are something that get their hooks into people and ground them and then consume them, and that the way we get people out of addiction is by incenting them through punishment to become sober, and then they'll be better people.

I think of a line from Dr. Maté where he says that the opposite of addiction is not sobriety; the opposite of addiction is connection. When people become disconnected from their sense of self—I think about queer and trans kids in our province and in our country who, for whatever reason, have grown up in a family that doesn't allow them to be themselves. They are rejected by their families, in many cases.

Half the homeless youth in our city in Ottawa are queer and trans kids. They turn to drugs. It's not as if drugs get their hooks into those folks and they're irretrievably addicted because of something some manufacturer did. I know that's part of the puzzle, but there's a bigger piece here. That bigger piece is, in our society, we have so many multiple traumas—my friend the member from Beaches–East York talked about it earlier in the debate—that people are carrying around. When folks use and abuse substances, they are using those substances in an attempt to escape.

The question that I hope this centre of excellence starts to ask—and I know the minister is paying attention. I know you've been involved in treatment, where you're asking this question—in Woodbridge, if I'm correct. We

have to be asking that question: Why do people want to escape? What is wrong with our society, where so many people just want to check out? The experts on addiction, whose works I have read personally since my family has suffered loss, have led me to believe that everything we have thought about with addictions is wrong.

1650

Before I talk about the opioid crisis, which schedule 2 of this bill talks about, I want to talk about other mental health conditions. To me, this centre of excellence doesn't just exist to study the opioid crisis—that's important.

I think about the one million people in our country who live with eating disorders. My partner works in this field. The fact is that some people are starving themselves to death because they hate themselves, or because they've been led to hate themselves—across our country.

Right now in our city, in a fantastic place like the children's hospital, where my partner works, funding has been so restricted to that institution that, in some cases, we are sending some of the sickest kids living with bulimia and anorexia to the United States for treatment in residential care—to the United States. We can't find the wherewithal in our society to look after them here. That's how awful the problem is.

I think about people who are at risk of self-harm through suicide. You can't get access to a publicly funded psychologist in the city of Ottawa, and I'm sure it's true across our province, unless you are at immediate risk of self-harm or at risk of harming others. Then you trigger the first-responder system, and then you trigger an institutional care system. What is going on in our society when that's the case?

I've talked to people on the campus level, where I was a professor at Carleton University—experts who work with so many students who struggle with trauma every day. I talked to people in the community health care and institutional health care environments in Ottawa, and they asked the same question: What are we doing? Why can't we deal with the crises that we face?

I think about Indigenous lands in what we call Ontario, and the suicide crisis in places like Attawapiskat where, at one point in 2016, they lost 12 youth to suicide in a single night—in a single night. I hope this centre for mental health and addictions looks at that and asks themselves what is driving beautiful, Indigenous youth to not only want to escape through an intoxicant, but to want to leave this world entirely. It breaks my heart, and it ought to break all of our hearts.

Moving beyond emotion to action—if this centre will do that, it's fantastic.

I want to now turn to the opioid crisis. Some of the research on this truly alarms me. We have lost 94 people in the city of Ottawa in the past year to opioid-related overdoses—94. Since I walked into this building and tried to start doing my job as a legislator, we have lost 94 people. In the last three years in Canada, we have lost 11,500 people to opioid-related overdoses—11,500 people.

It's so severe that researchers at Statistics Canada are telling us that our life expectancy statistics have been

impacted, and that if you look at some provinces, like British Columbia, life expectancy has decreased because of the number of people who have died from opioid overdoses. We do have a government in British Columbia that is doing a lot of fantastic work on that front. But in the province of Ontario, life expectancy has remained stagnant because of this.

That is how serious this is. That is why when my colleagues get up and say this is a public health emergency, I hope that fact on its own will arrest our attention enough to realize that that is in fact the case.

I want to talk about a few anecdotes from Ottawa Centre that can hopefully point us to some hope.

On November 13, I had the great fortune to attend a public meeting hosted by the Somerset West Community Health Centre. In Ottawa Centre, that is the community health centre that has the one safe injection site. Their meeting was meant to address concerns expressed by the Chinatown business improvement association and the Preston Street business improvement association, which said that they had significant frustrations with the SIS site because a number of their stores had experienced acts of petty theft and vandalism, and a number of clients had had cars broken into. They approached the Somerset West Community Health Centre, who approached Ottawa Public Health, who approached the police of Ottawa, and at St. Luke's church on Somerset Street, they held a meeting to discuss this. It was an interesting meeting, and I think there's a story that comes out of that meeting that will be useful for the centre of excellence to follow.

It was a full church, a full hall. You had members of the business community there, folks who are involved in harm reduction work there, public health, police and myself. Other city councillors like Catherine McKenney and Jeff Leiper were there.

What was fascinating for me to learn is that person after person who are actually directly working with people who are suffering with addictions said the same thing time and again, and it impacts upon schedule 2 of this bill. They said that the major problem we are dealing with with overdose deaths in Ottawa is tainted supply. The people who are selling drugs to our neighbours—drug users are our neighbours; they are not another species of human being, right? They are our neighbours. The people who are selling drugs are selling them tainted products.

