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of Ontario



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Mardi  
3 décembre 2019

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 December 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 décembre 2019

*The House met at 0900.*

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 2, 2019, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion, as amended, regarding amendments to the standing orders.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** When this matter was last debated, the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park had the floor. I recognize again the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Mr. Speaker, I want to start off from where I left off last night. I was excited to talk about the new proposed changes, which are very exciting, because the time of the day for statements by members will be moved from the afternoon to the first thing in the morning. All members in this place know the value of being able to rise and highlight their local events, the accomplishments of constituents and even some important initiative of our 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 that 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.

I believe one of the proposed changes to the standing orders will help to resolve the struggle of being in the Legislature and attending 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. 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 the use of technologies were written, the world was a different place. A constituent might have mailed a letter and hoped 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. It is actually true: Sometimes my constituents text-message me or WhatsApp or

they use 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 to 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 and non-disruptive complementary work could help us all to be better public servants, and if this allows members to more effectively participate in debates, then this is a change that we should support.

The government House leader spent the summer consulting with the Clerks of the Legislature, the NDP and independent members to develop a comprehensive and collaborative plan to modernize the Legislature's standing orders. These changes would modernize the rules of the Legislature, enhance the debate and increase opportunities for all MPPs to engage in this legislative process.

We are very pleased that the independent Liberals and Green Party support these proposed changes, but we are disappointed that after months of consultations, the NDP have decided to withdraw from the discussions and play politics. We are hopeful that once the NDP has had the chance to review our proposed changes, it will be clear that our only objective is a more productive, efficient and effective Legislature with enhanced participation for all members.

The NDP chose to withdraw from cross-party dialogue weeks ago and may not be aware of more recent developments in our proposals. It is disappointing that the NDP have indicated that they cannot support a single change in our proposals, including accommodation of members with disabilities.

While we are proposing that the government may debate the same bill in the morning and afternoon sessions, the intent of this is so the government may more logically move through its legislative agenda, not to expedite passage of legislation.

Further, even with the additional time for debate in a morning and afternoon, a bill would not receive enough debate to pass in one day. We have specifically indicated that a bill and a motion for time allocation for that bill may not be considered on the same calendar day, to preserve existing standards relating to timelines for passage of legislation.

I'm in strong support of this proposed reform. These changes are meaningful and important. They help us do the job that the people elected us to do in a better and more meaningful manner that hears voices from a wider array of

viewpoints. This helps people with disabilities participate more fully in the law-making process and empowers them.

I'm profoundly grateful for the people of Scarborough–Rouge Park, who have entrusted me with the great honour to represent them in this provincial Parliament. Every day, my imperative is to make sure I'm doing everything I can to help their lives and make government better and more effective.

This is such an instrument. I proudly vote for changes, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to highlight some of what the proposed changes accomplish, and why.

Allowing night sittings in the final 18 sessional days: Currently, night sittings are allowed in the final 12 sessional days. This change allows the government to spread out night sittings so they do not have to be forced into final sitting weeks.

We are also proposing to permit the government to cancel a night sitting when notice has been given but it is deemed to no longer be required. Currently, the government must wait for the night sitting to begin.

Amending the daily order of business to conduct members' statements in the morning before question period and to incorporate introduction of visitors into the proceedings.

Allowing the House leader to call no further business, at which point the House would adjourn to the next proceeding or the next sessional day: This already is done in the morning session, prior to question period. However, in the afternoon, an adjournment motion must be moved and can be voted upon.

As I mentioned, permitting the use of mobile phones, tablets, laptops and other electronic devices in the chamber.

Changing the format of debate from two-minute hits to one-minute Q&A: Under this proposed rule, after a member completes a 10-minute speech, members will have 10 minutes to question the member who made the speech. Questions are limited to one minute. The member who made the speech will immediately respond to each question as it is asked, and will have one minute to do so. The intent of this is to encourage more active debate and enhance the quality of debate.

Ending the requirement for a verbal referral of a question from one minister to another during question period: Ontario has the only Canadian Legislature which specifically requires a verbal referral of a question. The intent is that question period will be quicker, allowing more direct focus on the questions asked, and the possibility for more questions. The model for this is the House of Commons, in which any minister or parliamentary assistant may stand to answer any question.

Allowing co-sponsorship of private members' bills by any four members, regardless of their party's political stripe: Currently, two members from the same party may not co-sponsor a bill. We have proposed this change to recognize that some bills may benefit from this for regional or other political reasons.

Currently, there's a limit of three co-sponsors on any bill. This change would allow PC, NDP, Liberal and Green members to all sponsor a bill as a show—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Excuse me. Sorry for the interruption. The government House leader has raised a point of order.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'm just uncertain as to the amount of time—I wonder if the table officers could clarify the amount of time that we have—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** That's not a point of order; sorry.

I return to the member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Speaker, I think we have had enough debate now on this, and we would like to move adjournment of debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the debate be now adjourned?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, 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 0913 to 0943.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** All members take their seats, please.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Order, please. Thank you.

Mr. Thanigasalam has moved adjournment of the debate. All those in favour of the motion will rise and remain standing.

All those opposed to the motion, please rise and remain standing.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker):** The ayes are 67; the nays are 0.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I declare the motion carried.

*Debate adjourned.*

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

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

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to enact the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence Act, 2019 and the Opioid Damages and Health Costs Recovery Act, 2019 / Projet de loi 116, Loi édictant la Loi de 2019 sur le Centre d'excellence pour la santé mentale et la lutte contre les dépendances et

la Loi de 2019 sur le recouvrement des dommages-intérêts et du coût des soins de santé imputables aux opioïdes.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 28, 2019, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Tibollo has moved second reading of 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. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

*Second reading vote deferred.*

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

#### LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2019, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion, as amended, regarding amendments to the standing orders.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The last person who was speaking to the debate was the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park. Does that member still wish to continue or do we go to another member?

*Interjection.*

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

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you, Speaker. I'm very pleased to add—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I'm sorry, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, the opposition House leader has raised a point of order.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** The member from London was up on her feet way before that. She does want to debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Thank you. My apologies to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence. The rotation order would have it so that after we finished that portion of the debate, when the debate was ended, we now go to a member of the loyal opposition.

I recognize the member from London West.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm excited, I guess, to participate in a debate on a motion that has actually gone beyond the six-and-a-half-hour time allocation mark, but is still continuing. It's a refreshing and unusual situation, quite frankly, that we are able to continue to engage in debate on business that is before the House.

Unfortunately, we have had many, many, many opportunities where it would have been very useful to participate in debate beyond the six-and-a-half-hour mark, at which point time allocation is permitted under the standing orders. However, this government, in its wisdom, I guess, has chosen to use time allocation for almost every single bill that they have brought before this Legislature: 27 bills

have been debated; 25 of those bills have been time-allocated.

That said, today we are in this rather unique situation of being able to continue debate following the six-and-a-half-hour time allocation mark, and we are debating an amendment that was brought forward yesterday by my colleague the member for Brampton Centre. It's a significant amendment, especially on this day, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It requires that for the duration of the 42nd Parliament, the Speaker can alter the application of any standing order, any practice of the House, to enable the accommodation of members with disabilities so that they can fully participate in the activities of this House.

That amendment was moved in relation to the motion that my colleague the member for Timmins had originally moved to create a Select Committee on Modernizing the Standing Orders. The amendment to enable the accommodation of persons with disabilities is important so that while the Select Committee on Modernizing the Standing Orders conducts its work, there is the ability for the Speaker to fully enable the participation of any MPPs with disabilities who require accommodation in the proceedings of this Legislature.

**0950**

Speaker, I want to reflect a little bit about why our motion to create this Select Committee on Modernizing the Standing Orders is so important.

We have seen this government, as I started out saying—time after time after time, they have rushed bills through this Legislature, with breathtaking speed in many cases. They have shown, frankly, contempt for the democratic process. They have limited the ability of MPPs on this side of the House to participate in matters of vital public significance. They have limited or eliminated the ability of the public to weigh in on legislative initiatives that are before this House.

Again, speaking to the bills that have been debated in this Legislature since this government took office: There have been five of those bills that moved straight from second reading to third reading with no committee input at all, no opportunity for citizens of this province, for stakeholder organizations, for academics, for experts, for front-line workers, the people who are going to be most directly affected by these legislative initiatives—zero opportunity for any of these people to participate in the discussion on these legislative initiatives, to perhaps bring forward amendments that would strengthen the legislation. This government has chosen to prevent any opportunity for public input in at least five of the bills that it has brought before this Legislature.

This Select Committee on Modernizing the Standing Orders—might be something that we want to look at, that that select committee could look at. Is that appropriate? Is that an appropriate way to conduct public policy, to do the people's business in the province of Ontario, to rush legislation through as quickly as possible without providing an opportunity for public input? I think that the members of that select committee, that the persons who may be

called to speak to that select committee, may have something to say about whether that is an appropriate way to do business.

Instead of establishing a select committee to review modernizing the standing orders, to review how to sustain a healthy democracy in this place, we see this government introducing changes to the standing orders that are just going to enable them to move bills even more quickly. Speaker, we've already seen that this government has lots of tools at its disposal to ram legislation through at unprecedented speed, and yet this government wants to be able to do that more quickly.

Let's consider, Speaker, what this government has included in its standing orders. It has now proposed that the government be able to hold night sittings for the last 18 days of a session. Previously, night sittings were able to be called, I think, in the final eight days of a session. Then the government moved it up to the final 12 days of a session, and now they want to increase it even further, to the final 18 days of a session. When you have night sittings, the effect is that it adds the number of hours that are available for a bill to be debated, to move through the legislative process and reach that six-and-a-half-hour time allocation mark more quickly, when you add those hours after 6 o'clock.

Let's consider a scenario, Speaker: On a Monday, we could have debate begin on a bill, and that debate could continue through the Monday afternoon. It could continue into the evening during those night-sitting orders, and then that evening, as soon as the bill reaches the six-and-a-half-hour mark—and I mean the very minute it hits the six-and-a-half-hour mark, because that's also included in the standing order—it wouldn't even allow the person who has the floor to finish their remarks. The minute that bill reaches the six-and-a-half-hour mark, the government House leader could stand up and introduce a time allocation motion, and that time allocation motion could be written in such a way that the bill moves directly from second reading to third reading, with no opportunity for public input.

Let's acknowledge, Speaker, that that is exactly what we've seen. It's not as if, "Oh, no. No government would ever do that. No government would ever try to prevent the voice of the people, or would ever close their ears to listening to what people have to say." We've seen this government do exactly that, so it's not out of the realm of the ordinary that this is the kind of time allocation the government could bring in, that the bill could move straight from second reading to third reading.

Again, on a Monday, after these standing order changes take place, we could see the bill reach the six-and-a-half-hour mark, we could see a time allocation motion be brought in, and we could see the time allocation motion state that the bill will go directly from second reading to third reading. The following day, on the Tuesday, the time allocation motion would be debated. There's about two hours of debate on a time allocation motion. It would be passed, because the government, of course, would use their majority to pass the time allocation motion. And then the following day, on the Wednesday, the vote on the time

allocation motion would take place after question period. The votes on the second reading of the bill, immediately followed by the third reading of the bill, could take place in the afternoon of the same day.

This government defends itself by saying, "Oh, don't worry. We're not going to be moving bills and passing bills in the same day. We're not going to be doing that. We're not proposing that in these standing orders." Well, maybe not, but you are proposing just what I said: that you could have a debate on a bill begin on a Monday, and by Wednesday, it's law. I don't think that the people of Ontario think that that's a good thing for democracy. I don't think that the people who are here in this Legislature, who were elected to bring the views of our constituents to the table—I don't think that that is enabling us as members of this Legislature to weigh in on debates and to participate in decisions that are being made that are affecting all of our constituents.

Speaker, despite what this government says about its concern about enabling the participation of the independent members of the Legislature, when we look at what is actually in this bill, we see the true motivation behind these standing-order changes: It's to give the government even more ability to ram through legislation as quickly as it possibly can.

One of the other challenges, or one of the other issues that I think the Select Committee on Modernizing the Standing Orders may well want to consider, in addition to the routine use of time allocation—the automatic use of time allocation—is the number of omnibus bills that this government has brought in, and whether the use of omnibus legislation is good for democracy, whether that is a good way to enable the people to participate in decisions that are made in this Legislature. Let's just reflect on some of these bills that the government has brought forward, has time-allocated at its first opportunity shortly after the six-and-a-half-hour mark.

#### 1000

Bill 132, for example, had 17 schedules, and it made amendments to 80 acts—17 schedules, and it amended 80 acts. Speaker, that bill today is in committee. There is clause-by-clause review of that very hefty piece of legislation, with all of these schedules, with all of these acts that are amended.

When you consider the length of time that the government allowed for people to come to committee to speak to that bill, there is no possible way that the proper due diligence, the proper oversight, the proper analysis and the proper review could be conducted of a piece of legislation that substantial and that comprehensive in the changes that it made.

Perhaps the Select Committee on Modernizing the Standing Orders might want to make some recommendations about ensuring that the time for public input is commensurate with the range of issues that are contained within a bill, that the time allocated for public input actually enables enough speakers to address all of the legislative changes that are contained within a bill.

The danger of time allocation is that it's not only being used to move through bills that are fairly self-contained,

that address a single theme, where the acts that are amended are linked. We haven't seen that with this government. Instead, they have thrown in odds and ends of pieces of legislation all over the place. It's very difficult, therefore, for us as legislators, in our 20 minutes that we have to comment on all of those acts that are amended, and for the public, when they come to committee, to bring forward recommendations for review.

Bill 136, another piece of omnibus legislation, has 40 schedules and amends 65 acts.

Bill 57 has 45 schedules and amends 65 acts.

All of these bills have been time-allocated after the six-and-a-half-hour mark, and have provided very, very limited opportunity for people to participate. Now this government wants to bring in changes to the standing orders that are going to allow it to speed things up even further, to move time allocation even sooner, and potentially to pass legislation in the shortest time ever in the history of this Legislature.

Speaker, the other thing that we've heard from this side of the House is that they were interested in a dialogue, in a consultative process, about these changes. But I want to remind the government, and I want to remind the people who may be watching this debate, that when this government originally came to the NDP and the independent members with their proposals about changes to standing orders, there was nothing—nothing—in their original draft that talked about the extra participation of the independent members, nothing about additional questions, nothing about additional time in debate.

Our amendment to create the select committee acknowledges that the Speaker should have the discretion to allow the independent members to have those additional member statements, those additional questions and that additional time for debate. But the fact that that wasn't in the original draft that was presented to the NDP, the fact that the original draft changes to the standing orders raised all kinds of red flags for the NDP, is why we said that we are not going to be negotiating, we're not going to be supporting this package.

And then, the next thing you know, the government says, "Great news. We've got the support of the independent members. We've also updated the changes to the standing orders to give the independent members this extra ability to participate in the House." Speaker, this government is using this deal that they brokered with the independent members to try to mask the highly problematic elements of this package: the ability to have the night sittings in the last 18 days of the session, and the ability to call legislation twice in one day. These are changes that are going to allow the government, as I said, to move its agenda forward more quickly.

If this was a government that had shown some skill in managing its agenda, we may be willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. But let's not forget that 24 sessional days were lost in September and October because this government decided to call a five-month recess. Let's not forget that last December, we lost four sessional days because this government decided to adjourn the House

early. Oftentimes, it seems like this government doesn't know what it's doing, and it's scrambling. I guess that's reflected in the standing orders. It recognizes that it's had to scramble at the very end to try to ram through its legislation because it hasn't been able to manage its own legislative agenda.

So I urge this government to truly engage in a collaborative process by supporting both the sub-amendment that we're debating today, and the amendment that was brought forward by my colleague the member for Timmins to create a Select Committee on Modernizing the Standing Orders so that we can look at the big picture about what really needs to happen in this Legislature to enable, promote and fulfill our democratic mandate.

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

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** I'm very pleased to add my voice today to those of my colleagues who have spoken so far on the changes to the standing orders proposed by the government, as well as the amendments to the motion, proposed by the opposition, that we are debating today.

I want to start by noting how very disappointed I am to see these amendments tabled, and to see the opposition's attempt to politicize a collaborative, multi-party process undertaken by the government House leader, in conjunction with the Clerks of the House, the representatives of the opposition—at one point—and the independent members over the summer to strike a new set of standing orders.

Speaker, the changes proposed by the government House leader serve only to enhance debate, improve accessibility for members, and create more opportunities for all the members of this place, including the independent members, to meaningfully participate in the many important deliberations that take place each and every day in this Legislature.

Let's look at some of the proposed changes, some of the ideas which seem to offend the official opposition so much.

First, and most important, in my view, is the proposal that would allow the Speaker to alter the application of the rules of the Legislature to permit the full participation of members with disabilities. Currently, a member with a disability requiring special accommodation, such as an electronic assistive device or a personal support worker, would require the unanimous consent of the Legislature. The proposed change would give the Speaker authority to use his or her discretion to accommodate members appropriately.

Once such example of an accommodation could be a member who uses a wheelchair or a similar mobility aid. Under the current standing orders, a member in a wheelchair or other mobility device needs the unanimous consent of the Legislature to vote without physically standing. While I don't expect any of us would get in the way of such a request, that doesn't change the fact that in today's Ontario, such a request should not be necessary.

**1010**

Our proposed changes would allow the Speaker to grant this exception without unanimous consent. I know that my

constituent David Lepofsky would welcome that kind of a change, and I would certainly hope most of us would agree on the importance of making the Legislature accessible for all who serve here. But unfortunately, the official opposition has said they cannot support a single change that we are putting forward, and that is very disappointing. I would have thought that if there was just one thing we could all agree on, increasing the accessibility of this place for our fellow members would be near the top of that list, but I suppose I was wrong. I will say this, Speaker: The official opposition never ceases to surprise me.

There are some other very common sense changes proposed in the government's motion, such as formally allowing the use of electronic devices in this chamber in a non-disruptive manner. Looking around just now, you can see many devices in the chamber. Their use in the chamber has been tolerated over the years despite never being explicitly allowed in the standing orders. Now, I know that we could have an entirely separate debate on how these devices should be used, but the reality is that these devices are being used, and every time that happens, the Speaker is overlooking some of the current rules that exist in this place. We don't want to put the Speaker in a difficult position, so let's formalize these rules and let the Speaker focus on the other rules of decorum that may get overlooked from time to time, or certainly challenged on a regular basis.

Let's take a look at some of the other changes proposed in the government House leader's motion, some of the other proposals that the official opposition seeks to wipe out with their amendments.

Our proposed changes to the standing orders will also amend the daily order of business to conduct members' statements in the morning before question period and to incorporate introduction of visitors into the proceeding. While I've come to value the role that members' statements play in this place and look forward to delivering one this afternoon, the intent of the change is to increase the profile of members' statements by having them occur when more MPPs are present in the chamber and when the media are actively observing the chamber prior to question period. This is the way it has been done for some time now in our federal Parliament and is another change I'd expect to be rather uncontroversial.

Along with this change, we're proposing to incorporate introduction of visitors with routine proceedings so that there are stricter limits on its possible length. To ensure all members still have the opportunity to introduce their guests, the standing order changes proposed by the government specify a simplified and consistent format for introduction of visitors: name, title, organization and riding. These changes specifically prohibit the use of points of order for introductions, consistent with the Speaker's current application of the existing standing orders. This change makes sense, like the other ones, if only because introduction of visitors was originally added to the standing orders to prevent the use of points of order for that purpose, and to prevent fewer interruptions to debate is always a welcome thing. One would think this is yet another simple, common sense change that respects the

rights of all of the members of this House, but apparently it is too extreme for the official opposition to support. That's too bad.

Speaker, here's another idea: The government's proposed changes would allow night sittings in the final 18 sessional days, an increase from the current standing orders, which allow for night sittings during the final 12 sessional days only. The rationale for the change, again, is quite simple: If night sittings are necessary, we should have the opportunity to spread them out so that they're not all crammed into a mere two weeks. The proposed change would permit the government to cancel a night sitting when notice has been given but it is deemed to no longer be required. Currently, the government must wait for the night sitting to begin, which is not an effective—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I apologize to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence. Unfortunately, the clock has run out on the occasion for you to continue this debate this morning.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** This House stands in recess until question period at 10:30.

*The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Ms. Suze Morrison:** I'd like to welcome a number of tenant activists to Queen's Park today, including Rob Field, Geordie Dent, Mark Tennenhouse, Rosa Leo, Kelly Bentley and Brendan Jowett. Thank you so much for coming to Queen's Park today.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** I don't see them yet, but I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today the Ontario Public Transit Association. It was great to join them for breakfast this morning and to meet members of the organization from across the province. Thank you for all the great work that you do to advocate for transit for all Ontarians.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and we are very privileged in this House to be joined by some of our country's leaders on that front. I want to mention the great David Lepofsky, who I just got back from a press conference with, Odelia Bay, and Sarah Jama. Thank you for all the work you do for our country, for our province, and for people with disabilities.