I've had off-line discussions with the member from Peterborough—Kawartha. He told me a story about how carfentanil, which is an opioid that's appropriate for large animals like elephants—three granules of this will kill you. Three tiny little pieces of sand of this will kill you. There are operators out there in the illicit market who have no regard for other people, to the extent that they are selling them poisoned substances, and that is the major thing driving people's deaths. The worry about schedule 2 of this bill for me, Speaker, is that there is nothing in schedule 2 to address that—absolutely nothing.

I'm happy that the government wants to join a lawsuit with the province of British Columbia to take on the opioid manufacturers who massively marketed, massively

overproduced and, I think the evidence suggests, misled practitioners. I think that's great. We should do that. But my question, given the 94 people who have died in our community in the last year, is: What are we doing about the people who are poisoned? As I sat there and listened to this meeting on November 13 with rapt attention, I heard person after person say, "The safe injection site is great, because we can watch somebody consume their drugs, and if they overdose we can intervene with a naloxone kit to help them. But we can't help them if the source is poisoned."

And given some of the substances in the opioid market in Ottawa—and, I'm assuming, in supplies across Ontario—a lot of the erratic behaviour business owners were talking about is fed by that. It's absolutely fed by that. When someone has to feed a habit that you can only procure on the illicit market, guess what you do? You break into cars. You break into stores. You engage in sex work. You panhandle. You do whatever you can.

I am not rendering a judgment, by the way, on any of those activities—perfectly understandable activities if you live addicted to a substance in a society that has forgotten about you. You are just a statistic, and I really believe that that's how we're looking at drug users today, Speaker. I absolutely do. Because I look at the listeriosis crisis in this province—when we found out there was tainted meat on the marker and this Legislature compelled major manufacturers like Maple Leaf Foods to take responsibility for that, it was immediate, absolutely immediate, as it should have been. But the amount of people poisoned and killed in the listeriosis crisis or the tainted water crisis in Walkerton pales in comparison to what is happening right now with the opioid crisis, but because we're talking about drug users, we have a different standard for them.

I think we should just say it: Our urgency isn't quite there, and we need to ask why, Speaker. We should ask why, because this is what I heard in this meeting on November 13, where officials from Ottawa Public Health and the Ottawa police—

Interruption.

Interjections: Move your phone.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you—were telling me that we need to make sure that people aren't getting poisoned: "Joel, that's your job. You're going back to Toronto? We want you to tell people that. Your neighbours are being poisoned. There are people in our community with no regard for other people's health. They are selling product to people and they are being poisoned." I met somebody who is an executive member of a community association, who told me about his son being poisoned and dying.

Interestingly, the deputy police chief in our town, in Ottawa, Mr. Bell, got up in this meeting and noted something I just shared with my colleague from London: that London, Ontario, has a pilot where practitioners can actually prescribe safe opioids to people struggling with addictions, so they don't die because of a tainted supply. Sergeant Bell mentioned in this meeting that he was interested in working with me and other politicians and Ottawa Public Health to apply to whomever the funder is

to deal with what he saw: crime driven by addiction issues and people being poisoned. I was absolutely compelled. Here is a guy and the forces in that first response unit that work every day with people who are at risk of self-harm. They have a direct interest in this.

1700

What I hope this centre of excellence will do is look at that London pilot and, if we manage to get a compelling bid together with one of the Ottawa health teams, consider what we're going to propose. At the end of the day, shouldn't government be about making sure people can be their fullest selves? I actually was compelled to think, through that public meeting on November 13, that is what we can do, but we have to get beyond our mental stigma around drug addiction and we have to start looking to our neighbours who use drugs as human beings in need of help.

I'm thinking about something too. I mentioned that the Premier had lost family members to drug overdoses; I had too. I'm thinking about somebody who worked with Mayor Rob Ford here in Toronto: Mark Towhey. A tweet he put out—I believe he's the editor-in-chief of Sun News—evoked a firestorm of response. I want to read it all out so we can think it through. I'm not about to engage in an attack on Mr. Towhey, Speaker, just so I'm clear. I want to understand this. Mr. Towhey wrote:

“Doug Ford is right.

“There is zero point keeping people alive just to suffer in perpetual misery.

“Without more resources for rehabilitation and treatment, safe injection sites are inhumane.

“Invest in treatment & actively refer people from safe injection sites into treatment.”

What I've come to understand since I read this tweet is that Mr. Towhey actually didn't understand the Premier's position, because I've heard members of the government, including the associate minister, talk about the fact that they believe in safe injection sites as playing a positive role.

What I would invite us to consider across the aisle here is to not entertain what I would call either/or thinking. We are not making the case for this government to create more safe injection sites as the solution, but I believe that the city of Thunder Bay deserves a safe injection site. I believe the city of Peterborough—my colleague from that area—deserves a safe injection site. I believe we need to marshal the amount of resources that we possibly can through our public health agencies and mental health professionals to make sure people can make that transition from addiction, not to sobriety, but to connection—and if that involves sobriety, fantastic, but connecting to themselves, connecting to their neighbours, finding a purpose in life again.