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I'd like to introduce some constituents of mine. I met some of them on the evening of the federal election and invited them to come to Queen's Park. They are from Don Valley West and are with their children, who attend Northlea elementary school: James Carter, with Clara Carter and Sofia Carter; Todd Prendergast, Kara Beitel, Hannah Prendergast and Emily Prendergast; and Regina Espinosa, Ximena Lozada and Andres Lozada. Welcome to you. Thank you for coming.

**Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** Today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. I would like to invite members to the reception hosted by the All Disability Network later this afternoon in room 228. More

than 160 representatives from the disability community will celebrate the 25th anniversary of Ontario's provincial accessibility legislation. I encourage all members to join me there.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'd like to welcome a new member of my family, our first grandson, Anson William Traquair, seven and a half pounds.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Congratulations.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I have an introduction of sorts, as well, a family introduction—extended family. Patrick Kelly, who is the caucus liaison in the Premier's office and who worked for me for years, and his wife, Beth, on November 21 welcomed into this world Preston Louis, at seven pounds, two ounces. Welcome, Preston Louis. Congratulations, Patrick.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Again, congratulations.

Introductions of visitors or announcements of babies?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** My granddaughter has now turned 10 months old, so I have no new introductions.

My daily introduction of families with autism: Today in the House we have Laura, Bruce, Clara and Cliff McIntosh. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Actually, since we're on a trend, last night my executive assistant gave birth to a healthy baby girl. Welcome to Sofia Marie Irene Casselman Moreas. She's a beautiful baby. All the best to the family.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My first question is to the Premier. Parents and students are nervously awaiting news about which schools will be closed tomorrow, and hoping for news that will avoid job action.

Can the Premier tell us what steps he has taken over the 120 hours since job action was first announced to avoid a shutdown of schools tomorrow?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** For 204 consecutive days, the teachers unions have made absolutely no moves at the bargaining table, notwithstanding that the government of Ontario has made significant moves to classroom sizes from 28 to 25, to online learning from four to two.

We are listening to those we are serving; however, every single entity at the table must be reasonable in order to ensure we keep kids in class both Wednesday and every day thereafter. Our government is focused on getting deals because the parents of this province deserve predictability and children deserve educational stability on Wednesday and every day thereafter.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The government doesn't get credit for not cutting even deeper. Parents don't want them to cut at all; that's the problem.

To parents and students wondering what's going to happen to the school year, it looks like the Premier has been doing very little to fix the mess that he has created. For months, the Premier did his utmost to pick a fight with teachers in the classroom and ignore the concerns of parents and students who said his cuts would hurt the quality of our kids' education and create conflict.

Now that we're on the verge of school closures across Ontario, is the Premier ready to actually show some leadership, de-escalate this situation and reverse the reckless cuts?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** The Premier has demonstrated his firm commitment in the defence of public education by increasing expenditure to the highest levels ever recorded in this province's history.

Every member of our team is committed to keeping kids in class. We demonstrated this consistent, student-centric focus at the table with CUPE, and with CUPE we got a deal—a good deal for all parties. We seek to do that again for the teachers in Ontario.

What is constant through the process and what is frustrating for observers is that irrespective of the Premier and who's in the chair, the bottom line is teachers unions escalate against the government. That is unacceptable for parents. It's what unites Bob Rae, former Premier McGuinty and now Doug Ford. The unity there is that they all faced escalation by unions, and I think parents are frustrated and sick and tired of it. What they want is every party to be reasonable.

We're going to continue to invest in education, getting a good deal that keeps kids in class.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, I guess the minister doesn't get it, but cuts and rollbacks are escalations. Protecting our public education. That's the way the government should be going. That's what parents are saying anyway.

I don't know what the minister is looking at, but here's what parents see:

—a Premier who spent months calling teachers thugs and blaming them when he was booed at public events;

—a Minister of Education who literally delayed bargaining so he could hold a press conference about the lack of bargaining; and

—a government that is still defending classroom cuts that mean larger class sizes, cancelled courses and mandatory online learning.

If the Premier wants to keep kids in the classroom, he could de-escalate this situation today by reversing his cuts. The question is simple: Why doesn't he?

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has demonstrated a firm commitment to improving education

by putting more money in the system than ever before. He's committed to that, because we've doubled the mental health envelope in this province. We've invested more to improve schools—a \$550-million renewal to build new schools and improve existing schools. We're putting in a \$200-million math strategy to lift math scores after they were being firmly held at a low rate for 10 consecutive years. They've essentially stagnated.

**1040**

Mr. Speaker, the government is investing in our children. What we're also doing is asking every party at the table to be reasonable. Students should be in class tomorrow. The government stands with them. The question for the member opposite is: Do you oppose escalation by teachers unions who are keeping kids out of class tomorrow?

### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is also for the Premier. Yesterday, the Minister of Education defended the government's decision to hide the results of their education consultation, a consultation which showed an overwhelming majority of parents oppose the government's plans for larger classes and mandatory online learning. For months, the Premier insisted he was on the side of parents, and he claimed they supported the cuts that now threaten to close schools all across Ontario. Why would he say that when he knew that his own consultation showed the exact opposite?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** The government has consistently been reasonable at the table, to incent the parties to stay there and to get a deal. We demonstrated this precise approach in negotiating with CUPE and we got a deal that was good for students, good for parents and good for the workers of this province. We seek to replicate that again with our teachers. For 204 consecutive days, there has been no material change, no change at all, to the position of the unions. How is that an acceptable proposition for parents, who want all the parties to be reasonable and who want the parties to be focused on keeping kids in class?

The Premier has led by example by ensuring that my mandate is to keep kids in class. We're fighting every day at the table, 24/7, to keep kids in class, where they belong.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, Speaker, the minister needs to know, and so does the Premier, that what parents see is the furthest thing from being reasonable in this situation. It's the furthest thing from reasonable that you can get.

But for months, the Premier insisted that parents backed his scheme for large class sizes, mandatory online learning and firing 10,000 teachers. That's what they were claiming. Yet the government's own consultation showed that parents overwhelmingly disapprove of these moves, Speaker. This government is still hiking class sizes. This government is still forcing students into online learning that won't work for them and will not allow them to graduate without these mandatory requirements.

Why would a government who actually listened to parents move ahead with what parents have clearly rejected, Speaker?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, it's this government that is maintaining the lowest classroom size, in the early years, in this country, and that is a fact which the members opposite choose to ignore.

Mr. Speaker, we have listened to families, which is why we've made a decision to move the provincial average of classroom sizes from 28 to 25. It's why we've moved the online learning mandate from four to two. It's why we've improved and invested in front-line education.

What we have also heard consistently is the teachers union's mandate, or insistence, on a \$1.5-billion increase in compensation. We're offering \$750 million, and apparently that is insufficient.

Mr. Speaker, my priority, the bias of this government, is to put more money into front of class, to help our kids. That's what we're going to continue to do at the negotiating table, and do everything we can, including turning to third-party mediation, to get a deal that keeps the children of this province in class.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Here's a news flash for the Premier: Cuts that are less deep are still cuts that parents don't want to our public education system. That's the reality.

The Premier spent months claiming he had the support of parents and students, yet parents and students have been crystal clear from day one, and they continue to be clear today: They don't support larger classes, mandatory online courses or firing 10,000 teachers. So instead of working overtime to work with teachers and reach a deal to improve our public education system, the Premier has been making cuts, picking fights and pretending that parents don't care about these cuts.

When will the Premier stop defending his indefensible cuts and start working with teachers to reach a deal that works for kids, that works for quality public education in the province of Ontario? When will he do that?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Our government supports a deal, not a strike. That's why we're working hard at the negotiating table to ensure that our education unions, in good faith, get a deal with us like we did with CUPE just one month ago. The objective of the government is to ensure that the continuity of learning for children remains unimpeded. And what is regrettable is that, irrespective of the party or the Premier, the one constant in my lifetime is that unions escalate against the government. That is an unacceptable reality, and I would think that all members of this Legislature would oppose escalation that hurts our kids.

We stand with parents against escalation. We're going to work hard every day over the coming hours and days to keep kids in class and do everything we can to ensure that the continuum of learning is not impeded because of union escalation.

## PHARMACARE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is to the Premier, but I don't know if the minister noticed that there are no parents standing with him. Seventy per cent of them don't agree with him.

Yesterday, while the Premiers were calling for an increase in provincial health transfers, some were resisting the implementation of a universal pharmacare program. Sadly, it seems Ontario's Premier was the ringleader in that regard.

At a time when families desperately need a Premier who will work on the national stage to build a pharmacare program, why is this Premier trying to undermine any effort to do so?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Minister of Health.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you very much for the question. We are looking to solve problems that exist. One of the problems that exists right now in Ontario is that our drug escalation costs are going up 5% year over year over year. We need some assistance from the federal government on that, on rare and orphan disease drugs. It's wonderful that these discoveries are being made, but some of them are in excess of \$1 million per patient. That is something that, as Minister of Health, I take full responsibility for.

We want everybody to receive the medications that they need, but we need the federal government's assistance on this. We have a robust drug plan already in Ontario. We don't need assistance with that, but we do need assistance with rare and orphan disease drugs. That's something that I intend to follow up on with the federal health minister, to let her know what our position is and to understand what the position of the other provinces and territories is.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I have to say, I am shocked by that response. There are people in this province that can't afford their prescription drugs right now, that cut pills in half because they can't afford to renew their prescriptions in a timely fashion. This health minister refuses to acknowledge that.

This is a very serious situation, Speaker. Ontarians have already seen their health care system slashed by this government, and now the Premier is attacking a national pharmacare plan that can deliver that very real relief that everyday families need. At a time when people across the province are having to choose, as I said, between filling prescriptions and paying their bills, universal drug coverage is a crucial next step. Families simply can't wait, nor should they have to wait.

Why is the Premier trying to torpedo prescription drug coverage right when Ontarians need it the most?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** With respect, Speaker, I need to say to the leader of the official opposition, through you, that we are actually increasing our coverage for health costs in the province of Ontario by \$1.9 billion next year. That is a big, big increase. We already have quite a robust health coverage system for people that need coverage. We

also have the Trillium program for people that need extra assistance.

However, what we do need help with is access to rare and orphan disease drugs. I've heard from many people about this. I know that the coverage issue is very difficult. It's very expensive. We want people to get that coverage. We want people with those rare and orphan disease issues to be able to receive that kind of care. That's where we actually need the federal government's assistance, and that's what I'm going to pursue as Minister of Health.

## FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

**Mr. Parm Gill:** My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday, yourself along with other Premiers demonstrated the true essence of national unity and leadership by representing diverse regions and beliefs in support of the betterment of all Canadians. Leaders from across this great nation gathered together to demonstrate a commitment to putting our country first. Premier, you said it best: that although we might have our differences, Canada is united together.

Premier, can you highlight some of the overlapping policies that all provincial leaders raised as requiring further support from the federal government in order for Canadians from across this country to be better served?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our great MPP from Milton. That's actually the hometown of my daughter, and she tells me everyone loves him over in Milton as well.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: We've never seen this country so divided as after the last federal election. We had people from the West absolutely furious. We had Quebec with the Bloc that got elected. They have the third-largest number of seats in Parliament there. It was divided.

**1050**

What a great visit, when Premier Higgs came by and sat down. I give all of the credit for this meeting to my good friend Premier Scott Moe from Saskatchewan, who felt that this was a time to bring the country together through the Premiers, to make sure that we just lowered the heat amongst all of the provinces and the federal government. I know how much they appreciated the meeting.

After the meeting—Mr. Speaker, we were a divided nation, but we are a nation that's united right now, and we'll continue being united, because when we're united, there's no—

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order.

Restart the clock. Supplementary question?

**Mr. Parm Gill:** Thank you, Premier, for that answer and for your commitment and leadership in standing up for the people of this great province.

Premier, I know that in particular, you have been a champion for the Canadian economy, taking a leadership role on this front, highlighting the dangers that instability and economic isolation will have for this country. As you

have said previously, what is good for Ontario is good for Canada and vice versa. You have said that provinces should be competing together against the world and not against each other.

Premier, can you share with this House the importance of economic growth and the measures that were agreed on by all provinces?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** I thank our MPP from Milton for that great question.

There were a few items that we condensed down to about four different items that had the concerns of all provinces across this great nation—one being economic development and job creation. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we're leading North America in economic development and job creation because of the policies of our government. We're leading the nation, we're leading North America, with 252,400 jobs. There are 252,000 more families putting food on the table, paying rent, paying mortgages and doing things they might otherwise not be able to afford. Our economy is booming. We're the envy of Canada and North America.

We also spoke about the transfers. Mr. Speaker, nothing is more important in this country than health, health, health; jobs, jobs, jobs. We asked for it to escalate, to go up from 3% to 5.2%, which will take the burden off of the provinces, because I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, we can't do it alone when it comes to health care—

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

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** My question is to the Premier. First, let me say that nothing that the Minister of Education has said here today will give Ontario families an ounce of assurance that schools will be open tomorrow.

The government says they're being reasonable when it comes to their escalating attacks on our school system. But let's take stock for a moment of what they're offering our next generation: They're still planning to fire thousands of teachers, they're still planning to replace in-person instruction with risky, mandatory, Alabama-style learning, and they're still planning to cram more kids into fewer courses. Mr. Speaker, does this sound reasonable?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Mr. Speaker, what our government is focused on is investing in the front lines of education. We have increased expenditure. This year, we're on track to spend \$1.2 billion more than we did last year. That is proof positive that we care deeply about the success of our young people.

When it comes to what we're doing to keep kids in class, we have asked the members opposite to stand with the government, to look to third-party mediation, which worked with CUPE just one month ago. We've heard silence.

What we have told parents is that the mission of the government is to keep kids in class by using every tool in the tool kit, because parents should know with confidence

that their kids should be in class tomorrow. What is regrettable is that there's not unanimity of purpose in the Legislature in opposing escalation. The silence seems to be almost implicit support for these approaches, which we oppose.

Our government is going to continue to work hard 24/7 to get deals so we keep kids in class.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go back to the Premier. The minister clearly needs a lesson in bargaining 101. You're supposed to go to the bargaining table to improve education, not make cuts that hurt kids.

If this government cared about our students, they wouldn't be asking them to foot the bill for their tax cuts and their costly court cases. They wouldn't be jeopardizing graduation rates by cutting courses and pushing kids into online learning. And they wouldn't be targeting the very people who deliver our education.

As the clock ticks toward job action, will the minister finally do the right thing? Premier, take these unreasonable cuts off the table and stop these attacks on our kids' future.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite speaks about data points. Will she agree that a \$1.5-billion increase is too high when it comes to the offer we've proposed for educators, which is for \$750 million? The fundamental issue at the table is a lack of willingness to move off a \$1.5-billion commitment to increase compensation. It is a fundamental contrast point at the table.

The priority of this government and this Premier is to invest in education. The 1% we're offering is \$750 million, which is somewhat similar to the \$700-million increase made at the height of Liberal spending under the former government.

We are committed to our kids. We're putting more money in math supports, more money in our special education—the highest levels in French, in mathematics support, in First Nations and in French language. We're doing that because we believe in the potential of the young people in this province.

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Minister of Education is in a tough spot. I get that. It's a really hard place to be. But the fact is that the labour action that is in place right now is a direct result of this government's unwillingness to recognize that the cuts that are being imposed on the system are going to have implications.

I've worked as a parent activist with teachers. I've been an MPP. I've been the Minister of Education. I've been the Premier. To a person, I know from that experience, there is nobody in our schools who wants to be part of this conflict. They don't want the divisiveness; they know that it's problematic for them and their students.

Also, many, many of the parents who are in our school communities right now were children and students during the Harris years. They know what it's like to be out of

school for weeks on end. They know what that conflict costs.

So I say to the minister, beyond continuing to stand by cuts, what exactly has the government done in the last four days to try to get an agreement?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, what we have done is we've offered mediation as a reasonable offer to incent the parties to stay at the table. We've offered independent mediation, the same mechanism this government used to get a good deal with CUPE, which provided predictability for parents.

The requests and the insistence of the teachers unions is clear: They want a \$1.5-billion increase. I actually believe we should be remunerating our teachers well. They are at the front of class; we need to retain talent. They are the second-highest remunerated in the nation.

The preference of this government is to put more money to help our kids. We are looking at every option possible to invest more in our children's future. That's the priority of students. It's the priority of parents and it's the priority of this government.

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

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. I understand that the Minister of Education wants to claim that this is about compensation. What I have heard the unions and the federations say is that the quality of education is their focus. That's their primary focus. They know that the cuts to per-pupil funding, the increase in class sizes, and the insistence on mandatory online courses continue to be disrespectful to children, disrespectful to parents and disrespectful to their teachers and support workers.

It is up to the government to bring real solutions to the table. It is time for the government to bring real solutions and to work seriously to come to an agreement. Mediation can only work if there is willingness on both sides of the table. The government needs to bring real solutions to the table.

Will the minister assure the students of this province that he is going to do just that?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote the member opposite: "Mediation only works if all parties are reasonable." I agree, for the first time in my history, with the member opposite. Mediation—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. The member for Essex come to order.

1100

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** And what is unreasonable is that for 204 consecutive days, without interruption, there has been no material change at all to the position of OSSTF. How is that acceptable for parents? Every entity needs to be reasonable and put our kids first. What they are not doing is doing so. What they are providing is an insistent priority on a \$1.5-billion increase to compensation. That is unacceptable.

We want the unions to be reasonable, to stay at the table and work with the government in good faith to provide predictability for every child in this province.

## TOURISM

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** My question is for the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. Last month the minister was able to visit Where Canada Begins during her tour of southwestern Ontario. Her visit included stops at local attractions, as well as meetings with mayors and council members from Tecumseh and Windsor, and the CEO of the local tourism organization serving Windsor, Essex and Pelee Island. The minister was also able to visit the folks from the MH100 teen program, a successful program for at-risk youth in the area, before ending her day at the Windsor International Film Festival, attended by approximately 1,200 cinema enthusiasts and industry professionals. It is clear there is much to explore across all of southwestern Ontario.

Can the minister please tell us how her ministry's support for attractions in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington is growing the local economies in communities across southwestern Ontario?

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** It's my pleasure to respond to the great member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington. He has been a strong advocate in this House for many years for his community. I'm glad to be addressing what we're doing in the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries within his region.

He's right. Last month I had the opportunity to meet with Mayor Drew Dilkens of Windsor; Gordon Orr, who is the CEO of local tourism; Gary McNamara of Tecumseh and his team; and Mehari Hagos from MH100, a young man who has built, from absolutely nothing, something that is so spectacular that we want to emulate his involvement in sport in underprivileged areas right across the province.

I did have the opportunity to go to the Windsor International Film Festival, where we invested over \$50,000. It is the largest film festival, in terms of volunteers, across the entire province. They're doing great things there. I'm very proud of the work and the contributions that they are making, and we are going to continue to support the Windsor International Film Festival as well as cultural institutions within the member's constituency.

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

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** That's wonderful to hear just how an array of industries in southwestern Ontario have such an important impact on our local jobs and tourism spending.

Our region is lucky and proud to call itself a two-nation destination. Since our region is literally a neighbour to our southern neighbour, we benefit greatly from our American friends visiting our sights, assets and attractions. In fact, according to Destination Canada, during the second quarter of this year, visitors from the United States represented 52%, or \$3.3 billion, of all spending by international visitors.

Can the minister please tell us what she is doing to reach new markets and encourage more international visitors to explore what she likes to call a world in one province?

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** The member is right. We do call Ontario the world in one province. You can explore and experience almost anything in this province, and we should be very proud of that.

I'm also very proud of Windsor and the surrounding areas for their marketing of Where Canada Begins, literally embracing tourists from across the border and working, in fact, with Detroit on this two-nation destination.

Let me tell you a little bit about Destination Ontario. We are strategically targeting markets to show the potential for increased visitation and visitor expenditures, including the United States. In 2018, Destination Ontario, Destination Canada and our regional tourism organizations targeted markets in the United States accessible by a short-haul flight, targeted with Ontario-specific content through major publishers—for example, the New York Times, the New Yorker and the Washington Post. With a combined investment of \$2 million, this partnership generated 97,000 incremental trips to Ontario and approximately \$59 million in visitors. Mr. Speaker, we are open for business, open for jobs and we're open for visitors.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** My question is to the Premier. Last week, the Premier's normally wordy energy minister lasted all of about five seconds in a scrum with reporters when he finally stated that climate change is real and is a consequence of human activity. Then he bolted, shocking all the journalists in the scrum. It would almost be believable, if that same minister had not spent the rest of the week defending his passion for a website that specializes in climate change denial.

Whether it's tearing up clean energy contracts to the tune of \$231 million or putting up stickers that don't stick, it all points to the Ford government's belief that they can ignore the climate crisis.

Speaker, why is the Premier stacking key government roles with people who can't even say whether climate change is real?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Through you, Mr. Speaker: We've talked about this numerous times. We believe climate change is real but, even better, we have an incredible policy moving forward to meet our target, the Paris accord, of 30%. We're well on our way. We're actually going to exceed that goal and focus on making sure we have clean air, clean lakes, clean rivers, and making sure that we respect the environment.