That's what I actually think, to an extent, Mr. Towhey was saying. We got lost in the partisan left/right fracas that happens on Twitter. I actually think we need to seize this opportunity, if there is multi-partisan goodwill here, to not only say we need a centre of excellence and we need to sue the opioid manufacturers, but we need to ensure people aren't being poisoned in our communities and we

need to massively ramp up the resources that exist for people to get the mental health supports they absolutely deserve—the people who have fallen into crisis.

I want to talk about resources and getting there, because socialists like me are often accused of having wonderful ideas and no ways to pay for them, right? So I want to talk about resources for a second.

Interjection.

Mr. Joel Harden: The member for Nepean loved that.

What I want to point out, Speaker, is that last Christmas, in 2018, the biggest CEOs in the financial sector, the banking CEOs, awarded themselves bonuses of \$15 billion—that's a “B”. I also want to point out that the top 100 CEOs—chief executives, highly successful people in this country—earned by January 2, 2019, noon on that day, as much as the average Canadian worker does in a whole year. We are presiding at this moment over a massive and yawning gap of income inequality—massive and yawning. I haven't seen anything to date from our government here that would help us make an appeal to folks who do not just have a little but, to my mind, have so much that we are in this building having to make awful decisions: “We have to service the deficit and we have to pay for health care; well, let's cut this and let's cut that.”

Why wouldn't we entertain the idea of a special levy on major companies in this country, for mental health? Why wouldn't we entertain that idea? Why wouldn't we invite them to be not part of a corporate sponsorship campaign called Bell Let's Talk—I think that's fine—but why wouldn't we ask them through a progressive income tax system, to contribute far more? I've talked to executives at home in Ottawa Centre. They are as aware of mental health issues as we are in this place. But nobody in this place dares ask them because it has been religion in this place for decades to not do anything other than lower taxes and make them feel good about how our economy is doing.

Other countries don't work that way, Speaker. Other countries like Portugal moved along the lines of two fronts: decriminalizing all drugs and moving toward a supportive approach to addicts. Fascinating; it was a bipartisan moment in that country, too. The Prime Minister or the President—I can't remember how it works in their Legislature—got together with the opposition leader because literally 1% of Portugal was addicted to heroin. It was a crisis. So they decided they were going to decriminalize drugs and they were going to work with first responders and mental health professionals and make sure they could offer every addict in that country a job; affordable housing—as the member for Toronto Centre has often talked about—and wraparound services. Get that person a glint of hope that there is another life possible, that they don't have to escape, they don't have to check out, that their neighbours actually love them and they want them to have an equal opportunity.

What I hope I've tried to do in this debate, Speaker, is talk a little bit about my own thoughts about addictions, what I hope this centre of excellence will achieve, what I would like to see our province do around the tainted supply of opioids in the illicit market and some of the folks

who, for reasons that fail me, are poisoning their neighbours.

The action that's coming out of Ottawa from all quarters says that we must act on this. I hope that's where this legislation can ultimately move, but I'm glad we're taking some of the steps we're taking today, and I look forward to the debate.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: A pleasure to join the debate today—I want to say thank you to my colleague from Ottawa Centre—to talk about the opioid crisis and our mental health crisis as well as our city of Ottawa.

This is an issue that is near and dear to my heart, for a number of reasons. In 2012, I started working on the opioid crisis, which was then just really fentanyl, which is not the carfentanil that the member opposite started talking about. At that same time, in 2011, I stood up in this House on anti-bullying initiatives, as you well recall, as well as starting a suicide prevention plan with the former member for Ottawa Centre.

Speaker, not quite a year ago I lost a young man very close to my family, Tyler Hay, to an opioid overdose. Tyler was raised with my daughter. He was a bit older than her, and he was about to take off and go make it big in the United States as a musician. Tyler's grandmother, Myrna, has been my daughter's caregiver, and it really broke our family to see this young man with so much potential lose his life because somebody decided to lace what he was taking with that.

Speaker, I think that we all have a role to play, and we have to continue to have that conversation. I myself have been very open about my struggles with mental health and was heartened yesterday to spend some time with our former Lieutenant Governor, Hilary Weston, as well as our current Lieutenant Governor, Elizabeth Dowdeswell, as we talked about more mental health supports through the bursary program of Hilary Weston.

We have to end the stigma. This past summer, for example, the Toronto Star ran an article of me in a straitjacket. I think that we have to condemn that type of activity and those types of commentaries when we're dealing with people who have been open about their struggles.

Now, finally, this Legislature is talking about mental health the way we are, and this past weekend I had the opportunity to speak with leaders in Ottawa and leaders in Toronto in a social setting where people were being open about it. It's about time we've been open about it, just like we do with Bell Let's Talk.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's really a pleasure to get up and respond to the comments of my NDP colleague the member from Ottawa Centre—his very thoughtful, intelligent comments on this legislation and, more specifically, on mental health and addiction. I thought his comments really moved us from emotion to action, which I think is something he had mentioned.

I really appreciate, I have to say, the analogy between other crises, like the listeriosis crisis, and these crises we're talking about. I thought that was very compelling because it's pretty clear that the sense of urgency just isn't there. I think we can all agree—I don't think anybody here disagrees—that improving data and quality standards is great. Taking those folks to court—that's great. But we don't have timelines on this centre, for when it will be operational. And this government is not moving to do what we've been asking for over and over and over again, which is to declare a public health emergency.

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Why does that matter? It matters because, like these other crises that the member from Ottawa Centre mentioned, it would require us to put in place the commensurate supports and resources to take the kinds of actions that a real crisis and emergency merits. It is not an issue, as he so eloquently put it, of whether or not we can afford it. We must.

I thought it was also an excellent way to end his comments to also put some of that back to those in our society, and us as government—MPPs here, this government here—to actually make those who can most afford it pay their fair share. That is why we need to declare this a public health emergency.

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'm very happy to be here this afternoon and hear some of the comments that are being made from both sides.

As you all know, mental health and addictions is an issue that I take very seriously. I didn't come to politics because I decided that I needed a new career at my age of 59 but that there was a lot of work to be done.

I've spent 10 years of my life working with people who have addictions and mental health issues. I take this issue very seriously, as does this government. This government is investing \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years to ensure that we build a holistic, integrated, connected system that will provide services to everyone along the lifespan. That means that with our youth, we'll be able to do more in the way of education, making sure that we build resiliency and coping skills in them; with the people who suffer from addictions, that we're doing everything that we can with our consumption and treatment sites. You're correct in saying that consumption is something that we need to deal with and ensure that it's being done in a safe way. But we also have to make sure that there are treatment options for people, and people are aware of where those treatment options are.

I wasn't here in 2010, but I was banging my head against the wall with the previous government and, again, supported by the NDP, because more should have been done—not last year, not in the last six months, but in the last 10 years. What gets me upset is that I left my career to come here because it needs to get done, and it needs to get done now. This government is standing up for the people of Ontario to ensure that a system is put in place for everyone. So I take some of the comments being made

here this afternoon a little bit—I'm not too happy hearing it, because we've got to act on this really quickly.

Well, you know what? Why are we debating this? Why don't we just support the bill and move on with what needs to get done? Let's put the system in place so that we can look after the people and deal with the systemic issues that you are very well aware of.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for his thoughtful debate. He said something that really resonated with me when he said, speaking of a quote, that the opposite of addiction isn't sobriety, it's connection. It's that loss of connection that really is the root cause of addiction, and the loss of connection is interwoven with multiple traumas.

I have a good friend who I knew when I was living in London—my colleague for London North Centre, when I was living in his riding. My friend was an addictions counsellor. I sat down for tea with him one day and we had a conversation about his work and what he was doing. He was primarily working with Indigenous community members in London. He said, "You know, I need a new job title. I'm not an addictions counsellor; that's not what I do. I don't treat addictions. I'm a trauma counsellor. I treat trauma." Specifically, in an Indigenous context, he was primarily working with residential school survivors.

So we cannot disconnect mental health and addictions and put it over here in this bubble and not talk about the social trauma people have gone through, often at the hands of the very governments that are now coming in and trying to address the issue, but you're coming in and you're not addressing it with a whole-of-systems approach. You're looking at the addictions in isolation, but I don't see the approach to addressing trauma. I don't see the approach to making sure that people have access to safe and affordable housing while they are trying to get access to services and treatment. I don't see supports for health care, for poverty. These are the things that people need around them to begin to tackle the trauma that they're facing that is at the root of addiction. I encourage you, please, look at this from a whole-of-systems approach, and remember people are hurting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Ottawa Centre for final comments.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to begin with a quotation from Professor Bruce Alexander, who is one of those experts that I mentioned. He said, in one of the articles that I read, "Addiction isn't you—it's the cage" you're in. That is evocative for me because the question about addiction and how we deal with mental health is not and ought not to be about pushing and herding people into specific places in our city so we can deal with them there and keep them away, keep the riff-raff away from the rest of us. It should be about thinking how we as a society, how we as a country, how we as a province deal with addiction in a way that allows neighbours to be aware of each other's trauma and suffering and then help each other. It's not just highfalutin rhetoric.

I'm glad the associate minister is passionate about his mandate, but I am waiting for this government to commit its share of that 10-year plan. At the moment, what I saw in the last budget announcement was that \$174 million was earmarked, and when queries were made—we know that's the federal money that has come into the coffers. I want to know that that money gets doubled in the next—I want your passion at the cabinet table, Associate Minister, to demand the \$174 million of provincial funding to complete the federal funding so we can start opening up safe consumption sites in Peterborough, as my colleague suggested, in Thunder Bay, and, as you mentioned, wrap-around services that people need: housing, health care, trauma counselling. These are the services people actually need to find their way to the light.