Do you know how we're doing that, Mr. Speaker? The other day, yesterday, I made an announcement of SMRs, small modular reactors. That is the way of the future. It's going to create \$10 billion in economic development, \$150 billion of economic development globally. We know the Chinese and the Russians are playing in this arena. We have the smartest and brightest people when it comes to

nuclear right here in Ontario. We'll make sure that we take care of those jobs.

We're also getting people out of cars, putting a \$28-billion transit system together. That's the largest infrastructure project in transit in North America. That's—

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

The supplementary question.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Speaker, last March, the energy minister appointed his former Conservative colleague Joe Oliver as the chair of the Independent Electricity System Operator and charged him with handling Ontario's energy needs. It's a big job for a partisan appointee, but still, Mr. Oliver has found some time on the side to denounce what he calls "climate alarmists" and even suggested, "Let's not ignore the greater personal comfort of living in a more hospitable climate." Apparently, Mr. Oliver shares the same love of periodicals as the Minister of Energy.

Since this Premier has given him such a key role in shaping Ontario's energy future, does the Premier agree with Mr. Oliver about the potential benefits of climate change? If not, why did he let his energy minister give him a key role in planning Ontario's electricity future?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Through you, Mr. Speaker: I'm so proud of our Minister of Energy. He's an absolute all-star.

The Minister of Energy has one of the toughest jobs down there, cleaning up the mess that the NDP and the Liberals created for this province—and a mess that made us uncompetitive, gave us the highest hydro bills in North America. We're finally getting our hands around the colossal mess.

I was reading the Auditor General's reports from 2006 to 2014, under the NDP and Liberal regime. I said there's never been a bigger transfer of wealth from the hard-working men and women and businesses and ratepayers of this province than under their regime. The ratepayers paid to the tune of \$37 billion more than what they should have—\$37 billion right into the pockets of the backroom dealers and their cronies, and the other cronies that support the Liberals.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** My question is for the Premier. The Premier is making a lot of noise about his government's so-called Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan, but expert analysts have said that it's a—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. You can't drown out the member for Guelph such that he can't place his question. Order.

Restart the clock. The member for Guelph.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thank you, Speaker. Expert analysts have said that it's a made-to-fail plan. Economists and scientists have given it a failing grade, environmental groups have said it has failed to launch, and now a group of young people are suing this government for its failure to act on the climate crisis. Yet the Premier continues to sabotage climate solutions while citing the 22% emission reductions achieved under the previous government.

Well, Speaker, 22% is not good enough, so I ask the Premier if he can cite any action his government has taken to actually reduce GHG pollution in Ontario.

1110

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. Jeff Yurek:** I thank the member opposite for his question. I'm glad that you do have a plan for the environment, unlike our official opposition in this House, which has yet to table a plan to deal with climate change or the pollution.

But, Mr. Speaker, I will have to say that although we have reached 22%, we're one of the leaders in the country to get our emissions to 30%. The movement away from coal in our electricity sector was started by the last Progressive Conservative government, and we thank the Liberal government for following through on our initial movement towards removing coal.

We have made quite a bit of steps towards making our 30%. This morning, I just announced our new Drive Clean program for heavy-duty trucks in North York that is going to reduce the pollutants and start reducing greenhouse gases in the transportation sector, which is one of the leading causes of greenhouse gases in this province.

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

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Vague platitudes will not solve the climate crisis. It will not solve the emergency we face. As a matter of fact, delaying action is the new form of climate denialism. The bottom line is that this government has at least one minister who enjoys reading climate denial literature.

They wasted \$30 million on stickers that don't stick, trying to sabotage solutions by suing the federal government. They've cancelled renewable energy contracts at a cost of \$231 million at a time when renewable energy prices are dropping. They've actually cancelled transit funding outside of Toronto by 40%.

Speaker, I ask the minister: Can the minister tell the people of Ontario of at least one action this government has done to reduce GHG pollution so that we can leave a livable planet for our children?

**Hon. Jeff Yurek:** Just last month, working with the Minister of Energy, I approved the environmental approval so that it can move forward to start creating the Watay Power corridor up in the north, which is going to remove Indigenous communities off diesel energy production and give them clean energy production from clean sources. There's one.

We've laid the groundwork, with the Ministry of Transportation, to electrify our GO network. That's going to pay benefits down the road of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We've a got historic announcement to build four new subways in the city of Toronto, which is going to remove hundreds of thousands of vehicles off our roadways every day.

We've implemented and have asked the federal government—I had a great meeting with the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change yesterday, as we're moving together with our industrial performance

standards that are going to start reducing emissions from industry, the heavy polluters of this province. We're going to make sure they start lowering their emissions, and they're going to pay for it if they don't.

We are doing much to lower emissions in this province, and we're going to—

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

The next question.

## TRANSFER PAYMENTS

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova:** My question is to the President of the Treasury Board. A little over a week ago, he made an announcement, joined by dedicated non-profit and community leaders.

Non-profits and other public sector partners have been asking the government for years to ease administrative burdens. I've recently met with representatives of the Ontario Nonprofit Network in my riding of Mississauga Centre, and they told me how excessive administration is taking up more and more of their daily work. After 15 years of Liberal mismanagement and ill-conceived planning, this situation did not improve.

Ontarians expect and deserve better service from their government. That is why the President of the Treasury Board announced that our government will be consolidating transfer payment agreements to service delivery partners, reducing burdensome administration and allowing them to focus on their front lines.

Through you, Speaker, could the minister please explain how consolidation of government transfer payments will improve services for the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** I would like to thank the very hard-working member for Mississauga Centre for that question. As many people in this chamber know, 90% of government spending is transferred to other people to provide vital programs for Ontarians.

Under the previous administration, the Liberals, many different ministries and systems and processes were used to deliver these tasks in a duplicative way. You could often have a transfer payment agreement to seven or eight different ministries, making it very complicated for those who deliver these programs, which robs them of the ability to deliver those programs in a timely and efficient manner. By simplifying and streamlining the process, not only for municipalities but also for non-profits and for service providers who receive government funding, we are ensuring that Ontarians get funding and more value for their taxpayer dollars.

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

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova:** I'd like to thank the minister for his response and for being a champion for Ontario's taxpayers. By making sure that our public sector partners can focus more time and resources towards front-line services, our government is ensuring that Ontarians are getting better access to vital services for their taxpayer dollars. For example, our government has reduced the administrative burden for municipalities delivering early

child care programs by 50%. This one example shows how transfer payment consolidation is a smart policy that will benefit service providers and Ontarians alike. Smart initiatives like transfer payment consolidation are exemplary of how we are building an efficient, effective and smart government together.

My question goes back to the President of the Treasury Board. Could the honourable member please explain what our non-profit partners think of our smart initiative?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Again, I'd like to thank the champion from Mississauga Centre for that question. Transfer payment consolidation has been a long-standing request by recipients of transfer payments, because reducing red tape allows them to focus on what they do best: serving the public, not paperwork.

For example, the Ontario Nonprofit Network, an organization representing 58,000 non-profit entities in this province, spent over a decade trying to convince the previous government to make these changes. The organization said that transfer payment reform is "an important opportunity to modernize funding agreements so that both non-profits and government spend less time on paperwork and more time delivering services that support Ontarians."

Our work with the Ontario Nonprofit Network demonstrates that we are a government that listens, that delivers and that's dedicated to building Ontario together.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Since news broke of the devastating environmental contamination of Cootes Paradise in Hamilton, I have asked questions in the House about when this government learned of the spill; I wrote to you, as minister, requesting full public disclosure; and I filed a freedom-of-information request related to this investigation. But what I have gotten back from this government is either silence or attempts to shift blame away from the fact that this government chose to not disclose a significant environmental disaster to the people of Hamilton.

The minister has said that an investigation is ongoing. So my question: Will the minister commit to making the investigation's findings public so disasters like this never happen again?

**Hon. Jeff Yurek:** Thanks very much for the question. I've spoken to the media, and in this House as well: The city of Hamilton has failed its residents with regard to letting them know of the spill. We are making changes with the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan to ensure that, going forward, spillage across the entire province will be online and accessible. I have made comment that the investigation is ongoing. When that is complete, we will make the findings public.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Let's be clear: This was a devastating environmental disaster. Now, a year and a half later, people deserve straight answers, not comments from the minister to the media.

This government's attempt to wash their hands of the responsibility in all of this is simply appalling. The Premier himself shared his own opinions with the media when he said, "It's totally unfair what the councillors did and what the mayor did, knowing this all along. You know? They can't be dishonest with us." But his own minister knew for over a year and a half that sewage was flowing into our water and said nothing.

The people of Hamilton are looking for some accountability. Will the minister come clean, apologize for keeping Hamiltonians in the dark and release the results of the investigation publicly?

**1120**

**Hon. Jeff Yurek:** Unfortunately, the member opposite didn't listen to my response. I said that we would make the investigation public once it's completed.

We are making changes with regard to how reporting is going forward, and we've also made changes to the work that has to be done with the city of Hamilton going forward. It's going to be a very transparent and open process going forward, and I hope the member opposite works with us and supports us in our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan to ensure that we continue and that we make online reporting of any spillage across this province. We don't think it's acceptable when councils such as Hamilton's decide not to tell the people of their area the fact that they've made a huge mistake with their sewage system.

We are going to work as hard as we can at the Ministry of the Environment to ensure the cleanup continues, and ensure that it's made to go back to how it was originally, before the spillage occurred.

#### ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

**Mrs. Nina Tangri:** Many of my constituents were rightfully upset when news broke that a trustee with the Peel District School Board made a disparaging comment about McCrimmon Middle School in Brampton. More concerns have been raised by families, students, the Peel District School Board director of education, the board of trustees and members of the broader community. Allegations of anti-Black racism, broader discrimination, and a lack of adherence to governance, leadership and human resources practices at the board must be taken seriously.

Our government took immediate action and recently launched a formal review of the Peel District School Board. Could the Minister of Education please tell the Legislature what this formal review will cover and how it will serve students and their families?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** I want to thank the member for her leadership in standing up for the families of Peel region against discrimination.

We all agree that schools must be safe and respectful places for all students. It is clear, given the very serious allegation of anti-Black racism, that the government had to intervene, which is why we took immediate steps to call in two reviewers to do that. We've called in Ena Chadha, who is also, I should note, a Brampton resident, a leader in the South Asian community, a human rights advocate, and

former vice-chair of the Ontario human rights board. And we appointed Suzanne Herbert, who is a former deputy minister, but who was also involved in the review of the York Region District School Board—which did a very similar review—and who is a very credible person.

I have also deputized Patrick Case, my ADM for education equity, to lead this process. Patrick is a leader in Ontario's Black community. He is a human rights advocate and a lawyer, and he will lead the process and sit in on each review to ensure the voices of the Black community in Peel are heard.

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

**Mrs. Nina Tangri:** I want to be clear: The Peel District School Board is home to one of the most diverse student populations in Canada, and it employs thousands of hard-working and dedicated professionals, educators, administrators and support staff.

It is of the utmost importance to combat racism and ensure equity in our schools, not only in Peel District School Board but right across Ontario. No student, educator or staff member should ever be victim to discriminatory comments or acts. I know this is a value that every member of our government shares, and that combatting racism and ensuring the safety of our children are important priorities of our government.

Could the Minister of Education tell this chamber why these priorities are so important?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Obviously, we stand with all members of this Legislature opposing racism—particularly anti-Black racism—sexism, homophobia and any form of discrimination or prejudice that can manifest in class. It is the priority of all members of this Legislature to oppose and denounce it, which is why, when hearing about these serious allegations from students, parents and administration, we took immediate action to call in two reviewers. In addition, I have deputized my associate deputy minister, Patrick Case, a leader in Ontario's Black community and an advocate for human rights, to sit in on every single review, to lead that process and to ensure accountability for those that propagate it.

We are committed to ensuring that children in Peel feel safe and feel respected in their classrooms.

#### ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Mr. Joel Harden:** My question is to the Premier. Today is the international day for people with disabilities. Living with disabilities in Ontario is getting harder for them. This is a crisis, but the actions of this government so far have been to include a cut—in half—to planned increases to the Ontario Disability Support Program, and take \$1 billion out of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. That has made life worse.

We know that there are 16,000 people waiting for supportive housing in Ontario. We know that people with disabilities experience higher rates of homelessness, violence, food insecurity and poverty. We know that from the

time children with disabilities are born to the time they grow old, we're failing them. We're failing them right now, and we are failing their caregivers, who suffer from ritual burnout right across this province.

On this day, for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, will this Premier keep making things worse, or will he finally turn this around and start making life better for people with disabilities?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Thanks to the member opposite for the question. It's very important, particularly on this day. But every day, my ministry is working to ensure that we're improving supports for those living with disabilities, including all of the types of disabilities that the member opposite mentioned. When it comes to developmental disabilities, we are looking into how we are delivering services to those in the DS sector—the developmental services sector—to ensure that we get them what they need.

The previous government, for many, many years, didn't improve supports for these individuals. That's why we're taking an approach where we're looking across all of the different programs that are available. I've met with OASIS—and I know the members opposite were with OASIS when they were here last week—and Community Living and all those different organizations. As a matter of fact, I had a great meeting on Friday with Terri Korkush in my own riding. She is the executive director of Community Visions and Networking in the Quinte region.

There are many different models out there. We're going to find the ones that work—

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

Supplementary, the member for Windsor West.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Back to the Premier: The fact of the matter is, there have been numerous studies and reports done. You have the Nowhere to Turn report done by the Ombudsman. You have the housing task force report that was put forward. You have the Deputy Premier, who sat on a select committee and made recommendations about the crisis for people with disabilities.

It's time for you to actually act to help those people. On International Day of Persons with Disabilities, it is important to take stock of how we as a society support those living with a disability to lead full and happy lives. The reality is that living with a disability in Ontario is hard, and the government is not doing nearly enough to make life better for people living with disabilities. Wait times under the Assistive Devices Program, which helps people access things like hearing aids and wheelchairs, have ballooned to as much as six months under this Conservative government, and there is still no response to the Onley report, or any plan for Ontario to achieve full accessibility by 2025. In fact, this government is going backwards when it comes to accessibility.

When will this government put forward a real, comprehensive plan to improve the lives of people living with disabilities?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

**Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** I would like to thank the member for raising that question. But first of all, I would like to thank the Honourable David Onley once again for his work with the AODA review. The previous government had 14 years to improve the AODA. Mr. Onley said in his report that they did so little. When I tabled Mr. Onley's report, I was very pleased to announce the return of the health and education SDCs, which was one of his recommendations.

The government knows that a lot of work needs to be done to make Ontario accessible for everyone. Making Ontario accessible is a journey. This government will continue to take an all-of-government approach to tearing down barriers.

### FOOD SAFETY

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Everyone who has farmers in their riding knows the difficulties they face on a daily basis. Cow farmers like the Fosters, dairy farmers like the Schoutens, poultry farmers like the Bekings and lamb farmers like the Acres, all from the great riding of Carleton, and in fact, all farmers across Ontario feed Ontario's families. It's important that we support them.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, farmers in Carleton and across Ontario have felt more and more unsafe in their homes and workplaces, which oftentimes are one and the same, due to frequent trespassing on their properties and their homes.

Carleton's and Ontario's farmers want to know: What is our government doing about this, and will our government stand with them? Through you, Mr. Speaker: Will the minister please tell us what action we are taking to help farmers struggling with trespass issues?

1130

**Hon. Ernie Hardeman:** I want to thank the member from Carleton for that excellent question. Like her, we've heard these concerns from farmers, and I'm proud to say that we are taking action. We have proposed legislation which, if passed, would keep Ontario farmers, their families, agri-food workers and farm animals safe by reducing the likelihood of trespassing on farms and processing facilities. If passed, this legislation would deter trespassers by incurring fines of \$15,000 on the first offence and a maximum of \$25,000 for subsequent offences. By ensuring that farmers are able to continue the great work that they do, that animals are kept safe and healthy, we are ensuring the integrity of our food supply.

Mr. Speaker, our government stands with our farmers and remains committed to food safety.

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

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Thank you to the minister for his response. Mr. Speaker, members in rural Ontario will have heard the concerns of farmers regarding this very issue. This was a big topic of conversation at one of my earlier Carleton Conversations public town hall meetings.

I am encouraged by the fact that our government is taking action on this matter, and I'm glad that Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, has been put forward.

People in rural Ontario are aware of the great lengths farmers go to to ensure that their livestock is taken care of, and that they need the appropriate biosecurity protocols in order to ensure the integrity of our food supply. Trespassers are often unaware of how their actions might impact these measures taken and inadvertently cause harm.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: Will the minister tell us more about how this proposed legislation deals with this issue?

**Hon. Ernie Hardeman:** Thanks to the member for the supplementary question. Our government understands that this legislation needs to strike the right balance. We respect the right of people to protest. We also are committed to animal safety and food safety. Farmers make every effort to ensure the integrity of our food supply by ensuring that their animals are not exposed to disease and distress. Unauthorized trespassers threaten this balance.

The proposed legislation supports farmers and their efforts by creating animal protection zones on farms, processing facilities and other prescribed premises. With our proposed legislation, we are ensuring that food safety is prioritized while also ensuring animal safety and that farmers are able to continue the good work that they do, which all of us in Ontario benefit from.

As we all saw from the farm community yesterday, which widely supported this bill, we can rest assured that our government is doing just that.

I again thank the member for that question.

### TENANT PROTECTION

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Speaker, almost 100 residents of a few Oshawa apartment buildings found out this summer that their leases were being terminated because of renovations. They're being renovicted. These soon-to-be-displaced residents are seniors, working families and folks on a fixed income. The housing situation in Oshawa is dire and they don't know where they will go.

My constituent Angela wrote to me: "The new owners are abusing the renovation loophole to evict tenants, offering large sums of money to people if they'll give up their right to come back.... They state the units are in such a state of disrepair that renovations are necessary when in reality all they're doing is updating and slapping some paint on the walls and relisting the units for double what we are currently paying ... this is a cash grab. They know they can get more rent once we are gone."

Speaker, every single Ontarian deserves a safe and affordable place to live. What is this government going to do to stop renovictions and to help all of these people find a safe, affordable place to live?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Speaker, through you to the honourable member, I want to thank her for the question. I also want to thank her for attending our event yesterday in

Oshawa where we announced our latest innovation guide on tiny homes. I appreciated the opportunity to speak about some of the issues in Oshawa with her and Mayor Carter.

In regard to the issue that the member has placed on the table, our government believes that every Ontarian needs a place to call home, and as part of our Housing Supply Action Plan, More Homes, More Choice, we consulted widely about a number of topics, including the issue of the Residential Tenancies Act. We heard from both landlords and tenants about the need for a fairer system.

As the member notes, the Attorney General and I have a shared responsibility when it comes to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Landlord and Tenant Board. We are reviewing the information that we have received as part of the consultation and will be moving forward in the near future.

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

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Again to the minister: Each and every week, my office hears from people who are struggling to find a safe and affordable place to live. Let me share some more from Angela's letter:

"The people in my building have been here for years, like Margaret in her late 80s on a pension, or Heather, a single mom on Ontario Works trying to raise her children while suffering from mental health issues and going to school. There are so many stories of really great people being forced out by greed....

"I'm going to try and fight them ... but how can one little person win against a big greedy corporation? How can they use this renovation loophole when really all they're doing is cosmetic work to hike up rents?"

"Why are we not protected?"

Speaker, I have the same question as Angela: Minister, why are these renters not protected, and what are you going to do about it?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Speaker, through you to the honourable member: We want to encourage a safe and fair system for both landlords and tenants. As I mentioned in the previous question, we have consulted broadly. We understand that it's important for both tenants and landlords to be able to access hearings during a dispute. I know that the Attorney General and I have worked very diligently with Tribunals Ontario to ensure that we have more adjudicators when it comes to the system.

Again, we've heard a number of suggestions. We're reviewing them. I understand the concern that the member has in her constituency. We share that concern. We want to ensure that the system is fair, that it is balanced.

But in addition, I think the member needs to understand that we also have a housing supply crisis and we need to have more purpose-built rentals in this province. We've seen some great strides with some of the measures we've done last year.

We're going to continue to work with all parties. This is a big issue. We need everyone working together—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. That concludes question period for this morning.

## DEFERRED VOTES

### 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

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

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

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

*The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.*

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

On October 31, 2019, Mr. Tibollo moved second reading of Bill 116. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Harden, Joel	Piccini, David
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Mike	Rakocevic, Tom
Baber, Roman	Hassan, Faisal	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Hatfield, Percy	Rickford, Greg
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Roberts, Jeremy
Barrett, Toby	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Begum, Doly	Horwath, Andrea	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bell, Jessica	Hunter, Mitzie	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Berns-McGown, Rima	Jones, Sylvia	Sattler, Peggy
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kanapathi, Logan	Schreiner, Mike
Bisson, Gilles	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Shaw, Sandy
Bouma, Will	Ke, Vincent	Simard, Amanda
Bourgouin, Guy	Kernaghan, Terence	Singh, Gurratan
Burch, Jeff	Khanjin, Andrea	Singh, Sara
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Cho, Stan	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Mamakwa, Sol	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Stiles, Marit
Crawford, Stephen	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martow, Gila	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McDonell, Jim	Taylor, Monique
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norman	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Paul	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	West, Jamie
Ghamari, Goldie	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gill, Parm	Pang, Billy	Yakubski, John
Glover, Chris	Park, Lindsey	Yarde, Kevin

Gretzky, Lisa  
Hardeman, Ernie

Pettapiece, Randy  
Phillips, Rod

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.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker):** The ayes are 104; 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 28, 2019, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### GIVING TUESDAY

**Mr. Kevin Yarde:** As we all know, today is Giving Tuesday, a day set aside every year for people around the world to take action in support of charitable giving and non-profit work. After a long weekend of Black Friday and, of course, Cyber Monday shopping, Giving Tuesday is an opportunity to give back to good causes and to support the things that really matter in our communities.

Our Brampton food banks are working hard to provide hot meals and services to those in need in our community who deal with the daily issues of hunger, poverty and homelessness. Knights Table has helped alleviate hunger in Brampton and across the Peel region for over 27 years. They are the only multi-food location in Peel that offers programs and services 365 days per year. You can help them this holiday season, and all year long, by starting a food drive at your work or your school to gather donations. Volunteer at Knights Table to experience first-hand the positive impact their work has on our community or simply fundraise and donate. Every dollar provides three meals for families in need.

Also in Brampton, we have Meals on Wheels, which has been helping those in need live independently since 1963. With the early onset of winter this year and the recent snowy weather, they're concerned about funding for their snow-day meals to help feed 400 seniors who need their service during inclement weather. Donations from the public or local businesses would be appreciated so that those in need stay happy, safe and well.

### GUY HARLEV

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Last week, I had the great pleasure of meeting an incredible entrepreneur with an incredible story. Two and a half years ago, Guy Harlev and his wife immigrated to Canada from Israel. They had visited Toronto and fell in love with our city.

In his first year in Canada, he opened the first Canadian location of the popular Israeli restaurant-café, Cafe Landwer, in Richmond Hill. His second location is just down the street from Queen's Park, Speaker, at Adelaide and University.

Landwer Coffee has a storied history: It started as a family-run coffee bar in Berlin in Germany in 1919. When the Nazis came to power, the Landwer family immigrated to Israel, where, today, there are over 60 Cafe Landwer locations. Guy is carrying on that history in Canada with Cafe Landwer's first international location, which employs more than 100 people right here in Toronto. I'm excited to share, Mr. Speaker, that Guy will be opening five new stores this year, including in my great riding of Willowdale. I have to say that I'm a little bit more than excited to be able to get my fix of halloumi cheese and labneh a little closer to home.

From Tel Aviv to Toronto, Guy is a true new-Canadian success story. It's small business owners like Guy who drive our economy here in Ontario, and it's stories like his that make me proud of the work our government is doing to give entrepreneurs the tools they need to prosper. Speaker, when our small businesses thrive, our communities thrive.

I want to congratulate Guy once again on his success and thank him for supporting our community in Willowdale. We can't wait to welcome Cafe Landwer to the neighbourhood.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I rise today to address the housing crisis affecting my riding of London-Fanshawe. Every week, I hear from constituents struggling to find housing in London. They are single people working full-time jobs, families who need more space, students and seniors on fixed incomes and people receiving social assistance. It doesn't matter what your background is; everyone is facing the same concern: a lack of affordable housing.

Since 2016, the average price of a one-bedroom apartment has increased by \$320 per month. London has seen rent increase 15% in the past year alone. That means that 67% of low-income earners spend more than half of their income on housing. The wait-list in London for rent-geared-to-income housing has over 5,000 applicants, and it can take up to eight years for people to move into housing. According to city staff, London needs 30,000 new units to house those who can't keep pace with rising rents or spend huge proportions of their paycheque on housing.

The housing problem is compounded by the fact that the cost of buying a home has increased dramatically over the past few years, rental turnovers are low and vacancy rates are around 1%. This all adds up to a very dangerous and precarious housing crisis for Londoners, and the crisis is by no means unique to London. That is why I demand this Ford government to take real action and to commit to building new affordable homes, inclusionary zoning and to restore rent controls on new units in Ontario.

## ADOPTION

**Mrs. Nina Tangri:** Early this year, our government announced that we would be reviewing supports and processes in place regarding adoption in Ontario to ensure that the needs of families and children were being met.

Soon after the announcement, I partnered with the Peel Children's Aid Society to host a round table to gather feedback. Over 70 people attended, some of whom had already adopted, some looking to adopt and even some who had been adopted. We heard from the community on the challenges they face, such as long wait times, a lack of post-adoption supports, restrictive matching and inefficient processes and operations, with form after form after form to fill out, making matters more complicated and daunting for some.

We also heard that there's a lack of awareness here in Ontario and a need for adoptive families. A special concern was splitting up children and the need for families willing to adopt teenagers. Speaker, these issues need to be addressed for the betterment of children and families across the province.

I met some of the most caring, wonderful people who had opened their homes. One family fostered a child who was only a few days old. Now, more than a year later, the paperwork has still not been approved so that they can formally adopt her.

I also met two teenagers who had been adopted as teens—and the gratefulness they felt to finally have a stable home and family.

Many of those who were adopting had been adopted themselves. That's why I'm looking forward to the outcomes of these round tables and will work closely with the ministers to keep pressing this issue to ensure that we have the right programs and services in place to address the needs of the greater community.

I look forward to continuing to engage with my community and sincerely thank all of those who came out.

## COMMUNITY HEALING CALL-IN

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Recently, we held our Oakwood and Vaughan Community Healing Call-In at Montage Support Services, a landmark organization dedicated to disability communities. It was an opportunity for us to come together in St. Paul's and discuss recent incidents of violence in our community and how we're going to figure out our journey forward together.

The event couldn't have happened without my staff; Restaurant Canadian Caribbean, which catered; John Howard Society staff; Chana, who provided our entire packed House with naloxone training; and special guests Yami and Brenda, both residents, who shared their wisdom, stories and talents with our community family.

Mr. Speaker, the housing shortage and homelessness—we really need that to be declared an emergency crisis, because it is, and our community is scared, especially for our lower-income, underemployed residents and our senior residents, who are struggling to pay rent on a fixed income.

We also heard that we need community centres, a Caribbean culture centre, longer library hours and spaces for youth so that they can come together, thrive, dream and achieve together.

We need tougher gun laws. Weapons have no place in our riding, and that's a real thing that we're worried about. And we need OHIP that really, fully, comprehensively supports our mental health needs.

There was so much more that I could go into, including, of course, support for our local businesses, especially those on Eglinton West and near Dufferin and Eglinton that have been damaged economically due to the Eglinton Crosstown construction.

All in all, Oakwood-Vaughan: an amazing community. Come visit us. We are healing together.

## VĚRA MARIE KOHOUTOVÁ

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** It is an honour to rise in the House today, especially on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Today, I would like to recognize an outstanding member of the Scarborough–Guildwood community. For a number of years, Mrs. Věra Marie Kohoutová has been at the centre of Czech Canadian community in Scarborough. She has helped organize many cultural events in the Czech Canadian community, including the Canada 150 community celebration at Masaryk Memorial Institute.

## 1510

Her friends and family describe Věra as a selfless volunteer who goes above and beyond to help her neighbours. They say that you would never know that she is a senior citizen because of her active schedule. Věra is full of energy and committed to her community's cultural and social life. Věra is the editor of the community newspaper *Nový Domov*, which means “new homeland” in English. The paper is the oldest still-running Czech and Slovak newspaper published outside of the Czech and Slovak republics.

This past November marked the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism in Europe. Ontario is home to many people who came to Canada from former communist countries in search of a better life. I am grateful that people like Věra, who was born in the Czech Republic, have called Ontario and Scarborough–Guildwood home.

It is with sadness that Věra is stepping back from her many commitments in the community, as she is fighting pancreatic cancer. Věra, I know that you and the community are watching today, and I thank you for your years of service to the Czech Canadian community in Scarborough. I wish you good health and happiness, and we are all here at the Legislature cheering for you.

## ANNE MARIE D'AMICO

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Today, December 3, is the birthday of Anne Marie D'Amico. She would have been 32 years old today. Tragically, she was violently taken

from us and her family on north Yonge Street on April 23, 2018, by a stranger in what became known as the Toronto van attack. Ten people were killed and 16 seriously injured within a matter of minutes, but the impact of the violent attack on innocent people going about their daily lives affected the entire city of Toronto and all of its residents.

Anne Marie D'Amico was a passionate young woman who led by example and influenced positive change through her altruistic behaviour. In order to embody Anne Marie's spirit, character and kindness, and to continue her legacy, her family, led by her brother Nick, has launched the Anne Marie D'Amico Foundation, dedicated to ending violence against women.

Tonight, December 3, the foundation will host its first annual Turtle Project, an evening of dance performances, live music and magic to spark positive change at the Meridian Arts Centre. I will be attending, along with my colleague the member from Willowdale, and I am pleased to say that the event has sold out, but I encourage everyone to celebrate the life of Anne Marie D'Amico, to support the efforts of her friends and family, and to donate to the D'Amico foundation to help create a positive legacy for this young woman, who was robbed of the opportunity to create her own.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Last month I hosted a social assistance town hall with two legal clinics that serve my riding: Scarborough and West Scarborough Community Legal Services. The people at the town hall voiced their concerns about this government's plan to slash the 3% increase to Ontario Works and ODSP benefits in half next year. People are already having to think twice about buying essentials like milk and eggs. They're walking to their medical appointments because they can't afford public transit.

Over the past 20 years, consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have allowed poverty to deepen. They have ignored the root causes of poverty and failed to take action. Under Conservative Premier Mike Harris, social assistance rates were slashed by 21% and never restored by the Wynne or McGuinty Liberals. Since then, Ontario's social assistance rates have fallen more than in any other province, keeping OW and ODSP recipients in deep poverty.

Today, after adjusting for inflation, OW and ODSP recipients receive less support than they did in the 1990s after the Harris cuts. As a result, poverty has worsened. Food bank use, particularly in the suburbs, has skyrocketed. Toronto has the second-highest rates of child poverty in Canada, and my riding of Scarborough Southwest has some of the deepest levels of inequality in the city. According to research by the children's aid society, one in three children in Scarborough Southwest live in poverty. Cuts to OW and ODSP benefits will push those already at a disadvantage into even deeper poverty.

Ontario is a wealthy province in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Families should not be falling

behind and further into poverty. I and the NDP will continue to hold this government to account and fight for policies that reduce poverty. I ask this Conservative government to listen and work together to ensure that all Ontarians can make a good life here.

#### WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** It's a pleasure to speak about the important topic of workplace health and safety. We can all agree that everyone deserves to come home safely after a hard day's work. That's why Bill 152, the Occupational Safety and Health Day Act, is so important. Recognizing occupational health and safety every year helps foster a positive culture in workplaces across Ontario. It helps to nurture a culture where a safe and healthy working environment is respected by all.

We know that a safer workplace results in many benefits to the employer, including high productivity, fewer sick days and lower WSIB premiums. It builds a strong reputation and makes attracting qualified employees easier.

For workers and their families, they expect their employers, their government and this Legislature to do what they can to ensure they come home safe to their families at the end of each workday.

Workplace injuries still occur every day and profoundly affect workers and their families. This day would help educate employers and employees on the importance of safety.

Speaker, Bill 152 is a great opportunity to encourage and improve health and safety in every workplace in Ontario. There will always be more work we can do, but together, Ontario can continue to lead in workplace health and safety.

#### RANI ANTO

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** Today I rise to honour the accomplishments of Mrs. Rani Anto, a constituent from the great riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville. Rani was recently awarded the 2019 Bhayana Family Foundation Innovation and Creativity Award.

The Bhayana Family Foundation Awards recognize extraordinary contributions made by front-line staff and middle managers who are tackling local issues at United Way's greater Toronto area supported agencies. Their hashtag is #Unignorable. Award recipients are chosen for their dedication to helping people thrive and succeed through commitment, creativity, leadership and partnership. I was extremely proud to hear that a constituent from my riding was honoured with such a prestigious award.

Rani currently works at the Newcomer Centre of Peel as a full-time teacher. She has been in this position since 2015. Around that time, many refugees arrived in Canada. At the Newcomer Centre of Peel, Rani worked diligently to welcome these refugees to Ontario and helped them integrate into their new environment. Rani was recognized for the extraordinary contributions she made as a front-line

staff member. Rani managed a class whose graduates are now nearly all employed full-time and thriving, integrated members of our community in Ontario.

Thank you, Rani, for your dedication and service to the people of this great province. Please keep up the great work.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated December 3, 2019, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

*Report deemed adopted.*

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

**Mr. Roman Baber:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim):** Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

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):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

*Report adopted.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 25, 2019, the bill is ordered for third reading.

1520

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### COPD AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2019 LOI DE 2019 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION À LA BPCO

Mr. Kanapathi moved first reading of the following bill:  
Bill 157, An Act to proclaim COPD Awareness Day /  
Projet de loi 157, Loi proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation à la BPCO.

**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 Markham–Thornhill like to explain his bill?

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** COPD is an incurable lung disease that affects more than 2.5 million Canadians, half of whom have not been properly diagnosed. In Ontario, approximately 10% of adults are living with COPD. Increased public awareness, early detection and treatment are imperative to prevent the progression of this extremely serious lung disease.

The bill proclaims the third Wednesday in November of each year as COPD Awareness Day.

### SELECTION PANEL, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I'm seeking unanimous consent that, pursuant to subsection 4(3) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the member for Guelph, Mike Schreiner, be included on the selection panel for the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Calandra is seeking unanimous consent of the House that, pursuant to subsection 4(3) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the member for Guelph, Mike Schreiner, be included on the selection panel for the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Agreed? Agreed.

### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** I'm honoured to rise today to mark the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Since 1992, countries around the world have observed December 3 as a time to raise awareness about accessibility.

In Ontario, 2.6 million people have a disability.

Mr. Speaker, in Ontario we continue on our journey to make our province accessible. Our government is committed to protecting what matters most to people with disabilities and their families. By helping to remove accessibility barriers, we are empowering everyone to drive their own futures on their own terms.

We are taking a cross-government approach towards accessibility. This includes working with partners in the disability community, business, not-for-profit and broader public sectors. Collaboration is key in making this happen. By working together, we'll make a positive difference that will impact the daily lives of people with disabilities.

We are helping improve understanding and awareness about accessibility. For example, our EnAbling Change

program provides funding to not-for-profit disability and industry associations to develop practical tools and guides to help communities and businesses understand the benefits of accessibility. Many of these free resources are available on a convenient web page at [ontario.ca/accessiblebusiness](http://ontario.ca/accessiblebusiness).

One of the resources is a handbook called *The Business of Accessibility: How to Make Your Main Street Business Accessibility Smart*. It includes helpful tips to help businesses be welcoming to all customers.

When communities and businesses are accessible, everyone benefits. People with disabilities can take part in everyday life, and businesses gain potential talent, customers and higher profits.

As part of our government's commitment to break down barriers in the built environment, we are providing \$1.3 million to the Rick Hansen Foundation to help make buildings more accessible. This accessibility certification program will provide free accessibility ratings of 250 building over two years.

Just two months ago, we announced ways that Ontario is making its education system more accessible. For example, the updated elementary health and physical education curriculum reflects the diversity of Ontario students.

The K-12 and Post-Secondary Education Standards Development Committees resumed their work this fall to provide advice to government on addressing education barriers.

Also, the processes for families requesting service animals to accompany their child to school are clearer.

We're providing \$1.4 billion in funding for the 2019-20 school year to help school boards install accessibility features in learning environments.

Ontario is advancing accessibility. However, we know that a lot of work still needs to be done. It requires changing attitudes about disability.

As we recognize the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, I invite my MPP colleagues to join me as we work to bring positive change to the daily lives of people with disabilities.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Responses?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** This is an important day. This is the International Day for Persons with Disabilities. This is also the 25th anniversary, last Friday, of the accessibility movement in Ontario embodied in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

I want to acknowledge at this moment, as the critic for people with disabilities in this province, that that act was created by sympathetic people in this chamber, pushed by disability rights activists in this province and around this country.

I want to salute in particular David Lepofsky, who is here, who is the current chair of the AODA Alliance. I also want to salute my friend Sarah Jama, who is here with the Disability Justice Network of Ontario, and who is one of this country's tireless campaigners for disability rights.

I also want to salute the legacy of Gary Malkowski, who was part of the NDP government from 1990 to 1995,

who was the first deaf parliamentarian in this space, and who championed the case brought in 1994 to have an act that was finally realized in 2005 with the AODA.

I want to salute people like Laura Kirby-McIntosh, her daughter, Clara McIntosh, and her partner, Bruce McIntosh. I want to salute Sherry Caldwell, with the Ontario Disability Coalition. I want to salute Sally Thomas and I want to salute Kenzie McCurdy, folks back in Ottawa Centre who have fought tirelessly to get people in our profession to pay attention to them so that it might get embodied in an act like the AODA.

**1530**

But let me be perfectly clear: While we celebrate the AODA, we have to acknowledge, as Mr. Onley acknowledged in his latest report, that we are nowhere near meeting our AODA obligations. Let me be very clear: A \$1.3-million investment to look into the building infrastructure of 250 buildings in this province is vastly short of what we need.

Speaker, I want us to ask ourselves how we would feel if we showed up for work in this place and there was a sign, real or imagined, that said, "You don't get to come into this place today"—because what Mr. Onley said in his report is that those signs, real or imagined, exist across this province. They exist for the dyslexic child right now who is sitting in a school somewhere in Ontario and who is being asked or compelled to write or learn in a way that is not accessible to her or to him. They exist right now for people who, as Sarah has mentioned so eloquently, cannot get life-essential devices for them for months—for months—with the absolute gong show that is the Assistive Devices Program. Can you imagine, Speaker, what would happen to any one of us if crucial services essential for our lives spun around in circles—which happens sometimes when power chairs malfunction—or if crucial devices that allow diabetics to live safely and monitor their insulin level weren't available to us? What would people who are neurotypical or who are the so-called able-bodied have to say? We wouldn't put up with it.

Let us be honest on this day for the elimination of all barriers: We do not have sufficient urgency. Who are we looking after? Let's talk about that for a second.

We returned to this sitting of Parliament to find out that there were five new associate ministers created in this government, each of whom got a \$22,000 pay increase. We found out that this government set in place an incentive structure for deputy ministers so that if they met their targets, they got a 14% pay increase. We found out that this government is constantly maintaining tax expenditures created under previous Liberal governments that allow people who are affluent to deduct things like Raptors tickets and Maple Leafs tickets as legitimate business expenses.

We are hemorrhaging hundreds of millions of dollars every year lavishing things upon the already affluent. That's who Ontario currently serves. What can we spare for people with disabilities? Just \$1.3 million; platitudes around education while people who are hurting, who are suffering, are not getting the essential things they need in life.

I want to name something as I close my remarks. This government, as were previous governments before it, is stuck in a charity model when they regard people with disabilities. They want to think that they're compassionate if they do awareness days or if they do boutique announcements. People with disabilities don't want our charity. They want solidarity. They want an equal opportunity to be themselves. "Free to be," as the DJNO folks say: That's what they want, what any of us would want. What it requires is for us to use the resources of this province fairly and make sure that when we talk about people with disabilities, we empower them to be their fullest selves and we do not create a disabling society.

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's a pleasure to speak on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. We're encouraged to reflect on how persons with disabilities participate in society and how we evaluate the barriers that lay in front of them. It's an opportunity to examine what we can do better to help integrate everybody to fully participate in our society in this province. We have a responsibility as legislators to better include all people in this province.

I want to stop now and tell a little story about a woman named Linda Smith. Linda Smith died about four years ago. She was an exceptional person. She lived in Ottawa and she touched the lives of many as a volunteer for politicians of every stripe—and as you can imagine, in Ottawa, that's a lot of politicians.

Linda had a developmental disability or, as I like to refer to it, an exceptionality. That exceptionality filled her with love and acceptance in abundance. She would often call our office several times a day just to check in, and more than one person has said to me, "You could be having an awful day, and Linda would call and you'd forget all your troubles." She had that effect.

Linda was a regular at city council meetings, often sitting in the front row until the mayor recognized her. There's a plaque at city hall now in honour of her. She loved to have her picture taken with everybody; it didn't matter who. There are hundreds of pictures of her with all sorts of politicians from all over Canada, actually.

Linda would help out with any mundane task. I was thinking about it this year, because she loved to do Christmas cards, especially because it came with lunch: two slices of pizza, with one to take home, and a Pepsi.

She was great company. She loved strawberry milkshakes and ice cream.

Her exceptionality left her vulnerable, and she struggled with how people could be cruel, mean and thoughtless, although she was resilient and was always quick to forgive.