Unfortunately, a family member of mine never found the way to the light, and we can't let that happen to anybody else. We're too good for that. As the member for Nepean talked about her meeting with Hilary Weston, maybe in the next meeting with Hilary Weston, if the member from Nepean could please ask her to pay her appropriate level in taxes and not shelter them in the Caribbean, we may find a way to get there.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: I would like to congratulate all the members on both sides of the House who have volunteered to speak on this bill.

This bill will revolutionize the way we tackle the opioid crisis that is evolving in our province. This issue is just one of the many crises that have grown to the edge of disaster.

The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has done amazing work, and I'm so pleased to speak on this bill. This bill would hold accountable the drug companies that are risking individual and community health for their own financial gain, to ensure that those who manufacture, market and distribute drugs are held accountable for the damages that these drugs can cause. Drug companies should not be divorced from the health outcomes of their drugs, especially if their products are causing harm to people and communities for profit.

The taxpayers of Ontario are shouldering the burden of opioid addictions. They are paying the bills and, more importantly, they are facing the social costs each and every day. We know it is impossible to put a price on a family member who has destroyed their relationships for drugs, but what we can do is to impose penalties for those companies that facilitate damaging and harmful behaviours. This bill is targeting those that irresponsibly manufacture and distribute opioid drugs and those that fail to educate or protect the consumer regarding their potential dangers.

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Just as importantly, this bill is the beginning of a robust mental health strategy program. The Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence is a one-of-a-kind location, a place for Ontario Health to centralize resources and policies for those suffering from chronic addiction and mental health issues.

People have been crying out for more mental health services. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has reported that one in five Canadians will experience a mental health or addictions crisis in any given year. One in five is a crisis level.

This is another crisis that was left unchecked by the Liberal government. Despite the outcry and the awareness and the realities in streets and homes around Ontario, very little was done. They saved their mental health announcements for the election, as our NDP colleagues pointed out at the time. They had a chance to make positive change when they were in power, and for nearly a decade very little was done. It will be nearly 10 years since the previous government launched an all-party select committee on mental health, yet for a decade nearly nothing was done.

In fact, in 2018, when the previous Premier was asked about her pledge to strengthen the mental health system, she said that it was a good system but “too many people are struggling to navigate the system to find the care that they need.”

Speaker, the system was not a good system, not at all. There were key inadequacies that made the system difficult to navigate and unable to meet demand. Ultimately, that starts to change with this bill. Our government is proposing the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence, because those who were struggling with addictions and mental health did not need promises in 2010; they needed action. That is why I'm pleased to speak on this bill—a bill which turns a decade of failed promises and noncommittal actions into a better, more equitable future for those who need help. We promised that we would invest in mental health and addictions services, and now we have.

The relationship between substance abuse and mental health has been proven. Individuals with mental health issues are up to 50% more likely to have a co-occurring substance abuse issue. I find this bill important because it recognizes the complex connection between drugs and mental health. Many times in this House, mental health has been debated—particularly how it disproportionately affects minorities and low-income communities. Drugs and mental health impacts communities that are already economically fragile. Neighbourhoods need successful businesses and work opportunities, but businesses are unwilling to invest where mental health and drug addictions are liabilities in the labour market.

In addition, without social supports or consistent treatment options, the effects of failing mental health and drug addictions only get worse. For individuals who struggle with addictions and mental health, contributing to the economy is not and should not be a priority, and no one should expect them to do anything other than take care of themselves, because with good physical health and mental health, we can eliminate barriers to productivity that so damage households across Ontario and begin to address the mental health and addiction hurdles that struggling households literally cannot afford.

It is important for all Ontarians to be aware of the risks of opioid addiction, just like it is important for all

Ontarians to be aware of the mental health issues that disproportionately affect minority populations. The data shows overwhelmingly that regardless of income, ethnicity, geography or living situation, opiate drugs are addictive and destructive. This damage has a cost to all Ontarians, and as I have said in this chamber before, an issue that can affect anyone affects us all. If a company is found liable in facilitating the unintended use of its drug, it should be responsible in part for the costs of the resulting behaviour.

While opioid drugs have been around for generations, discussions in the 1990s were had regarding the increase of addictions and deaths following the rise of over-the-counter opioid painkillers. But recently, the mental health conversation has put an acute point on the relationship between drugs and health outcomes. Individuals with mental health issues are up to 50% more likely to have co-occurring substance abuse issues.

I find this very important because it recognizes the complex connection between drugs and mental health. Many times in this House, mental health has been debated, and particularly how it disproportionately affects minority and low-income communities. In the same breath, the debate around drugs has been treated as a wholly different issue. In both urban and rural communities, opiates are used as unhealthy coping mechanisms and as a means of self-medicating difficult mental health situations.

The irresponsible promotion of opioid drugs has been a huge issue. There is no better example of this than promethazine codeine, commonly known as “lean.” Although it would appear to be a simple medicated cough syrup, it was used as an opiate and popularized to urban communities in the United States and Canada through music and celebrity endorsements. Because medicated cough syrups and opiate painkillers were so easily accessible in Canada as over-the-counter medication, a generation of young Canadians were introduced to opiates without supervision or oversight or proper education. There was no labelling or warning of the dangers of opiate medication. As such, individuals who found themselves dependent on painkillers and opiates would be introduced to the drug without being informed of the potential risks.