Linda was our friend, and we are the better for it. She had this ability to bring everybody together. It was really quite incredible, and we all miss her.

When I think of Linda, I try to understand what the world looked like through her eyes. I've never quite gotten to that point; I've seen some of that. As legislators, it's not just for the Lindas of the world who have a developmental exceptionality—which also gives them a great gift, in another way—but there are people who have disabilities

and exceptionalities that are different than that. We need to try to see the world through their eyes and understand the barriers that are in front of them—whether that's a device they need to be healthy, as the member from Ottawa Centre said, or whether that's access to a public building, access to a restaurant.

My eyes were opened when my father-in-law became wheelchair-bound and we tried to find a restaurant where we could get him in and out, with an accessible washroom. The definition of "accessible" is definitely different in many different places.

So our job is to see the world through their eyes and then make laws and investments with that in mind.

I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this today, and all the members' words in this House.

Let's remember to try to see the world through their eyes.

## PETITIONS

### ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

**Ms. Rima Berns-McGown:** My petition is "Address Anti-Black Racism in the Peel District School Board.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the disproportionate streaming of Black children into applied courses, disproportionate rates of suspensions and expulsions of Black children for behaviours non-Black children have received lesser consequences for, and racist language directed at Black students are but a few of the many examples of anti-Black racism experienced by Black children and their families in the education system;

"Whereas the Minister of Education announced a review into anti-Black racism in the Peel District School Board and yet failed to appoint an independent Black reviewer as part of the investigation;

"Whereas the members of the black community deserve and need the opportunity to disclose their experiences and have solutions presented to them by experts with lived experience and expertise in anti-Black racism, and previous reviews have centred Black experts within their investigations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the ... Ford government to appoint at least one Black" independent "reviewer to conduct an independent, transparent investigation into allegations of anti-Black racism in the Peel District School Board."

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

1540

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Norman Miller:** I have a petition with regard to climate change presented to me by a very peaceful and

friendly protest group that has been protesting at my Parry Sound constituency office on Fridays. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas climate scientists overwhelmingly agree that governments must act to address global warming caused by human carbon emissions within the next 12 years to mitigate the ongoing and accelerating catastrophe of species extinction and human displacement;

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

“We ask the government of Ontario to declare a climate emergency. We ask that action be taken, without regard to partisan politics, with urgency, and with the best scientific direction. We ask that industrial, residential and automotive carbon emissions be regulated, alternative energy projects be subsidized, and species protection be supported with the seriousness that this commitment requires.”

#### ASSISTIVE DEVICES

**Mr. Tom Rakocvic:** I’m going to be reading a petition from the Disability Justice Network of Ontario. It’s called “Reform Assistive Devices Program (DJNO) Campaign.”

Whereas “the Assistive Devices Program ... is mandated to help people in Ontario with long-term physical disabilities pay for customized equipment, like wheelchairs, walkers, communication devices, hearing aids, and more. The ADP is also supposed to help cover the costs of specialized supplies, such as those used with ostomies;

Whereas “there are many problems with the ADP program. Though it is supposed to take six to eight weeks to be able to have a file processed, people with disabilities can often wait for many more months to hear back about an application, and receive the required assistive device. This is due to a chronic underfunding and understaffing of the program;

Therefore “we, the undersigned, are concerned residents in Ontario with disabilities or who are allies of the disabilities. We urge the government of Ontario to take the following actions as it pertains to the Assistive Devices Program ... in Ontario:

“—license all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices in Ontario;

“—have all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices be subjected to annual reviews by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services;

“—mandate and enforce timely access to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario, including addressing the backlogged files as it relates to” the “Assistive Devices Program;

“—mandate and enforce timely access to repairs as it relates to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario, including addressing the backlogged files as it relates to” the “Assistive Devices Program;

“—mandate and enforce clearer supports as it relates to the transition between pediatric and adult services;

“—mandate and enforce adequate staffing for the Assistive Devices Program, in order to address the backlog.”

I certainly support this petition, will be signing it and giving it to page Visakan.

#### ORGAN DONATION

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** I have a petition here.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas more than 1,600 Ontarians currently await a life-saving organ transplant, and every three days somebody in Ontario dies from a preventable death, waiting for a transplant; and

“Whereas donor registration rates are lowest among 16- to 19-year-olds at 21.2%, which is 12.2 percentage points below the provincial registration rate of 34%; and

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

“To promote organ and tissue donation and transplantation and” to “consider including this as a component of the Ontario secondary school curriculum.”

I will sign this and give it to page Eric.

#### ASSISTIVE DEVICES

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** I proudly present a petition on behalf of the Disability Justice Network of Ontario: “Reform Assistive Devices Program (DJNO) Campaign.” The petition summary and background reads as follows:

“The Assistive Devices Program (ADP) is mandated to help people in Ontario with long-term physical disabilities pay for customized equipment, like wheelchairs, walkers, communication devices, hearing aids, and more. The ADP is also supposed to help cover the costs of specialized supplies, such as those used with ostomies;

“There are many problems with the ADP program. Though it is supposed to take six to eight weeks to be able to have a file processed, people with disabilities can often wait for many more months to hear back about an application and receive the required assistive device. This is due to a chronic underfunding and understaffing of the program;”

The petition asks:

“We, the undersigned, are concerned residents in Ontario with disabilities or who are allies of the disabilities. We urge the government of Ontario to take the following actions as it pertains to the Assistive Devices Program ... in Ontario:

“—license all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices in Ontario;

“—have all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices be subjected to annual reviews by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Service;

“—mandate and enforce timely access to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario, including addressing the backlogged files as it relates to Assistive Devices Program;

“—mandate and enforce timely access to repairs as it relates to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario, including addressing the backlogged files as it relates to” the “Assistive Devices Program;

“—mandate and enforce clearer supports as it relates to the transition between pediatric and adult services;

“—mandate and enforce adequate staffing for the Assistive Devices Program, in order to address the backlog.”

I proudly support this petition, affix my signature and hand it to Luba for filing.

#### ASSISTIVE DEVICES

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I am also proud to read this petition from the Disability Justice Network of Ontario, which is located in my home city of Hamilton, that was signed by many folks in the city of Hamilton. It reads as follows:

“Reform Assistive Devices Program (DJNO) Campaign.

“The Assistive Devices Program (ADP) is mandated to help people in Ontario with long-term physical disabilities pay for customized equipment, like wheelchairs, walkers, communication devices, hearing aids, and more. The ADP is also supposed to help cover the costs of specialized supplies, such as those used with ostomies;

“There are many problems with the ADP program. Though it is supposed to take six to eight weeks to be able to have a file processed, people with disabilities can often wait for many more months to hear back about an application and receive the required assistive device. This is due to a chronic underfunding and understaffing of the program;

“We, the undersigned, are concerned residents in Ontario with disabilities or who are allies of” those with “disabilities. We urge the government of Ontario to take the following actions as it pertains to the Assistive Devices Program ... in Ontario:

“—license all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices in Ontario;

“—have all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices be subjected to annual reviews by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services;

“—mandate and enforce timely access to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario, including addressing the backlogged files as it relates to Assistive Devices Program;

“—mandate and enforce timely access to repairs as it relates to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario, including addressing the backlogged files as it relates to” the “Assistive Devices Program;

“—mandate and enforce clearer supports as it relates to the transition between pediatric and adult services;

“—mandate and enforce adequate staffing for the Assistive Devices Program, in order to address the backlog.”

This is an extremely important petition. I am proud to sign my name to it and give it to page Sarah to bring to the Clerk.

#### TUITION

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a compulsory 10% tuition cut with no compensating increase to government funding will have a huge negative impact on post-secondary education;

“Whereas eliminating the OSAP tuition grants for low-income students will make post-secondary education even less accessible to underprivileged members of our society;

“Whereas eliminating the six-month interest-free grace period for student loans will increase the student debt burden and make post-secondary study less accessible to low-income students;

“Be it resolved that the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party withdraw these proposed attacks on students, university and college workers and equity-seeking residents of Ontario; and

“Be it further resolved that the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party commit to reversing their policy changes to OSAP by restoring the six-month interest rate grace period and the 2018 model of grants and loans; and

“Match the 10% tuition cuts with an equal increase to government funding for Ontario colleges and universities.”

I fully support this petition, and I’ll be giving it to page Peter.

#### ASSISTIVE DEVICES

**Mr. Joel Harden:** A number of my colleagues have read this petition, so what I’ll do, with due respect to the people who signed it, is get right to the ask dimension, in case there’s anybody else who has a petition they would like to present today. I do want to say thank you to Ian Borsuk in Hamilton, who is one of the co-signers of this particular petition.

From the Disability Justice Network of Ontario, the asks are:

“We, the undersigned, are concerned residents in Ontario with disabilities or who are allies of” those with “disabilities. We urge the government of Ontario to take the following actions as it pertains to the Assistive Devices Program ... in Ontario:

“—license all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices in Ontario;

“—have all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices be subjected to annual reviews by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services;

“—mandate and enforce timely access to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario, including addressing the backlogged files as it relates to” the “Assistive Devices Program;

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“—mandate and enforce timely access to repairs as it relates to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario...;

“—mandate and enforce clearer supports as it relates to the transition between pediatric and adult services;

“—mandate and enforce adequate staffing for the Assistive Devices Program, in order to address the backlog.”

I am honoured to sign this petition and will be handing it to the Clerks’ table thanks to my friend Eric.

#### ASSISTIVE DEVICES

**Mr. Gurratan Singh:** I am proud today to sign the petition from the Disability Justice Network of Ontario. As my other colleagues have done, I will go directly to the asks, in the interest of time:

“We, the undersigned, are concerned residents in Ontario with disabilities or who are allies of the disabilities. We urge the government of Ontario to take the following actions as it pertains to the Assistive Devices Program (ADP) in Ontario:

“—license all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices in Ontario;

“—have all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices be subjected to annual reviews by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services;

“—mandate and enforce timely access to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario, including addressing the backlogged files as it relates to” the “Assistive Devices Program;

“—mandate and enforce timely access to repairs as it relates to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario, including addressing the backlogged files as it relates to” the “Assistive Devices Program;

“—mandate and enforce clearer supports as it relates to the transition between pediatric and adult services;

“—mandate and enforce adequate staffing for the Assistive Devices Program, in order to address the backlog.”

I fully support this petition. I’ll be affixing my name to it and then giving it to page Visakan.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I’m presenting this petition on behalf of the Family Council Network 4 Advocacy.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard to provide an average of

four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

#### ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** I proudly present “Address Anti-Black Racism in the Peel District School Board.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the disproportionate streaming of Black children into applied courses, disproportionate rates of suspensions and expulsions of Black children for behaviours non-Black children have received lesser consequences for, and racist language directed at Black students are but a few of the many examples of anti-Black racism experienced by Black children and their families in the education system;

“Whereas the Minister of Education announced a review into anti-Black racism in the Peel District School Board and yet failed to appoint an independent Black reviewer as part of the investigation;

“Whereas the members of the Black community deserve and need the opportunity to disclose their experiences and have solutions presented to them by experts with lived experience and expertise in anti-Black racism, and previous reviews have centred Black experts within their investigations;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the ... Ford government to appoint at least one Black” independent “reviewer to conduct an independent, transparent investigation into allegations of anti-Black racism in the Peel District School Board.”

As an educator, I couldn’t sign onto this more. Thank you very, very much, Sarah.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2019, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion, as amended, regarding amendments to the standing orders.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** When this matter was last on the floor, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence had the floor. We turn now to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you’ll recall, we were talking about the changes to the standing orders proposed by the government, as well as the amendments to the motion proposed by the opposition. I started by noting that I was disappointed because there was, I think, an attempt to politicize the collaborative, multi-party process undertaken by the government House leader with the Clerks and representatives of the opposition and independent members over the summer to strike a new set of standing orders.

We went through a couple of the ones I wanted to talk about. The first and most important, especially on this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, was the proposal that would allow the Speaker to alter the rules of the Legislature that prevent the full participation of members with disabilities, which currently you have to seek unanimous consent to approve. So that was the first. I thought—I certainly would hope—that if there was one thing we could all agree on, it would be that, but unfortunately the opposition said that they can't support a single one of the changes that we were putting forward, and I expressed my disappointment with that.

The second one that I talked about was very common-sense changes such as formally allowing the use of electronic devices in the chamber in a non-disruptive manner, which of course is kind of done right now with some toleration, but is actually still against the rules. Why don't we formalize it and allow the Speaker to focus more attention on decorum, which sometimes we need the Speaker to focus on?

Number three, I talked about the standing orders' ability to amend the daily order of business to conduct members' statements in the morning before question period and to incorporate introduction of visitors into the proceeding. The intent of this is to increase the profile, as I said, of members' statements, which again I would expect to be rather uncontroversial. But apparently not. Within that, we were going to also incorporate introduction of visitors within routine proceedings so that there are stricter limits on the possible length, and provide a simplified and consistent format for the introduction of visitors. The most important point I think I mentioned there was that the introduction of visitors was originally added to the standing orders to prevent the use of points of order for that purpose, and that fewer interruptions, of course, are always welcome. But apparently that also was too extreme for the official opposition to support.

Just as we were finishing this morning, I was talking about the government's proposed changes allowing night sittings in the final 18 sessional days as opposed to the final 12, which is what it is currently. The idea would be to not cram them all into the last two weeks so we would have more time. The other part of that was the proposed change that would permit the government to cancel a night sitting when notice has been given but the night sitting is no longer required. Currently, the government must wait for the night sitting to begin, which is really not an effective use of anyone's time.

Carrying on from there, another proposed change to make more efficient use of everyone's time would allow the government House leader to call, "No further business," at which point the House would adjourn to the next proceeding or the next sessional day. We can already do this during the morning session, but the proposed change would allow the government House leader to do so during the afternoon session as well. It seems to me that sparing all the members from 30 minutes of bells when there is no further business to be conducted should be an uncontroversial, common-sense change to the rules, especially if it

means everybody getting home to their ridings sooner on a Thursday afternoon. But no, Speaker, the official opposition says they cannot support a single change. I don't know about you, but I'm starting to notice a bit of a trend with all of this.

Let's talk about debate next, because that's what we spend the bulk of our time doing when we're in the chamber. It's what I'm doing right now.

One very simple change that the government House leader has proposed is allowing a bill to be debated more than once on the same sessional day. It seems to me to be an unnecessary complexity for the House schedule to do it otherwise. If the intent of the measure in the current standing orders was to substantially delay the progress of a bill, it doesn't do that. It just makes it more complicated for everyone involved. Speaker, perhaps this one minor change is why the official opposition insists they're unable to support a single one of the proposed changes that we've put forward. But if that's the case, I'm very pleased to inform them that we are maintaining other restrictions which prevent the government from expediting a bill in a way that we currently cannot, because the facts are, even with the additional time for debate in the morning and afternoon, a bill would not receive enough debate to pass in one day. And we have specifically indicated that a bill and a motion for time allocation for that bill may not be considered on the same calendar day to preserve existing standards relating to timelines for the passage of legislation. So that's not changing.

#### 1600

What we have proposed to change is making that debate more meaningful. A big part of that proposal is to reform the 10-minute questions-and-comments period, what currently consists of four two-minute discussions on a member's speech, followed by a two-minute response from the member. Unfortunately, this current practice doesn't encourage direct debate between those members. It doesn't require members to pose meaningful questions to those who debate, and it doesn't require those who debate to give meaningful responses to those questions or comments. That's why I really liked those proposed changes so much, giving members the opportunity to ask a question of any speaker during debate: one minute for a question and one minute for a response, repeated five times, for 10 minutes of meaningful back-and-forth debate—fewer comments, more questions and, most importantly, more opportunities for meaningful discussion and reflection for all members of this House.

While we're on the topic of questions, I should note that the proposed changes to the standing orders would also impact the daily ritual of question period—in a good way, of course. Since getting here a year and a half ago, I've noticed that most of the questions in the House go directly to the Premier—or the Deputy Premier or the government House in their absence—who will have to rise and refer the question to the appropriate minister. This is a practice that simply doesn't exist in any other Canadian Legislature, and certainly not in the federal House of Commons either. While each individual referral takes just a few

seconds off the clock, over the course of a daily question period, that takes away valuable time that could be used more effectively, allowing members to be asking questions and receiving answers from government ministers or their parliamentary assistants, whoever is best equipped to provide an answer to a member's question.

Before I conclude my remarks on this, I want to touch on one proposed change in the government's motion that I am personally quite excited about: changes to the co-sponsorship rules for private members' bills. Speaker, in the time that I have been here, I have quickly learned that private members' bills are one of the most effective ways for an individual member to raise an issue in the House. Each Thursday afternoon, three members of this place get time on the floor of the House to raise an issue or a concern that is important to them and to their constituents, one that may not be addressed in the government legislation that occupies most of our time in this chamber. But currently, two members from the same party may not co-sponsor a bill. I understand that the original intent of this rule was to promote members reaching out across the aisle—which I think is a laudable goal for all us—but the reality is that for some bills, co-sponsorship from two members of the same party may be entirely appropriate.

The other reality, of course, is that we have more parties represented in this Legislature than ever before. In addition to the recognized PC and NDP caucuses, we have independent members representing both the Liberal and Green parties.

Under the current rules, we could not have one member from each of the four parties co-sponsor a single piece of legislation in a true demonstration of cross-partisan support. The proposed changes to the standing orders would change that. It would allow us to do that.

And since I've mentioned the independent members, I think it's only fair to mention how the proposed changes to the standing orders for the duration of this Parliament would help them participate more meaningfully in the proceedings in this place. Some of the changes specific to the 42nd Parliament put forward by the government House leader would:

- allow independent members the ability to share their time in response to ministerial statements;

- allow up to 12 minutes overall, and three minutes each, for independent members on debate on opposition day motions;

- allow up to 12 minutes overall, and three minutes each, for independent members on debate on time allocation motions;

- allot 15 minutes to independent members at estimates; and

- allow independent members to substitute for each other at committee.

Speaker, these proposed changes all serve to increase the participation and engagement of independent members and are proposed in the spirit of enhancing debate, as is the entire package that I have reviewed proposed in the spirit of enhancing debate. I think they do only serve to enhance debate, improve accessibility for members and create

more opportunities for all of the members in this Legislature, including the independent members, to meaningfully participate in the many important deliberations that take place here each and every day.

I want to thank the government House leader for his efforts and work over the summer to put together this package of proposals that will enhance debate and will ultimately make this chamber work better for all of its members.

I want to recognize the active participation of the independent Liberal and Green members in the process, as well as the role the official opposition took—at least until they chose to walk away from the table. Unfortunately, it seems that the official opposition would prefer to play politics. I think that's too bad, but there's still time for them to read these proposals—which, I've said, are common-sense proposals, things I think we should all be able to get behind; some of them, I would think, not controversial in any way—and look at them and see if there aren't some changes here that they can support.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this motion today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I believe the member for Brampton East has a point of order.

**Mr. Gurratan Singh:** Thank you, Speaker. I just want to quickly correct my record. During petitions, I mispronounced the name of one of the pages. Visakan is the correct pronunciation. It's very important that we take time to honour and learn the diverse names that exist within our province. Having a diverse name myself, I understand this, so I wanted to quickly apologize to the page and correct my record. The name is Visakan.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Thank you. It's always in order and appropriate for a member to correct his or her record.

Further debate?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I am pleased to be able to stand in this place on behalf of the good folks of Hamilton Mountain to participate in this debate and in this motion that has been brought forward by the government and also to speak about the amendment and the subamendment that the New Democrats have put forward trying to help the government along as they are proposing changes and debating.

I want to start with the fact that I have heard from many members on the other side how New Democrats have refused to participate and how we have just pushed all notion aside of all of the changes, saying that we couldn't agree to anything. In the good words of our dear friend Peter Kormos, I would have to say that that's bull spit. That is absolutely not true. We have been working, on this side of the House—and I'm going to start on this section on disability rights and access for people who need to be able to access the Legislature if they have a disability and to be able to have full access, as all members should enjoy.

They've said that we disagree with it and how dare we, that they're shocked by the fact that we would do this. In fact, many of our members have stood in this House and fought for disability rights against this government—

rights that they have refused to allow people of this province with disabilities to have. Now they're choosing to try to paint us with the brush that we don't support disability rights, and that is the first thing that I wanted to get on the record, saying shame on the members for bringing that into the debate. If they want to talk about their motion and they want to talk about their belief in the changes to the standing orders, that they think it's good, that's what they should stick to. They don't need to go to the fact that we don't believe in disability rights. I think that's just totally tarnishing the debate. It hurts the reputation of folks in this House, because there is no credibility. I think the people of Ontario know, quite frankly, who is standing on their side when it comes to disability rights in this province, and it certainly is not the Conservative government.

**1610**

Other changes that the government House leader has proposed are allowing night sittings to come into effect and having bills proposed several times a day. I'm bringing up these two particularly because they're talking about the House moving efficiently, that the government needs to be able to have time to put forward the legislation that they wish to be debated and have it move in a timely fashion. Well, quite frankly, Speaker, they already have the ability to do that. We have seen time allocation happen on pretty much every single bill. Of 27 bills debated in the House, 25 of them have been time-allocated by this government, who are already pushing things through this House. Now they're saying that they need to bring in more rules to move things quicker.

We're seeing stuff move through this House so quickly that the people of Ontario don't even have an opportunity to be able to come and speak to a deputation. For the cannabis bill, amendments were moved for the same day at 6 p.m. We couldn't even get people into the House to be able to talk to this stuff. For Bill 74, the people's health care, thousands of pages of written submissions were received by the 6 p.m. deadline following hearings, and the amendments deadline was less than 48 hours later, providing virtually no time to go through the submissions. So here we are as legislators in Ontario: We're expected to participate in making laws, and yet this government, in all of their wisdom, thinks that 48 hours is enough time to go through thousands of pages with amendments and to be able to have people come and speak to these bills. This government doesn't care about what the people of Ontario have to say. It's very clear.

And now this motion that has been brought before us will do just exactly that: It will force things quickly through this House. We have an example that was laid out here stating that a bill can start on Monday during p.m. orders and continue in debate during the night sitting to get to the six and a half hours needed to move the time allocation motion. The time allocation motion is written in such a way that there are no committee hearings and minimal or no third reading debate—and they can write whatever they want in a time allocation; we've seen it. Then the third reading process immediately follows the

second reading, possibly without deferral. On Tuesday, the time allocation motion is debated. On Wednesday, you vote on the time allocation motion—that takes place after question period—and then we can vote on second and third reading. That could take place in the p.m. orders.

That leaves absolutely no time for the people of this province—let alone the people who have been sent here to represent our ridings—to be able to participate in debate. That is shocking. It is shocking that the government thinks it needs a bigger paddle to hit the opposition over the head with, to be able to push things through faster. If they used the process that they currently have in front of them and tried to possibly stick to that process, they might be able to get through things appropriately. But because they rush so many things quickly, we're seeing them back up and having to put amendments forward to their own bills. We see them have to bring forward new legislation to make up for the last bad legislation, to correct their own legislation. They're backtracking and creating chaos here.

For example, this morning we've seen the government ring the bells on themselves for 30 minutes, wasting more time—more time that they claim they need. They're wasting all of that time because they are rushing things through so quickly that they can't even get their own house in order as to what bills are supposed to be debated by more time allocation motions. For instance, this morning, if they didn't run the bells, adjourn the debate—which was on the standing orders, which they called first. I think they were so excited about coming to the House this morning to speak to the standing orders motion that they just tripped over themselves and forgot to call—is it Bill 116?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Bill 116.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Bill 116 was the mental health and addictions bill that had a time allocation on it that said that that bill had to be called today. They caught their mistake, they adjourned debate, rang bells for 30 minutes—

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** They don't even have much on the order paper.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** They've got nothing on the order paper—nothing. They can't keep track of two bills; one motion and one bill they can't keep track of. And they want more time; they want a bigger hammer.

This is a problem, and we see this as a trend. If they were concerned about their debate time, why did they take an extra 25 days off this session? The House was supposed to resume right after Labour Day. We should have been back on September 9. Instead, we returned on October 28—25 extra sessional days wasted. I have an idea of why that happened. Others could also guess, but I'm quite sure it had something to do with a federal election that was happening. It's just coincidental that the House didn't resume until after the federal election, so that the Premier could pop back out of his hole, just like Groundhog Day, and say, "It's time to go to work now"—because we didn't see him through the entire election and, coincidentally, we lost 25 sessional days. Now we see the government asking for a bigger hammer to be able to push things through quickly. It's a farce.

Then they talk about us in the opposition, saying that they can't believe it. They're just mortified that the opposition would say that they couldn't find anything good in this bill. What we can't find is the ability to make an agreement with a government that truly doesn't have the best interests of people in all of this. The government is not putting forward standing orders changes for the best interests of Ontarians. That is very clear. We see this is in the best interests of the government, so why would we help them push that through? Why would we hold hands—oh, hold hands like you're doing with the Liberals? Liberal, Tory, same old story. They're tight, Speaker; that's what's going on here.

The Liberals and the Green Party have been given a backroom deal. They'll push bills through, they'll help them do things if they go along with these standing orders so that they can continue the dialogue that the Conservatives are friendly to everyone now. They want to work with everyone in the House these days. They want private members' bills to be shared widely. Maybe we can put 10 people on one private member's bill so they can all take one piece of legislation home to their riding about, probably, a proclaimed day—nothing much, I'm sure; nothing much for the good of the people of Ontario. We know that because we haven't really seen much pass through this House for the good people of Ontario: That is absolutely for sure.

The other thing about not having their house in order: PMBs are waived. The private members' business—we've seen waivers happen daily. For the people at home, when we table a private member's bill, the members of this Legislature get a date when they will read their bill, which is called second reading. So you have to have that tabled at a certain time allotment before your reading date. But because this government is fumbling constantly, they're having to waive the rules so that they can table them days before the debate. One was actually—first reading was tabled for a bill today that we'll be reading on Thursday. Last week, we saw the member from Burlington have to reintroduce a bill and have her private member's bill waived because she had the Day of Mourning as the date for workplace safety day. As we all know, April 28 is the Day of Mourning in the province of Ontario.

So they're fumbling over themselves because they're rushing to get things through, because they need more time. They need more time because they took an extra-long vacation. They were spending more time on the federal election and hiding their leader than they were being here, what they're paid to do. Our jobs are to be here in the Legislature, creating legislation, working together to get it done. Instead, the Conservatives were off doing other work than what they were supposed to be doing here at the Legislature.

It's also really interesting—we're talking about changes. I did a Google search. This article reads, "Doug Ford Changing Queen's Park Rules to Pass Bills More Quickly." This one reads, "Ford Government Seeking New Powers to Pass Bills More Quickly." It almost sounds like the exact same title. You would think that it would be

the exact article, that it would have something close. The funny part is, the first title that I read, "Doug Ford Changing Queen's Park Rules to Pass Bills More Quickly," was dated September 15, 2018, and this one, "Ford Government Seeking New Powers to Pass Bills More Quickly," is from November 10, 2019. So this is not a new thing that happens around here at the Ontario Legislature. Every government of the day is changing the standing orders to try to make it better for themselves.

They implemented changes for the independent members, but what I found really interesting was that they talked about it only being for the 42nd Parliament. So they're making deals with these independent members, but these changes will not count for any governments going forward, so new deals could be rigged up again. That's the way we see it, and that's the way I read it, for sure.

What other changes are happening here?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Night sittings.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Night sittings: They want to be able to call night sittings whenever they see fit, without doing it in the last couple of sessional days, which, again, is just because they're not able to get their legislative business in order.

We've been doing it this way for quite some time.

There used to be night sittings. I believe there were some issues that forced the government of the day to say, "It's probably not a good idea that our members are hanging out at the Legislature at night." I don't want to, by no means, state reasons that I've heard. There was a lot of debate going on here that probably wasn't parliamentary. Maybe that's a way to put it. They thought that the behaviours were cause for changes to the night sittings. That's why night sittings were taken back in the first place.

Quite honestly, there should be enough time in our legislative schedule and agenda to allow the government to put forward good legislation. Instead, we see things that are just drawing us backwards, not in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

So night sittings are something that has happened here before. We still have a couple of them to finish up a few odds and ends. But when we have governments who are stumbling over themselves just to get through a day—that's why they need the night sittings. It helps them correct all their own mistakes. It's giving them the extra time just to, truly, make up for that extra time.

The changes for the independent members and the time that they're allotted: I've also heard that the NDP doesn't want the Liberals to have extra time because the Liberals didn't give it to the NDP. It has nothing to do with the Liberals and the NDP; it has to do with a formula that is based on the number of seats in this Legislature. When the people of Ontario have spoken, then why—Google is my best friend here. Currently, 12 seats—the rule calls for 10%, so what gives a party status is the percentage of seats that they take in the House. With that comes finances, comes debate time, comes participation time. So their jargon about why it's happening and why our displeasure at the entire change package really doesn't make sense, for many reasons.

The members opposite also want to talk about the fact that we're not participating, but when we put forward amendments, that would be participation. We're trying to ask the government to create a select committee, to actually then change the rules of the House in the standing orders within a committee setting, and not just a government with a majority that has a heavy hand and can just push things through.

Work that happens in select committees is good work. I've participated on a select committee for developmental services; we did great work. I would love to see some of that work implemented; unfortunately, it's not. The Minister of Health participated on that committee also, and I'm sure she would say that select committees do good work. She also participated on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, as well as other members in this House. When we participate on that level in a select committee, we do find the collegiality and we do find the balance of being able to work together to find solutions that work for the best interests of the people.

The orders of this House, the rules of this House, are to be set out for the best interest of the people of Ontario. It's not supposed to be about the best interest of the government being able to push things through, about having a heavy hand. That is not the job of the standing orders. The standing orders are to make sure that we have rules to ensure that we have fair debate, not heavy hands and big clubs for a government to be able to use to their own advantage to push legislation through this House.

We've seen them push things through so fast, and we've seen them have to backtrack, have to create new legislation to fix the mistakes of the last legislation. We're seeing them ring bells because they can't get their own House in order. They need to slow down. They need to take their time. They need to make sure that what they're doing actually makes sense.

Maybe by working with other members of the Legislature, like the official opposition, and having common conversations, we might be able to achieve that and to make sure that it truly is in the best interest of Ontarians, not in the best interest of the Ford government.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's a pleasure to stand up and talk about the motion and the proposed changes to the standing orders.

I remember in the summer when I met with the Deputy Clerk about some of the proposals that they were putting forward, largely housekeeping, cleaning up the act—it's not often we get an opportunity to do that. The changes that they put forward: Many of them are in this—I think they're all in this motion. They were needed, and I appreciated the work that they did that on that.

The government, of course, put forward some other changes inside this motion, so when they came to us with that, we took a look at it and we made some modest proposals that I'll talk a bit more about later. We expressed—when I say “we,” I'm talking about Liberal members, independent members, the Green independent

member, and there are four Conservatives over here. Is it four? Three.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** Sorry—it slipped. It slipped, guys. You'll have to guess who it is. Sorry.

It's amazing how we can all have different views on politics and we can all get together, and we all agreed that—we looked at this and we said, “The night sittings—you just can't blow that wide open. You have to have some restriction on that. So if you want to move it to 16 or 18, we'd be okay with that.”

The other concern that we had is late shows. I know there's a proposal to let PAs answer questions—I'll talk a bit more about that later. Our concern was, we just don't want anybody showing up for a late show. If we're going to show up for a late show, we'd like the relevant person, the person who answered that question, to be here. I think that was reasonable.

**1630**

One of the proposed changes is having PAs, parliamentary assistants, answer questions, which we considered when we were in government. I have to say, it's a bit of a double-edged sword. I think that there are many parliamentary assistants who are very knowledgeable on their file, because they're working with a minister who's giving them that latitude. But I can tell you from experience of being over there: That doesn't always happen. You can have some real challenges around having literally 45 people able to answer a question. I think the changes will allow for more participation on the government benches. It's going to mean a lot more preparation for PAs. So I don't have a great deal of concern with it.

I do have a concern around how those questions get referred. I wouldn't want to ask a question—because referral is a convention. It's how we treat each other as legislators. If I ask the government House leader and he doesn't want to answer, he stands up and he says, “Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I refer the question to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.” That's an acknowledgement of the fact that we answer the question, and this person may better answer that. I hope that that continues. But that's a matter of convention, and not a matter of the standing orders.

The other change that I think is a really positive change are the changes to the question-and-answer period. I think it reflects more, again, the experience in the federal Parliament. I think it's going to lead to more natural debate, as opposed to everybody doing a bunch of two-minute hits. There's going to be more discourse going back and forth. I think it will end some of the recitation of talking points that happens. I think that'll be a good thing—more natural. I'm willing to try that. I think that that could be a very, very good thing for us. I don't think it's an attack on democracy to do that. So I think we'll have to listen to each other more closely during debate and during those question-and-answer periods, so that we can respond in an appropriate and, hopefully, practical way.

We've heard from the opposition and the Leader of the Opposition that we made a deal with the devil. “Oh, my

gosh, you've made these awful changes," which I'm not surprised at. There is nothing in this proposal that's going to give the government a great lever to speed legislation through. There are still levers that exist inside there, and the government itself is accountable for its actions. They did get elected. They do have a majority and a mandate. But, also, the way that they conduct business is going to reflect on how their voters see them. That's a big lever too.

So we put forward some modest proposals. Now let's remember that 1.1 million people voted for Ontario Liberals. And if you look at the independents, about 1.5 million people voted for them. That's a lot of people. So I know we've talked a bit about the make-up of this House and how the questions should be distributed, but we have the highest threshold for party status of any Legislature in Canada. It's 10%. That proposal is a challenge for those people who voted for us.

So what we put forward—and we're glad that the government responded in a way that reflects this Parliament. What were those proposals? We'd like to be able to ask a question in question period without having to ask for unanimous consent, that we could manage ourselves—the three different groups inside the independents. That government put that in; we're very pleased. So we wanted to get two questions every day, for 1.5 million people. How many questions do we get out here every day? Like seven, eight, for 1.9 million people, 2.3 million people? I can't count how many. I think we could live with one less friendly a day.

We want the ability to sub in on committees. We can manage ourselves. We can't actually change committees right now. We can't actually even participate in estimates, which is not good for the people who voted for all of these independents here. We want the ability to debate on opposition day motions. I don't think we even have to have an opposition day motion, because it might be hard to manage it between all of us, but we want to be able to speak to it, because you bring forward things that are important to Ontarians. We'd like to participate. We can't do that right now.

We'd like to actually be able to debate on private members' bills: five minutes on each bill—not a big ask; reasonable. If somebody has a private member's bill on either side of the House that I'd like to speak to, I don't want to have to fight to get five minutes.

To speak on time allocations, as well—we can't do that right now. We can vote on it, but we can't speak on it.

They're all very modest proposals, and they reflect the fact that 1.5 million people voted for us here. I very much appreciated the government's willingness to listen to us, that there's a change in tone. I'm not going to let them off the hook on other things, but I do appreciate when people want to work with me.

Last year at this time, here's what I remember. I remember putting forward exactly what was done for the NDP in 2003—exactly. Actually, no, that's not true. We didn't ask for money; the NDP did. Exactly the same things. And the NDP voted with the government against that motion.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** He wasn't here for that.

**Mr. John Fraser:** No, but I was around. I wasn't here, but I was around.

The other thing I remember about this time last year is having to get up every time to ask for unanimous consent because one of my colleagues wasn't here, and being turned down, and the person saying no was the opposition House leader.

I remember being here for Mitzie Hunter's private member's bill on gun control, actually coming back from the airport because we couldn't stand five, and NDP members speaking in favour of it, and when I asked them if they would stand with us—the Green member stood with us—I got yeses. But when it came time to stand, somebody told them, "Don't stand"—a private member's bill on gun control, to bring it to a vote that they were going to support. Really.

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Can't trust them.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Well, hey, don't go that far. Don't go that far. The pot calling—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Order, please. Order.

**Mr. John Fraser:** So sometimes over here—and I'm not speaking about all of my colleagues over here, because I have a lot of respect for them. But there are a few that make me feel that it's not so democratic over there. That's how I see it. You know what? My face is on the Internet now, along with the Premier's and Mike Schreiner's, as—we're attacking democracy. Like, holy cow. Really. I don't want to have this debate—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order, please.

**Mr. John Fraser:** No, seriously. I've kind of had enough of this. What we're doing here is we're trying to make this place work a little bit better. That's all. And to hear that somehow this is an affront and an attack on democracy is like, "Oh, my gosh. Really? Really?"

Maybe, at the end of the day, there are a few people over there who don't want to share the time. I get it. I get it. Maybe I should propose an amendment to this that says, "The Leader of the Opposition gets the first two questions of the day but not the third one. It should go to somebody else." That's not a bad thing. I can't propose that; I won't be doing that. Somebody might want that over there.

Here's my point: Look, I still don't agree with what the government does. I don't agree that there's no plan for education. I don't agree that there's no plan for energy. I don't agree with the things that they are doing. I don't agree with what has happened in autism. But that doesn't mean I can't agree with people when there's a chance to work with them to make this place work better, and I think that is what's happening here. And the official opposition would be well placed to participate in that instead of trying to blow it up. What's the point?

I'd be great with a select committee if it wasn't obstructionist to getting this thing done right now. Maybe there are some other ways we can all get together and talk

about how we can improve this. It's a living thing. This place is living. It needs to change. We need to take a look at what we're doing. That's just obstruction. That's all it is; it's obstruction.

Speaker, I am pleased to have had a chance to be here in this debate and to say a few words, and to ask my colleagues in the official opposition to stop trying to stop this. It's not a bad thing.

Speaker, I appreciate the time very much.

1640

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

**Hon. Todd Smith:** It's great to participate in the debate here this afternoon, and it's great that the other parties are participating in the debate here this afternoon. This is an important conversation, and for whatever reason, yesterday throughout the day, the opposition party, the official opposition, didn't participate in this debate. But I'm glad that they are participating here today, because it is important.

I was the government House leader when this government was elected last year, and spent the year in that beautiful office in the west wing that Mr. Calandra now operates out of. I can tell you that when I was in that office, Mr. Speaker, we always spent time with the leader of the official opposition at our House leaders' meetings, and occasionally we would have Mr. Fraser, the leader of the Liberals, who would come over and participate in some meetings, and Mr. Schreiner from the Green Party would come as well. We also had the opportunity to invite some of the independents to come over and have conversations about how the House would run.

You'll recall that, at that time, it was a bit of unknown territory that we were about to embark on. It was the first time, I think, in the House's history that there were only two recognized parties in the House, because the Liberals had been reduced to non-party status, down to seven members at that time. I believe now they're down to five members.

Of course, we did have a fourth party represented here in the Legislature, and that would be the Green Party, for the first time in the House's history, and a couple of independents then joined them as well.

Early on, I had many conversations with the leader of the Liberals—

**Mr. John Fraser:** You did nothing for us.

**Hon. Todd Smith:** He says I did nothing for him, and that is entirely true, Mr. Speaker. I did nothing for him.

But there was a reason for that, Mr. Speaker. There was a reason for that. It was that when the Legislature was formed and the new makeup was formed after the election on June 7, 2018, the voters did send the Liberals a pretty strong message. They put them in the penalty box, and it was a very small penalty box that they put them in.

There was a need for the Legislature to recognize what the people of Ontario had decided, and so we worked with the leader of the official opposition, Mr. Bisson, to ensure that the House was going to operate—

**Mr. John Fraser:** Is he the leader?

**Hon. Todd Smith:** I said the House leader, right? The House leader of the official opposition—and make sure that the House was going to run.

There was a lot of discussion, and the Clerks' table, of course, was involved in those discussions at the time as to who was going to be asking questions when, because for the first time ever, there was not a third party to be in that slot asking those questions.

There was a lot of math that was going on in determining the ratios, and who would be represented, and who would get to speak to what and when, and who would participate in the various committees. It was a bit confusing, I think, for everyone involved, including the folks at the Clerks' table, who had never had to deal with this before. There was a lot of time and effort that was spent in getting those ratios just right, and determining when an independent member would have the opportunity to ask questions.

It was a bit clunky—we'll be honest, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Fraser, the leader of the Liberals, mentioned that in his speech, where he would have to ask for unanimous consent to ask a question on behalf of someone else in the independent caucus, if you want to call it that, during question period, and to participate at various times. It wasn't as smooth and traditional as things were in previous Legislatures, so there needed to be some things that were done.

But at the same time, we did have some very constructive meetings with the House leader from the official opposition, from the NDP.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when I was elected here in 2011 with my good friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and 16 other PC MPPs, and a number of members from the other side, we had the three parties that were represented here in the Legislature. Of course, the Liberals were in a minority government at that time, which made things rather interesting, from a House leader's perspective as well. There was a good team of PCs over there, and then the NDP—around 20 members at that time, I believe. At that time, it was very interesting because it was a minority government, but it was the only standing orders that I had known because that's what we lived with.

I think it's good to take a look at the standing orders of the Legislature, and that's what our current House leader did over the summer. He consulted with not just members of other parties in the Legislature or the independents, but other people who had been House leaders in other Parliaments. He comes from Parliament Hill and had a different perspective on how things operated there—of course, that's a Westminster Parliament itself. We were doing some things here at the Ontario Legislature that other Legislatures and other Parliaments weren't doing. We had some unique things that maybe boxed out different members of the Legislature from participating as actively as they should.

I know that the House leader put a lot of thought into this. A lot of consultation took place. He brought me in; he brought in Minister Clark, who was a House leader previously in opposition, as well; Minister Yakabuski, the

Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, who was a House leader and whip in opposition, as well; and probably all kinds of people I don't even know about; and of course, the Clerks' table, just to talk about how we could make things operate better and more efficiently and more fairly for the members of the Legislature. I think he has done a very good job at putting together a number of ideas that are going to make it more fair.