As the popularity of codeine medications increased for its use as a recreational drug, companies that own these drugs profited directly from the unhealthy use of codeine medications. This is not right. It took federal regulations in the United States and the courts to restrict codeine medications to prescription-only drugs. However, I'm sure that many on the other side of the House would agree that such actions are not enough. If a company is found liable in facilitating the unintended use of its drugs, it should be responsible in part for the costs of the resulting behaviour.

Another report from last year that was done by the Canadian centre on substance abuse reported that the national cost of opioid addiction was \$3.5 billion, or nearly 10% of all substance-abuse-related costs.

Mr. Speaker, the status quo is not acceptable.

Between 2007 and 2014, opioid-related health care costs increased 22.2%. Opiate drugs cost the Canadian health care system \$313 million.

In regard to lost productivity, the largest increase in per-person lost productivity costs was associated with opioids, which increased 20.6%. The cause of that increase was in large part due to opioid overdoses.

There are, of course, many other costs surrounding opioid abuse, including judicial costs, incidental property damage and so on.

But these drug companies must be held accountable. A family should not have to buy medication and then have to fund a rehab.

Currently, Ontarians are paying the price for companies that have not informed the public about their drugs, or are in other ways liable.

Opiate overdoses have become increasingly common over the past decade, and this is the first piece of legislation that intends to address the source cause, which is the manufacturing, distribution and marketing of these drugs.

Additionally, I believe both sides will agree that addressing the community costs is important. As I stated earlier, mental health has a disproportionately negative impact on low-income communities. However, opiate-related costs, including lost productivity and health care costs, are also much higher in low-income areas. This legislation addresses the impact that the spread of opiate drugs has on communities, and it forces companies to bear the costs of damages they helped create.

But, Speaker, this bill does more than affect the source behaviours. This bill provides a beacon of hope for those who have been inadequately served by the existing mental health and addictions system. This centre of excellence should be unanimously praised as a starting point for better service and policy. I'm pleased that the ministers in charge of both designing and funding this centre felt that this was an important part of our mental health strategy.

Mental health and addictions require sensitive and contextual care and solutions. As I have said, the current provincial health care responses are inadequate to deal with these issues at present. This bill is a massive step forward.

This bill acknowledges that the status quo is unacceptable, that tangible changes need to be made. Regardless of the criticism, this bill looks to curb the irresponsible behaviours of drug producers, and to tangibly address the policies and services that were inadequate under the previous government.

Mental health has affected every member in this chamber. Whether it's a personal story that many members shared of addiction, depression or suicide, or even second-hand from family, staff members or constituents, these stories affect us all, and in every single one of our ridings, there are individuals struggling.

At a high level, we may discuss things like productivity, labour and community building. But there is something important about how bills like these will help the people in our ridings live their lives. As MPPs in this chamber, we do not just represent the healthy people. We represent everyone, including those addicted to drugs or who are physically or mentally ill. This is a commitment that I take very seriously, and that I'm sure you all take seriously.

No matter what opposition is levelled at this bill, I encourage you all to think about who in your community and what neighbourhood in your ridings this bill most affects. I hope the tragic stories of loss and illness stay in your minds as we prepare to vote on this bill. I have thought long and hard about the families and the individuals that this bill will affect, whose names some of you mentioned; some names, for the sake of privacy, we are not mentioning in this chamber. But across Ontario and Canada, this signals an acknowledgment from government that mental health matters and that we are all responsible.

As governments, businesses and citizens, when it comes to drugs and mental health, this bill will matter to the lives of Ontarians—a positive change for the people we serve. That's why I'm proud to support this bill.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Markham–Unionville for his comments.

When we first started talking about overdose prevention sites in this Legislature, the Minister of Health at that time said that they wanted to really get this right. However, with the change from only 21 sites down to 15, with six sites that had their funding cut, and now this tremendous push to see the legislation go through, it sort of doesn't make sense. Those two things contradict one another.

Today has been really important and powerful, to hear people's passions, as well as people and their willingness to share their own personal stories of mental health. These are the kinds of things we need within the Legislature, while also within the community at large. I'm glad to see this government following the BC NDP government and holding pharmaceutical companies to account for their actions within this crisis.

But I wanted to also discuss the temporary overdose prevention site within London. The MPP from Windsor West visited with me. We met with Dr. Sonja Burke, who is the director. Really, that model is not about people taking drugs there; it is about relationships. It is about understanding that person and then getting them in touch with those wraparound services. It's an oversimplification to say that this is a place where people take drugs. No, this is a place where people come back to being human beings once again.

It is not a moral issue, as many people would claim. There should be no judgment involved and people turning up their nose at it. This is a health issue at the heart of it. Mental health and addictions are something where we need to get over the judgment, blame and shame, and deal with it for what it is, which is our health.

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

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Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Once again, it's a pleasure to rise to speak about this very important piece of legislation.

One of the reasons I came to the Legislature was because a few years ago, two of my friends lost their sons,

and you can't help but be concerned and wonder why, when these situations happen, they happen. In those particular situations, it wasn't because there weren't services available; it was because there weren't detox beds available for a few weeks. Both of the individuals passed away before they could get into a detox facility.

One of the things we've learned from the 2010 standing committee report is that there's a problem with access. I used to work in a residential therapeutic community, and it was created 40 years ago because people couldn't get a straight answer as to where to send their son or their daughter if there was an addiction issue. That problem has persisted. We've had 10 years where that problem could have been dealt with, because it was identified in 2010, and yet we have fragmentation, we have barriers, we have uneven services.

We have services that are being provided, but we have no evidence to support whether those services are actually making a difference in the lives of the people we're trying to treat. We've spent, in the past, \$4.1 billion a year on mental health and addictions. So I look at that and I think to myself, there's a great deal of work to do and we have to get on with it.

Why a centre of excellence? Because everyone should be held to a high standard when they're delivering services to the people of Ontario. We want to make sure that the services are effective and that they're making a difference in people's lives.

So I'm hoping that we can move forward with this quickly and start implementing a system that's client-based, integrated, based on principles of doing the best we can to help the people of the province.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: The biggest issue we see that's gripping Ontario right now is the fact that there is a health crisis, there is a mental health crisis, there is an opioid addiction crisis. The impact is real. When you come to my community of Brampton, you can see the impact of this health crisis, particularly with respect to the lack of funding received for our hospital.

When the government makes decisions that cut funding to our hospitals, that cut funding to mental health—\$330 million of mental health funding that has been cut—all these factors worsen the crisis we're facing.

Health is collective. Health is holistic. Health is connected across the board. Impacts to our mental health, cuts to mental health and cuts to overall health—the end result of all of this is that Ontarians are not getting the health care they need and they deserve. The end result of this is thousands of people being treated in hallways because we don't have funding to get them beds in rooms. The end result of this is incredibly long wait times to get into hospitals.

Health care must be made a priority, but it also needs the dollars to back it up. A healthy society is a society in which we provide good-quality, world-class health care to the folks who live in our communities. This is the biggest issue we're seeing right now: a lack of dollars, a lack of

commitment and a lack of priority in terms of investment. This upfront investment will pay dividends down the road, because an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. That's why we need to make this a priority. We need to invest now in our communities, and we need the funding across the board with regard to mental health and all kinds of health care in our communities.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to rise in the House, but it's more of a privilege when we have to talk about something we are passionate about. Hearing the member from Markham–Unionville talking about Bill 116 was really touching.

I want to talk about something that recently happened in Ontario. On November 25, we were having awareness on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. On the same day, right here in Ontario, a video went viral on social media showing a husband physically assaulting his wife in the street, in the daylight, right here in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we had a conversation. The community came together and we had a conversation on what happened and how we can stop this and how we can make sure it doesn't happen again. One of the things which was talked about was that in any abusive relationship mental health or mental wellness is one more reason why this happens.

That's why it is important that this topic—whether the reason is social stigma, whether it is lack of effort or lack of funding, whatever it is, it has been ignored for too long. I think it is about time we take action. We keep talking about the problem. We all know the problem is big. We know it is time to take action. I encourage all my fellow members of the House to come together so that we can act and react rather than listening and discussing. Let's continue to make Ontario Health the gold standard for the world on mental health.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Markham–Unionville for final comment.

Mr. Billy Pang: I still remember when I was younger, which was not very long ago, I started serving low-income communities as a volunteer. Every day I faced a lot of street kids, marginal youth, and later, when I graduated from university, I started serving those cage-home seniors. Those low-income communities face a lot of challenges including mental health and addictions.

I'm so honoured and humbled to be elected as an MPP for this government that recognizes mental health is an essential element of health. The mental health and addictions system has led to a lot of unnecessary delays in accessing care and caused unnecessary suffering. Let's acknowledge the social and economic costs of mental illness and addictions, including the fact that mental illness and addictions is a leading contribution to lost productivity and absenteeism in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, this government serves our people from all directions—not just one, but from all directions—health, education and others.

I'm so proud to be here to share my message on how I support this bill and I hope all the members from the other side can support this bill as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Therefore, further debate—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm sorry.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We'll sort this out. I recognize the point of order. Go ahead.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I understand that once you rule, that is the final ruling, and there will be further debate—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No, that's not a point of order.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The government House leader moves adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I heard a no.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1820.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Calandra has moved the adjournment of the House.

All those in favour will please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 7; the nays are 7.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The ayes being 7 and the nays being 7, the Speaker votes in favour of the motion. There will be no overtime.

Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

RETIREMENT HOMES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Ottawa Centre has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the

Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. The member from Ottawa Centre has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn to the member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: Yesterday, I rose in this House to highlight a very disturbing problem brought to my attention through media reports and by several folks reaching out from the community, both in Ottawa and around the province, worried about the fact that some retirement home operators are appealing for trespass orders to exclude family members from visiting their loved one living in their home—let me be clear: their home—in a retirement home.