When I met with him in the House leader's office back in the summer and he was proposing a number of these things, my initial reaction was, "Why would we, as the government, actually be proposing these things?" Quite honestly, in my opinion, what a number of these things do is give more voice to the opposition parties. They actually give the opposition parties more of a pedestal to stand on.

I don't want to tell the official opposition or the opposition independents how to operate, but certainly one of the examples that I would point to is moving members' statements from 1 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the afternoon from routine proceedings to that 10:15 to 10:30 block in the morning, before question period, so we don't have that gap anymore. The galleries are generally full during that time. The media gallery is certainly filling up with those journalists who have gotten out of bed and shown up here for question period. Here's an opportunity for the members of the opposition parties to highlight some of their issues during that time, when people are actually here and paying attention, between 10:15 and 10:30. As a member of the official opposition for seven years, which was way too long, if I had had that forum to deliver some of the important things for my riding or for our party, that would have been far more meaningful. So I think members of the official opposition can hang their hats on that being a better profile, a better time for them to be talking about their issues.

We had a very busy first year as the new government here in Ontario, as you know, Mr. Speaker, passing a record number of pieces of legislation. Twenty bills were passed during the first year, so it was very, very busy in the House leader's office. I would often get a knock on the door from the independent members, asking, "Can you meet with us and talk about how we can make life a little more fair around here," because it felt like they were elected—and as the member from the Liberals just said, a lot of people in Ontario did vote for them. If we had taken the same math that the current leader of the Liberals here in Ontario would have used, Andrew Scheer would be Prime Minister of Canada right now. That's not the way it works in our country or in our province, because we have ridings. That's the way things work in Ontario and in Canada. But a lot of people did vote for the Liberal Party in the last election, and he's not wrong when he says that they should have more opportunity to speak.

I would believe that Mr. Schreiner, too, of the Green Party, does have an opportunity to participate. We were very willing and open to listening to the Green Party at the time because they were a new party represented here in the Ontario Legislature and we felt that he should have an opportunity to participate in debate perhaps more than he

did. I always had lots of time for the Green Party leader, although we didn't make a lot of changes during that time. It was simply because, quite honestly, the House was going gangbusters. We were driving through a lot of important pieces of legislation to fulfill the promises we had made during the election campaign of 2018. When you look at the legislation that was passed, Mr. Speaker, a lot of that legislation was fulfilling campaign promises, so it was really important for us to do that.

**1650**

I'm just going to take a look at some of the other changes that are being proposed here in this motion from the House leader. The NDP is claiming that this gives us in some way the ability to pass bills in a single day or pass bills faster. I know that the House leader from the official opposition knows that is not true. The Liberal Party already mentioned that is not true, Mr. Speaker. This does nothing, actually, to speed up our ability as a government to get bills through the Legislature any quicker.

One of the things that's a real common-sense piece of the motion that the House leader has put forward is the ability for the Speaker to make decisions when it comes to members with disabilities. We had a member here for the last couple of years that he served in this House, from York Centre, a very distinguished member, Monte Kwinter. You'll remember Monte, who was a cabinet minister here for years, a very distinguished member. He had to have assistance at the end of his last term to get up here into the House. A ramp was put in; he wasn't able, of course, to stand when he voted. There were special calls that had to be made. By putting this formally into this motion, it would allow the Speaker to make the Legislature more accessible for members who have circumstances where maybe they can't stand to vote or are having difficulty getting into the Legislature.

I know the member opposite from the official opposition, who was speaking prior to the Liberals, the member for Hamilton Mountain, was talking about the fact that she was somewhat offended that our members were insinuating that the NDP don't care about people with disabilities. We all know that all members of this House care about people with disabilities. That includes the NDP or the Liberals or the PCs. We all want to do better for people with disabilities. I just find it so funny how, when the shoe is on the other foot over there and someone is criticizing the NDP—that's what they do every day to us. They say, "The PCs don't care about this or the PCs don't care about this group of people or they don't do that." Horse feathers, Mr. Speaker. We are here doing what we can to try and make sure that the province is accessible—we really are—and providing a better life for the people of Ontario. Certainly we have different ways of going about it, but the intent of this portion of the motion is to ensure that the House is more accessible for members, should they need it to be more accessible.

I talked about members' statements moving to the morning, which I think is a great idea.

I'm a pretty traditional guy around here. I have never stood on the floor of the Legislature when the House was

sitting without a tie on. It's just something I believe: When you come in the House, you should have a tie—as a male member of the House, you should have a tie. Of course, members have their own rights. I always tease the member from Ottawa Centre, the new member from the NDP. As a matter of fact, when I was the government House leader, I actually sent him over a tie in a big manila envelope, telling him that he should wear a tie when he's in here. But that's his choice. He chooses not to do that, and there have been many members who have chosen not to wear a tie. I'm a pretty traditional guy.

I don't think we should have a whole lot of electronic devices hanging around in the Legislature, but I understand that things are evolving. We're changing the standing orders. We can change to allow for a bit of an adaptation to use modern technology in here, within reason, Mr. Speaker. I don't ever want to see those earbuds in people's ears when they're here. I think it's fine to have the one little earpiece that you have on there, Mr. Speaker; I think that's fine. But I don't want come in here in the Legislature ever and see people wearing headphones. There's something about that that doesn't seem right to me, and I am a bit of a stickler for tradition.

Our former House leader one time—you'll remember this story. I don't know if I'll say it right or not. The member from Waterloo was talking about her private member's bill one time, and it was about proroguing the Legislature. She didn't want the government to be able to prorogue the Legislature. This was after Premier McGuinty prorogued in 2012 or so. She had just won a by-election around that time and brought in this legislation.

I remember we were talking about how we were going to vote on her private member's bill. Our House leader at the time came in and said, “[Expletive], there are 200 years of parliamentary tradition. We're Tories. We believe in parliamentary tradition. This is the way we're going to vote on this piece of legislation, because of tradition.” Then news came from the leader's office that we weren't going to vote that way, and he said, “Ah, screw the tradition.” It was kind of a funny story.

But I am a believer in tradition, and I believe we should, where we can, preserve the traditions that we have here. I know we do a pretty good job at making sure that we're doing that.

A lot of clumsy little things—and I'm not going to get to everything, because I'm going to run out of time. This is the first time, actually, that I've delivered a speech like this in this session. I haven't had a chance to freelance it like I used to, back in opposition, so it's kind of nice to be able to do this.

There are a couple of clumsy things and housekeeping items—I think they were referred to by the members opposite—that needed to be cleaned up as well.

It is kind of clumsy that a member opposite—and they always direct their questions to the Premier, which is their right to do that. But I think the House leader does have the right to maybe point to the member who he believes is best suited to answer that question. Sometimes, the members opposite ask the Premier a question when the Premier is at

the Council of the Federation and not even in the Legislature. So I think it does clean that part of it up, and will allow it to be a little more of a seamless approach.

The other thing I really like, that the House leader is proposing, is the change in the way we debate. We're debating a motion right now, so there are no questions and comments, or hits, as we currently call them, in debate. If it was a piece of legislation that we were debating right now, there would be an opportunity to have questions and comments. But, really, what it is is a two-minute hit. A member opposite can write that two-minute hit a week earlier, and just come in here and deliver the two-minute hit, whether it has anything to do with what the legislation is or not. He or she is supposed to keep it on the general topic.

I really think that this is going to be an opportunity to elevate the debate. I love question period. I don't know about anybody else, but I love question period. I think it's the best time of day. You have a lot of interesting ways of proposing questions. You don't always get an answer, but you do have the opportunity to pose questions. I think there's going to be an elevated debate here in the afternoon, where everybody has to be on their game, because the questions that the members opposite will be asking of those who have just delivered a 20-minute speech on an important piece of government legislation—they will have to pose questions to the messenger of that speech.

It will also sharpen the skills of the individual who has just delivered that speech. They have to be able to respond to the questions from the members opposite. I think that will be really interesting, to see how that evolves. I know that stems from the government House leader's time on Parliament Hill, because that's the way they debate up there. But I think it will create a new and more interesting level of debate here in the mornings and in the afternoons, where sometimes it's great, if you are suffering from insomnia, to turn on the channel, but it's not so great if you're actually looking for riveting conversation or riveting debate.

So I think this will be a really good thing for the Legislature, and I am curious to see how that happens to evolve over time.

There's a lot of great stuff in here. I know that when I first saw a lot of it—and thank you, to the government House leader, for bringing me in and consulting me on the proposals he was making. The one thing that drives me crazy—and I've actually heard the Speaker do this a couple of times too—is during morning introductions of visitors, before question period, it can go on for 20 minutes, when the House is full.

**1700**

I still have another proposal for the House leader that I want him to bring forward when this does get to committee where we introduce our guests after question period is over. So those of us who have to get to a reception or those of us who have to get to a meeting will have the opportunity to do that, but there's still an opportunity to welcome our guests, which is really important, but we do it after question period. I think it's a neat idea, so I'll continue to

push that with our House leader, who, I think, has done a magnificent job in bringing some much-needed changes to the way we debate here in the Legislature.

Thank you for the time this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** It's important that we debate bills and motions when they come forward in this Legislature. This is one motion that needs to be debated, and at some point, I think, it also needs to be clarified. Some of the things that were said yesterday are not quite up to par with what has really happened and what's going on.

We know that this Ford government has been known for shutting down debate on every bill. Out of the 27 bills that we have now, this government has time-allocated 25 of them. So to say that we're not wanting to co-operate on standing orders because we don't want to see the business of the House pass through is not correct. We're simply pointing out that more standing order changes that help this government push and ram through legislation faster in this House don't help, really, the democratic process to allow people to come to committee.

We've had examples, as we know, in the Legislature where the government—for example, I know the member from Hamilton Mountain talked about it. There was, of course, Bill 36, the Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act. The hearings ended on October 12, 2018, at 12 p.m. That's the hearings in committees. Then amendments were due that same day, at 6 p.m. How does that allow the time when the committee stops hearing deputations at 12 p.m.? Gathering all of that information, and then having six hours, you are now to create amendments, debate them and get all that through.

That is what the essence of our debate is about: how things are being pushed and rammed through this Legislature and not giving full time for the public to participate in these bills, especially as some of these time allocations are worded where they don't even allow it to go to committee. Or, another example would be the health care bill, Bill 74, the People's Health Care Act, where thousands of pages were written submissions. They were received at a 6 p.m. deadline following the hearings, and then the amendment deadline was less than 40 hours later—again, virtually no time for people to put their submissions.

You are rushing things so fast, you're making mistakes, and we all know that they've made legislation that really doesn't reflect what Ontarians want. They've had to roll those things back more than once. To not even consider the amendments that we put forward, to really—again—have a process in place so that there are conversations so that people can express their concerns, work through what the suggestions are and what's going to work and what's not, is not doing a service to the standing orders that this government proposed.

There is also, yesterday, as I'll point out, in Hansard—I'm going to read from Hansard. One of the members opposite stated that they're "deeply disappointed that the NDP chose to withdraw from cross-party dialogue weeks

ago and, as a result, may not be aware of the most recent developments. It is disappointing that the NDP has indicated they cannot support a single change in our proposals, including accommodation of members with disabilities."

Well, that is complete—

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Bull spit.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Horsefeathers.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Horsefeathers; there's another good one.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** That is complete horsefeathers, because we all know that when we submitted first our amendment and then our subamendment—I'm going to read our amendment, because it's actually a very good amendment. It doesn't take away anything from the Liberals and the independents that was built into these standing orders.

I have to comment on the Liberal interim leader and his comments about how there was a situation when one of their members brought a private member's bill forward, and it was so relevant—it was a good bill. We all bring private member's bill ideas to this Legislature, and they're formulated around the needs of our riding and the way we want to make sure that we serve the people who elect us here. He was disappointed that there weren't enough people in the House to divide, five to divide for that private member's bill so that we could actually vote on it and take a recorded vote.

If you are so serious about participating in this Legislature and you have seven members who sit in the Liberal Party, can you not make the effort to rally your five members, knowing that that private member's bill slot was picked long before that date? Can they not organize their schedules, Speaker, so that they could have had their five to divide, so that they could have had their recorded vote? But instead of taking ownership of that work, instead of making their members accountable to come into this House to help and support their own member for their own private member's bill, they point the finger at the opposition, that we didn't do their heavy lifting for them.

That's not heavy lifting, coming into this Legislature and supporting your member when they want to divide a private member's bill. Shame on that interim leader to even suggest that. Hopefully when this all comes to light, they'll actually show up to ask questions—because that's a question we have as well. They sometimes aren't even here for their independent questions when they have them. But anyway, we all know that there are different reasons for why people aren't where they're supposed to be, but don't point fingers at the opposition that we couldn't divide their private member's bill vote because it was so important to them. They should have got their act together. They should have had their members there.

Back to why we have proposed an amendment and a subamendment: It's because we want to make sure this government does its homework before it rushes through legislation that is maybe going to clog up the wheels even more of passing bills in a way that's democratic, to make sure that the public gets to have their say in this Legislature. The amendment that our member from Timmins

brought forward says, “Delete everything after the first ‘that,’” so really just scrapping everything they’ve got, and saying that we need a “Select Committee on Modernizing the Standing Orders” to be “appointed to consider and report to the House its observations and recommendations with respect to proposed changes to the standing orders that would better serve the democratic interests of the people of Ontario.” And not to better serve the interests of this government—that’s the key of that one.

“That in developing its strategy and recommendations, the committee shall focus on the following:

“—measures that reflect the government’s right to carry out its agenda and opposition parties’ responsibility to hold the government to account;”—so nobody is arguing or debating that this government doesn’t have the authority or the mandate from the people to move their legislation, to move their bills through this Legislature at will. Nobody argues that, but we do have tools right now in this Legislature to hold this government accountable, to send messages to this government to slow things down.

Speaker, you were here in 2011 when the Conservative government, many members on that side, used to sit on the opposition side, and they rang those bells, 30-minute bells. Do you remember that, Speaker? They rang those bells—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Oh, I see a member there chuckling away. He remembers. The ability you had to do that was to send a very clear message around that legislation. I believe it was the anti-bullying legislation. They were ringing those bells and they were delaying things, and they felt pretty darn good about the tools they had to make sure they held those Liberal governments accountable to what they felt needed to happen.

1710

So now flip it over, and they don’t want that to happen. They don’t want those tools to be held against them. They actually want to strip away any measures we have to delay their legislation. What they should be thinking about is, when those things happen, it’s a time to pause and actually think, “Are we doing the right thing?” When an opposition party is so opposed and they’re pulling levers and making things slow down, that is a time for you to reflect. But they won’t look at it that way.

What would happen, then, Speaker, in this proposed amendment that the member from Timmins brought is:

“That the committee shall have the authority to call for persons, papers and things, and generally still have such duties and powers as are required to carry out its mandate.” That’s important, that when you do have that opportunity to have a debate on a bill and then it goes to committee, the committee’s work isn’t impeded, it’s not challenged, that it actually has that authority to do that so we can hear all of the information that’s required in order to make good legislation in amendments and to bring that bill back to third reading so we can debate it.

“That the committee be composed of five members from the government, one of which shall be the Chair, two members of the official opposition, one Liberal independent member and one Green independent member;

“That the committee shall meet at the call of the Chair;

“That the committee shall report back to the House by no later than February 28, 2020; and

“That in exercising his discretion under standing orders 31(c), 37(i) and 98(a)(iv), the Speaker shall recognize the 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.”

Nothing here is taking anything away from the Liberal and independent members. I don’t know why the Liberal interim leader is so adamant about not wanting to have this process happen. They’re still getting their extra time. That isn’t the reason for this amendment. It’s to make sure people collaborate and agree on the standing orders going forward, because we all know that we have to live with every government’s changes to the standing orders, and the purpose of a government changing standing orders is to make their lives easier. It’s to help them. It’s not to help the rest of the people in the Legislature.

And then I turn to the subamendment that was read yesterday by the member from—Brampton? I can’t remember the riding. I apologize.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Brampton Centre.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Brampton Centre. It reads as follows: “that the amendment be amended by adding the following paragraph after the words ‘February 28, 2020; and’:

“That, for the duration of the 42nd Parliament, 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; and”

So those two amendments and subamendment speak to why we need to have this government pause and look at it.

The Hansard comments yesterday are completely inaccurate. Shamefully, they went down that road. That is sometimes not a surprise.

Saying that, Speaker, we look at the fact that when this government first came into power, one of the members opposite said they had promises to keep. Do you know what they did, with those promises to keep? On December 6, 2018, there was a motion moved without notice that the House was going to rise a week earlier and would sit back until December 12. They did that because there was a controversial issue around an appointment around Mr. Taverner.

Then on June 6, 2019, there was a motion moved without notice to push back the start of the 2019 fall session by six weeks. Again, the reasoning for that was just willy-nilly, at the will of this government when they want to pull the switch.

When the government says it's looking for more debate—there have already been times where they have taken that away from themselves. Are they making up for lost time? What is it that they want? They want more control, they want less public participation and they want to push things as quickly as they can. Maybe people are watching and they're getting confused as well.

Even when they put in the Toronto act, if you recall that, that was quite a kerfuffle, ramming that through. People were out in the Legislature, protesting in the middle of the night, and rallying. There were people upset in the galleries, and the public was getting thrown out.

That is not the way to conduct any debate on legislation. And that wasn't even a promise, by the way, that this government made during the election. That was something—I don't know. Whoever decided that that was just a random idea, to kind of switch the power around municipal governments—that was ridiculous.

For this government to not take the proper approach, again sending something to committee, having committee members debate the standing orders in order that we get it right—and we're not actually hurting what's going on in this House.

The member from Hamilton Mountain—it's such a valid point. When you introduce a bill, and you didn't have time to do the research on it because of an important day—mourning injured workers, on April 28. You're going too fast when you can't even do your own research on a private member's bill. That doesn't make a lot of sense. Take that hint.

There's a little story I want to talk about before I end my debate.

There was a big flood—a lot of water, a lot of flood. This one man was standing on the roof, waiting to be rescued. A boat went by, a small boat, a man in a canoe, and he said, "Hey, come on in. Jump in the canoe. Get on board." The guy said, "No, no, no, I'm waiting to be rescued. I know there are bigger plans for me here." So he said okay, and he kept on going.

Then a big cruise ship comes by and says, "Listen, come on, get on here. You're going to be in jeopardy in a little while. The flood's happening. You're not safe on the roof. Get on here, so we can save you." "No, no, no, I know there's a bigger plan for me. I'm okay. You keep going; you keep going."

Then a helicopter above him yells down, "Grab the ladder. Save yourself." He says, "No, no, I'm okay. There's a bigger plan for me. I don't need your help. I'm okay."

Well, it turns out he drowned. He let each passing help, the people extending help to him, go by and he drowned.

So, he gets to heaven, and he says, "Jeez, Lord, why didn't you save me?" The Lord says to him, "Why didn't I save you? I sent a canoe, and you didn't take that help. Then I sent a cruise ship, and you didn't take that help. The last thing I sent was a helicopter to try to help you out, and you didn't take that help."

The lesson in that whole story was, when people are extending, in this case, some helpful advice, maybe you

should take that help, because you could really mess this up for yourselves and, more importantly, mess it up for the people of this province. They expect this Legislature to work in a democratic process, and expect to come into this Legislature and have their voices heard at committee when there are bills to be debated and there are deputants, and not to be rushed for six hours: Send your deputations, or you lose your opportunity to have a voice in that Legislature during that bill. That's the sad part here.

I wish this government would pay attention to the olive branches that have been offered. We've sent two amendments your way, and you're refusing to get help. I hope this doesn't come back to bite you. In some ways, ultimately, who is going to pay the price are the people who have to put up with the legislation that these people want to ram through without having proper consultations and proper debate. You already have the tools at your disposal to call time allocation when you wish or if you want to call bills twice in one day. It isn't going to make the legislation any better. You still have the opportunity to pass it in a way that's thoughtful so that you can have that kind of debate and that kind of public participation.

1720

With that, Speaker, I'm going to sit down, and hopefully those words maybe will sink in to the government.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate? The member for Guelph.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Thanks, Speaker. Good to see you in the chair today.

I rise to speak to the amendment to the amendment to the standing order motion 73. I want to just say that I appreciate the member from Brampton Centre for highlighting the importance of accommodating disabilities in the chamber with the amendment, and I appreciate the idea raised by the member for Timmins.

I'll echo my former colleague Natalie Des Rosiers in saying, "The process to achieve changes to the standing orders should be larger and should include a committee of many parties. I think it would make more sense for the future." This was attempted without success at the House leaders' meeting, so a different approach may be necessary moving forward.

Speaker, a lot of noise has been made about the proposed changes to the standing orders, and I want to cut through the hyper-partisanship. Yes, it is true that the current government has a nasty habit of ramming legislation through in a way that disrespects democracy. They limit debate through time allocation, they give little notice for public testimonies, they fail to consult on massive omnibus bills—they propose massive omnibus bills in the first place—they don't provide enough time for the public or opposition to propose amendments at committee, and they do this now with the existing standing orders. I don't think that's right and I will continue to oppose these efforts to limit debate and input.

Now let's look at the reality of the hand we are dealt. The government has a majority to push standing order changes through this House. Speaker, that is why I continue to meet with the government and to push them to

reconsider and backtrack on areas of concern. In this case, independent members met with the government so that we could express our concerns with the initial draft of the proposed standing order changes. We didn't like the potential of unrestricted access to night sittings, so we asked for and achieved a significant reduction in the number of night sittings. We didn't like the idea that a minister or parliamentary assistant unrelated to the topic could answer a follow-up question if a member was dissatisfied with the initial answer. We achieved a change so that the applicable minister or parliamentary assistant still needs to answer questions during late shows. We asked for increased debate time for independents, whose participation rights are underrepresented in this House.

Speaker, 1.4 million people voted for the Green Party or the Liberal Party in the last election, but under our broken first-past-the-post system, their voices are not reflected in terms of the seats in the House or speaking time. More voices speaking out mean more people holding the government accountable. It means less hyperbole and overblown partisan rhetoric. Two parties should not have a monopoly on the debate, because there are more than two views in this province.

Let me be clear: Independents have been asking for additional ways to participate in debate for over a year. We've approached the government and we've approached the official opposition. As the former House leader said in his debate, for a long time the government refused to move. Now they have, because we continued to fight for our participation rights and those rights now are reflected in the proposed changes to the standing orders.

From the official opposition, we heard nothing until the amendment that we now see was put forward. I share the official opposition's concerns that the government is pushing bills through the Legislature too fast, and I will continue to vote against the government's efforts to use time allocation to limit debate. But Speaker, we need to be clear: This is happening right now, under the existing standing order rules. On review, I can see that the proposed standing order changes allow one more hour of debate a day on a bill by calling it in the morning and in the afternoon. Although the minimum of 6.5 hours required for second reading stays the same, the government could push a bill through faster in a day by calling for debate in the morning, the afternoon and the evening. I'm concerned about this change and I have expressed this concern to the government. I don't think they should be able to call a bill for debate in the morning, afternoon and evening.

Unfortunately, I can't move an amendment right now because there are already two amendments on the floor. However, I have written an amendment that would require unanimous consent of the House for the government to call a bill for debate in the evening if it has already been debated in the morning and in the afternoon. This could mostly preserve the status quo. I'm hoping you support that amendment. Will you support that amendment if I have the opportunity to bring it forward? Unfortunately, as I said, Speaker, I can't bring that forward right now.

We could argue that the status quo could use a shakeup. I would actually argue that pretty strongly, but that's for debate on another day.

I'm going to keep working to get this amendment passed when the opportunity presents itself, because I think we need a House that represents the unprecedented number of independents that are now in the Legislature. For the first time since the 1940s, we have four parties elected to this Legislature. The standing orders were written when MPP Peter North was here as a single independent. Now we have a number of independents. The standing orders need to reflect the democratic rights of independents, because the people of Ontario who voted for those parties and those members deserve to have their voices heard in this House.

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

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I appreciate the opportunity to join the debate on the proposed changes and how we do some of the business here in the legislative chamber.

I was just reflecting on the fact that we, as parliamentarians, have been doing this since 1792. I know that somebody has carved in the wood above the Speaker—they've carved in "1867." Our Ontario Legislature here, as legislators, we've been debating 75 years preceding Confederation. I asked Todd Decker, our Clerk, actually, just in passing at the door—he didn't really have time to give me a fulsome answer—if the Ontario Parliament has been operating since 1792, why did somebody carve 1867 in the wood over there? And he indicated, "Well, it's relating to Confederation." To his credit, he asked—actually, I got a note here from David Bogart. I guess our Clerk asked him to do a bit of research.

I'm very pleased to find out—maybe other people here know this, but the date "1792" is present in this Legislature. It sits above the eagle, above that arch—although somebody made the brilliant move to paint over it, again, painting over history; somewhat akin to carving over history—not that I've got anything against Confederation, but I just feel it's so important for us to remember that—what are we now? What sitting are we in? The first session of the 42nd Parliament. Okay, when was the first Parliament? In 1792. That was under our first Lieutenant Governor, John Graves Simcoe.

Were they conducting debate like this during that first sitting? Were they debating where you should place members' statements? I suggest no. I think there were some more important things to do back then.

The first sitting was September 17, 1792. I doubt that they were focusing on protocol for members' statements, or introduction of visitors, or the timing of questions and comments. Actually, in their first sittings in 1792 through to 1793, they really got down to business. They passed bills to install British common law. That's fairly significant, as far as I'm concerned. They introduced trial by jury, the standardization of weights and measures. They established the county system for Ontario's system of municipal government.

1730

Going further, in 1793, they passed the first act in the British Empire to ban the importation of slaves. That is the legislative history, just in the first couple of years, that we inherit. I am a little bit of an advocate of history and tradition, but I have also thought and continued to think that things evolve. Our way of doing business constantly evolves with the mixture that we see. We have more independent members now, certainly, than I recall in my time here in the Legislature. So there's always a call to streamline, to be more efficient and to bring things up to the times, as you would say.

Very few people tell me that they watch the legislative channel. They may not need to. They may understand what's going on here. I've been here a number of years now, and I am certainly still learning. As I understand, I can't get the legislative channel in my riding. It just may be the nature of the fact that I live out in the country. The Lieutenant Governor's first session obviously wasn't televised, in case anybody was wondering if we would go back that far.

But some people do tell me they find legislative debate fascinating—very few, actually. I think many people find it somewhat cumbersome, perhaps confusing. We live it day in and day out, and sometimes at night. For some, it's a bit like watching paint dry, or perhaps making sausage. I know there's an old expression with respect to how you don't want to know how legislation is made, that it's something like watching sausage get made. In my view, it's not necessarily good television. I imagine there are very few people here who watch television, for that matter, other than perhaps on their iPhone, if they get a chance.

We cannot have people, for any unnecessary reason, be cynical about the work that we do. We probably give people a lot of good reasons to be cynical, but we can't have people be cynical just for the fact that something is outdated or we have a somewhat obscure procedural protocol—albeit very important protocol—to ensure that we have good meetings here.

The Legislative Assembly, this wonderful building, is to my mind, really, in many ways nothing more than a gigantic meeting place. It's a place where I can show up here and represent those people that I am elected to represent, whether they voted for me or not. It's just a wonderful opportunity. For example, going out the door, I passed between the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Clerk and had a second to ask a quick question, without writing an email or going through any particular procedure.

But again, with our debate today, there's a little bit of a tiny crossroad, in a sense. Some of the things we're doing, some of the rules that we follow may be somewhat of a detriment to us doing our business more effectively. There's really nothing wrong with admitting there are better ways of doing business, in any sector or any regard. We should be constantly searching for better ways to do politics, if you will, and to do debate. After all, things change. Things have changed since Simcoe's day.

I was very heartened. Our House leader did a run-through of the standing orders and made reference to

section 8, which added a clause. Now, I will just look it up here: "(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."

Now, I don't know whether I recall seeing parliamentarians sing God Save the Queen in this chamber. That's in the standing orders. Maybe this has been discussed today or in previous debate. I think that's very important. Has this not been going on for the last—what would it be—227 years? Every single one of us here, elected, who is sitting in this chamber, before we are allowed to set foot in here representing our ridings, all swear allegiance to the Queen. We all swore allegiance to the Queen. More recently, we have been singing O Canada. Now, under the standing orders, we will have an opportunity to sing the royal anthem, and I think that's quite appropriate, because apart from getting elected, you don't get to walk in here unless you swear allegiance to Her Majesty.

We've been told about the consultation the House leader has had with a number of other House leaders, with the Clerks, the opposition and the independent members. The goal was to come up with something a little more comprehensive, a little more collaborative, to modernize the standing orders here. The goal was to enhance debate—we certainly heard that during debate on this particular proposal—to increase opportunities for MPPs to be more engaged on behalf of the people that they represent.

Again, a lot of this sounds kind of picayune, kind of crossing the Ts and dotting the Is, something that I'm sure Lieutenant Governor Simcoe and those we see in that beautiful painting down in the lobby really perhaps weren't spending a lot of time on, because they had some very big issues to deal with. They had the benefit of drawing on hundreds of years of British parliamentary tradition.

I am pleased that there will be more leeway for our independent Liberals and the Green Party. I came to realize just a few minutes ago that I would be speaking later than I thought, because the Green Party had had an opportunity to address this bill. I also know the independent member of the Liberal Party addressed this bill, so it's not just the government and the opposition. I think it's important. These people were elected just like the rest of us to have these kinds of opportunities.

The opposition had a chance to review these proposed changes. I hope they understand, as I've had explained to me and I see here, what the objective is: to make things more productive, to make it more efficient, to make it more effective and to enhance participation. Our democracy really survives on the principles of citizen involvement, citizen participation and, through extension, more fulsome participation by those people whom they elect to send in here.

I think it makes sense, for example, that the same bill be debated in the afternoon as it was in the morning. I don't know who came up with the previous rule against doing that, but it seems logical to me. It's not going to necessarily unfairly expedite passage of legislation. How

often has a bill passed in one day? I know that in—oh, gosh, I guess it would be the early 1990s under the Bob Rae government. There was a procedural measure brought in. I recall there was a one-day bill passed. That was the ammo bill, restricting sales of ammunition, requiring people to sign their name and address when they buy ammunition, and hope that the bad guys don't get a hold of that name and address, because then they'll know where it's stored. That's one example of a one-day bill that I can recall, and that one was supported by all three parties at the time.

I think, obviously, it's common sense. We heard a motion today with respect to disabilities. It's common sense to do whatever we can to ensure that members with a disability have accommodation within our standing orders—it may be a personal support worker, an electronic assistive device—rather than asking each time for permission to ask for unanimous consent. For example, if someone was in a wheelchair, you don't need unanimous consent from everybody in the Legislature to vote without standing up. The Speaker can grant that exception without asking the Legislature. I think that's a bit of an outdated rule that needs to be changed.

1740

The use of laptops and cellphones: Again, things progress. The Lieutenant Governor did not have an iPhone on his belt, as I understand. Anytime I saw a photograph or a statue of him, there was a sword. We don't wear swords in this Legislature—well, at least one person does; I know that. I know I asked permission once to wear a sword in the Legislature. I was granted permission to wear a sword. I forget the occasion; It might have been the 200th anniversary of this place, something like that. But I never did get around to wearing the sword, something that those who were a part of Ontario's Legislature in many, many days gone by—tougher times back then, and if you look at the paintings, they wear swords.

With the advent of something that's going on anyway with electronic technology, we're not going to be taking pictures of one another in the House, although we're regularly being photographed by the media; we're being televised by the parliamentary channel, and that goes back decades now to when the television system was installed in the chamber. Party photographers on occasion are sitting in the gallery.

I have to admit, on occasion—and maybe I shouldn't be doing this. I don't use fax machines anymore; I'm sure most people here don't. If I'm here and I've just finished writing my newspaper column, rather than running in the snow back to my office or asking one of my staff to come over here and pick it up, I'll take a photograph and email it. Now, maybe that's not legal to do in the House, but when I have a document here and I somehow would like to get it over to one of my staff, I will take a picture with the ever-present iPhone.

Changes to the timing of members' statements: Currently, we do them in the afternoon, after question period, when, it's been suggested here, the chamber is nearly empty. Again, part of that purpose is really to reach out to

our constituency, not necessarily to reach out to other MPPs with members' statements, unless somebody is really pushing the envelope on something political. The reasoning is, do them before question period when there are a lot more people around. We'll see how that works out. I think I heard it was suggested and—of course, this hasn't gone to committee. This isn't carved in stone or carved into the panel above the Speaker yet, but there can be changes and amendments, as far as I'm concerned. That may still be up for discussion as far as the location on the calendar for members' statements.

Many people here like to play to the galleries. That brought up that issue of the very extensive time spent introducing people, and many people here in the GTA, for example, do have visitors. In my riding—now, in the best of times, it's a two-to-four-hour round trip. I don't have many visitors here from my riding. When I do have visitors here—I think of a year ago—oftentimes they're out front with signs. They're demonstrating. I very rarely sign the admission slip, whatever it's called, to have someone come in, the slip that is given to security. In fact—again, the nature of my rural riding—I recall maybe one of the last slips I signed was for a horse. I put down the name of the horse, I said it was a horse in brackets, and gave it to security. I don't know whether they need to read them or not.

Then I went back out and said, “Well, I sent in a slip. The horse can come in. I'm sure this could be accommodated.” But by the time I got back outside, the demonstration was wrapping up.

This was Animal Welfare Watch. It was with respect to some concerns, some changes which I feel have now been reflected in the government's PAWS legislation and would also be reflected in the very recently announced Ministry of Agriculture's trespassing legislation.

By the time I got back, they were making arrangements to load up the horse in the trailer, so I never did make arrangements.

I'm just not sure how—well, we could get a horse in here. It would be pretty easily done, when I think about it, but maybe it hasn't been done before.

Members' statements: The proposal is 10:15 every day, just before question period. I don't know how important that is. I don't know what Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe would have thought about spending time on issues like that, when they were dealing with wolves, and the importation of slaves, and how to set up a county system in this beautiful province of ours.

I don't see a lot of people in the galleries today. I'm not necessarily really concerned that people in my riding are that attentive to what we're discussing in this particular debate today. But if it makes for more efficient debate, if it makes for a more effective way of doing our business here, I'm all for it. It has my vote.

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

**Ms. Rima Berns-McGown:** It's always an honour to rise and contribute to the debate in this House. This is a really, really important piece of legislation to talk about.

The piece that I think is important for everybody to think about is that process matters. What makes a democracy work, what makes it a functioning system that isn't perfect but is the best that we have so far, is process. It's a question of being able to sit down and to consider carefully all of the legislation that is coming forward, to make sure that it is thoughtfully put together, and that there haven't been either mendacious aspects sliding through, or errors, that create legislation that's problematic.

I feel as though standing orders that aid that thoughtful process are always good. Standing orders that contribute to a diversity of folks being welcomed, and feeling that this is space that they can occupy and can contribute to, is really important. Standing orders that take away from that are deeply problematic, and things that we have to consider carefully and reconsider where necessary.

Obviously, any changes that make it easier for persons with disabilities to come in, to observe, to be part of their House are good things.

However, anything that takes away from the ability of the people to be able to contribute to debate and to say, "Hey, there's an issue here that maybe you guys didn't think about, that you might want to reconsider," is a problem.

As you've heard earlier, Speaker, 25 of the 27 bills that have been passed by this government were time-allocated. That's a really serious issue. These were bills that did not have enough time in committee for people to adequately consider what was being discussed. These were bills where people didn't have time to say, "But wait a minute. This is going to hurt me, and this is going to hurt me. Maybe you didn't think about this, but it's going to be hurtful." There has been case after case after case where we've seen this happening, and where the government has stacked the process it already had available to it, such that there wasn't time for people to be able to come and depute. There wasn't time for them to submit written concerns they had. There wasn't time for them to even be notified that they had a day or a couple of hours in which to pull something together. These are deeply problematic.

**1750**

The Premier, in his previous incarnation as a city councillor, was very impatient about the amount of time debate would take at city council. We do know, for instance, that he tends to be impatient. He wants things through. When he has a set of ideas, he wants them passed as fast as possible. We saw that on display, and he said so himself, during the debate on the Toronto bill. But the issue is that the makeup and the newly enlarged city council that was supposed to be in effect in Toronto wasn't merely to have more members, and therefore more debate. It was specifically created very thoughtfully after a great deal of consideration in order to ensure that there would be a diversity of members, so that city council would better represent the city.

When city council got cut effectively in half by this government's legislation, what happened was that the opportunity for Black and brown and Muslim members to be able to run in newly created wards and take their place

in city council and better represent the people of Toronto was taken away. There was no opportunity to properly consider that because that bill was pushed through and time-allocated like so many bills after it.

I want to talk about one other bill that people have mentioned already here this afternoon that got shoved through very quickly and where there wasn't adequate time for debate, and that was the cannabis bill. We're dealing with an issue, in fact, in Beaches-East York at the moment that may not have been intentional and that may have been corrected, had there been sufficient time for consideration and for the public to come in and talk.

What happened here was that there's a specified number of metres between high schools and elementary schools and cannabis shops. But the folks in the Ministry of Education apparently forgot to consider daycares and preschools, and I believe it's the first case in the province where this is occurring, but it's unlikely to be the last: There is a preschool, and a cannabis shop about to open a mere 35 metres away.

Now, obviously there aren't the same issues with toddlers that there would be with high school students, in that the toddlers aren't going to be going and asking folks to buy weed for them. That's not the concern. But the parents of those toddlers in this daycare are beside themselves because they have some very real concerns about the health and safety of their toddlers, and the daycare operators of the Montessori school on Kingston Road are beside themselves because they're trying to assure parents that their kids are going to be safe, that they're not going to be breathing second-hand smoke, that they're not going to inadvertently be picking up brightly coloured gummies and putting them in their mouths, that there won't be congestion concerns right outside the daycare.

These are real issues, and they have reached out to the government to say, "Did you do this on purpose? What are you doing here? How are you going to fix this? How are you going to help us with these very real concerns?" As far as I know, neither of the ministers, neither the Minister of Education nor the Attorney General, who's responsible for the rollout of these cannabis shops, has reached out and sat down with the preschool operators, or the parents, and said, "Here's how we're going to develop a protocol for the safety of your little ones."

For a government that says that it cares specifically about the safety of people—and that was a big deal when this legislation was rolling out; in fact, they were all there asking the police to start arresting people who had shops that were illegal—this is a really flagrant disregard of the very genuine concerns of parents. No one is asking that there not be a cannabis shop. Everybody is saying, "Can we keep the kids safe? How do we do this, because there seems to have been an error here."

The point I'm making is that when you rush legislation through, you're going to make mistakes. We have seen a government that, time and time and time again, has done the legislative equivalent of shooting before it takes aim, and before it even knows what it's shooting at. It doesn't look good on the government. It really doesn't. They end up looking like a clown car, busting through and with all

of the clowns falling out and making all kinds of mistakes. The problem is, these mistakes are actually hurting people's lives. I think that greater consultation would give the government and its members different kinds of perspectives.

Let me give you another example in the few minutes that I still have available to me. The former Minister of Children, Community and Social Services was very fond of saying that the best social program is a job. It's a line that the new minister has also picked up, although he doesn't say it with as much—

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I'm sorry to interrupt. The government House leader has raised a point of order.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I appreciate giving somebody a lot of latitude, but we are speaking to the amendment that was brought forward by the member for Brampton Centre. I would ask that she actually focus on the actual amendment that was brought forward by her member.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** You have raised a valid point. I would ask the member from Beaches–East York to confine herself to what is supposed to be on the floor.

**Ms. Rima Berns-McGown:** Speaker, I am addressing myself to precisely the same points that all of the government speakers were addressing all afternoon, as I have been sitting here listening very attentively. The point that I will make again is that when you—

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I'm sorry to interrupt again, but the government House leader has raised another point of order. Government House leader?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Sorry, I'll leave it for you to judge whether the member just challenged the ruling of the Speaker. But again, we are debating, because we wanted to debate, the motion that was put on the floor by the NDP member, the deputy leader of the NDP. So I would ask that the member focus her remarks on the motion brought forward by the NDP deputy leader.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Thank you. Yes, we are debating changes in the rules of order for

the House. If the member from Beaches–East York could get back—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Sorry. Excuse me, please—through the Chair. We only have about a minute left; no cross-aisle chatter.

The member from Beaches–East York, please continue.

**Ms. Rima Berns-McGown:** I think that this actually has very much to do with the full proceedings of the House and the ability of the House to proceed in a quick manner, or a manner in which the government actually listens to the folks who are speaking. I think that the reason that the member opposite keeps getting up and interrupting me is because I have gotten under his skin and am making points that are hard to refute.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** On a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I'm sorry to interrupt again. The government House leader has raised a point of order. You have about 30 seconds before we're out of time this afternoon.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, I thought that the debate today was on the opposition motion with respect to the participation of individuals with disabilities in this chamber. Given the day that today is, I would again hope that the member and the members opposite would focus their attention on that motion brought forward by the deputy leader.

It's not that she's under my skin; it's that a member that has brought forward a motion from their party about the participation of people with disabilities. I would hope that, as opposed to speaking about anything other than that, she would focus on that, given that this is a day where we are focusing on that in this chamber. We heard a minister's statement on that very same message.

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

Looking at the clock, I see that time for further debate this afternoon has expired.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*

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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
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Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
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Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
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Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
<b>Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)</b>	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
<b>Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)</b>	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud- Weston	
<b>Hatfield, Percy (NDP)</b>	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
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Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
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Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
<b>MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)</b>	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
<b>McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)</b>	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
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Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
<b>Nicholls, Rick (PC)</b>	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

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Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
<b>Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)</b>	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
<b>Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)</b>	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (IND)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
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Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
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West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
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<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
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Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
<b>Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
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Vacant	Ottawa—Vanier	

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