The CBC Marketplace story has since been revised. A follow-up story was released last night. The journalist who wrote that story tells me that they have now been inundated with more people complaining about this same practice being done.

Let me be clear: I am not saying that this is common across all retirement homes. I am saying that some retirement homes are using trespass orders to exclude family members from accessing their loved ones.

In the case of Mary Sardelis, which is the case I mentioned yesterday out of the CBC Marketplace story, this is someone who complained about the living conditions of her mom, Voula. For 316 days, she was separated from Voula. She missed Christmas. She missed Thanksgiving. She missed her birthday. I can't imagine, as someone whose grandparents—they raised me. My grandfather had Lou Gehrig's disease. My grandmother had Alzheimer's disease. She was in specified care. The thought of being excluded from them, were I to complain about their living conditions, wrenches my heart. I can't imagine the courage it took for Mary to defy that trespass order, peacefully enter into City View Retirement Community and ask for this process to be changed.

In the members' gallery is Graham Webb, the executive director of the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly. What Graham's organization has taught me—and other colleagues of his—is that unfortunately this practice is more common than we're led to believe. I'm told that the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly hears about a case like this at least once a week.

What I would love to see from the minister is a commitment to investigate this matter personally. I know the minister cares about seniors. I know this government cares about seniors. If the anecdotal evidence that has been flooding into our office after these media revelations is the tip of the iceberg, which is what I think it is—I don't think Mary's story is an isolated one—I want the minister to exercise his powers under the Retirement Homes Act. Let me talk about those for a second. The Retirement Homes Act empowers the minister to conduct a specific inquiry, to convene a committee to look into this matter, and I would consider that to be a great, bipartisan gesture so people like Mary never face something like this ever again.

I have the copy of the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority's complaint report after Mary's incident. This eight-page document details that Mary's assertions were

correct, that the caregiver she had hired for her mom was deemed to have been fired by City View retirement home half an hour before her shift was to commence through the night—half an hour. When she complained about that, she was excluded. The supposed compromise the operators offered her was that she could see her mom for one hour between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m., when she is often asleep.

I wish this were an isolated incident that doesn't happen anywhere else, but I'm being led to believe, as the seniors' affairs critic for this province, that it is a lot more pervasive than many of us realize. So thanks to the great work that Mr. Webb's organization does. Thanks to the great work of Elder Abuse Ontario, because I consider this to be a matter of elder abuse. When we are prevented from accessing our loved ones in their own homes, I consider it to be a situation of elder abuse. Writing a report and citing an operator saying the practices are bad, without enforcement, without consequences, without someone in the sector knowing that you can't operate a business like this, to me, that's absolutely not acceptable.

So what I would love to hear from the government, not only in this specific case, but in all cases like this, is that we share an interest in the well-being of seniors—particularly at-risk seniors like Voula living with dementia in homes—and that the government of Ontario, the opposition and the government, will combine our efforts to convene an immediate study to study this problem, to look into it meaningfully, to access colleagues like Mr. Webb, so we make sure that this never happens to any family ever again.

I will say now that if there are any families who want to direct any queries to my office, please do. I want to talk to you. I want to understand what has happened to you. It's not right. We have to make it stop.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now, Minister, you have up to five minutes to reply.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you for the opportunity to rise today to provide more detail on this issue and the answer I gave here in the House yesterday morning.

Before I begin talking about what the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority does, I would like to address the situation at the City View retirement home. The RHRA received a complaint about the City View retirement home that is still in the complaints review process, a process set out in the Retirement Homes Act. The Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority followed up on the complaint according to their complaints and inspections processes, and

a decision on the matter was provided to both the home and the complainant. The decision is currently under review by the complaints review officer, a third-party adjudicator. In light of this, I'm not able to comment further on this matter.

Now, I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about the RHRA. In Ontario, the government regulates the retirement home sector through legislation, namely the Retirement Homes Act. While it is worth noting that retirement homes are private businesses, they must be licensed by the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority. To operate a retirement home in Ontario, an operator must be licensed and comply with the requirements of the legislation. Some of these requirements are:

- retirement homes operators' duty to protect residents from abuse and neglect;
- mandatory standards for care services;
- mandatory safety plans, including emergency planning to address fire and other risks; and
- mandatory staff training.

The act also establishes residents' rights. These rights include to live in a safe and clean environment, to know the cost of care and to fully participate in care planning.

At a higher level, this arm's-length regulatory authority educates, licenses and inspects retirement homes, to make sure they are meeting the required standards. It is important to note that the authority carries out hundreds of inspections of retirement homes every year. It inspects reports of abuse or neglect, looks into complaints and checks for compliance with the act.

Mr. Speaker, the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority is available should anyone have concerns about conditions in retirement homes. Reaching out to the authority is very easy; either call or email them.

This government knows that seniors want to stay active and socially connected, and live in their homes and communities as long as they can. They deserve our respect and support, and when it comes to those living in retirement homes, families need to know that they have a right and the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority to turn to should they need it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank both members for respectful debate. There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1832.

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