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4 décembre 2019

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 December 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 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 3, 2019, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion, as amended, regarding amendments to the standing orders.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): When we last debated the amendment to the amendment to the motion, I understand the member for Beaches–East York had the floor. I recognize her to resume.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Indeed, we are discussing the amendment and the context in which the amendment was necessary. In that context, I'd like to relay to the House a really interesting conversation that I had last evening. I was at one of the receptions that are regularly held at Queen's Park, and I chanced to fall into conversation with a gentleman who was a former government House leader of a Progressive Conservative government, that is not this one, in a province that is not Ontario. This gentleman was saying something that was very interesting and that I think all of the government members should take heed of as they push these standing order changes forward.

What this gentleman was saying was that it was imperative to him as House leader to understand that it was always a good idea, when you were putting forward a piece of legislation, to allow it to sit in the ether and in the public arena in order to allow people to comment on it, whatever those comments might be, whether they were in support of it, whether they were deeply opposed to it, for whatever reason that might be, or whether they thought that, in general, it was a decent piece of legislation, but that it needed some alterations here and there. It was only by allowing that legislation to sit in the public ether, to let people of the province absorb it and think about it and talk about it and argue about it in whatever way they need to, that the bill gained consensus, number one—at least public consensus in terms of being able to move forward—but also that things could be made better, errors or omissions, that alterations could then be incorporated in it with the amendments.

I think that is such a profoundly important piece of advice that he passed on through me to the members of this government, also Progressive Conservatives. I think it's something that members of all political parties really need to take to heart. When we are putting forward standing orders and thinking about what those standing orders do, I think that it is absolutely imperative. It goes to the core of

what we're doing in this building, because I firmly believe that everybody here is here because they want to make the province of Ontario a better place.

The question is, how are we going to go about doing that? In that mode, I go back to the very first thing I said, which is that process matters. Process is profoundly important. Allowing time—time for the members of the House to debate motions of bills fully; time for thoughtful amendments and history to be brought forward that may cause the government to adjust a bill in one way or another; time in committee so that stakeholders, people who are on the front lines of an issue, people who have dealt with it day to day, can come forward and bring their perspectives and give the government an opportunity to say, "Hey, you know what? I didn't think about that, so let's incorporate this idea. Let's make the bill better"; time to travel bills so that people who don't live in Toronto have an opportunity to participate in the debate and to feel that they are being heard.

The issue here is that elections are not the only time that a government is being held accountable. That accountability needs to carry on throughout a government's term in office, and it's our job as the official opposition, of course, to hold the government to account on a daily basis, on an ongoing basis. That is our jobs—literally our jobs. But the people of Ontario also pay attention, and the people of Ontario also want opportunities to provide feedback to course-correct the government as needed as it proceeds on its way.

I think that this is particularly important when we're debating sets of legislation that affect people who have lived experience in areas that go beyond that which the government members have.

The point that I was starting to make last evening was that the former Minister of Children, Community and Social Services used to speak often about how jobs are a real, key cure for poverty, and that was something that dominated her way of seeing the world, which makes sense when you understand that she grew up in a small town—New Glasgow, Nova Scotia—which had a fairly monochromatic population, and which did start to suffer when jobs began to decline as local industries shuttered.

For those people, absolutely, the provision or the re-emergence of those jobs would have done the trick, but the rest of the province is in a very different set of circumstances. Indigenous people, 90% of whom live in poverty in Toronto; Black people who face anti-Black racism from the time that they enter junior kindergarten, throughout school and the workplace and on the streets; and other people of colour face barriers that are very different from the barriers that didn't exist in the situation that people were dealing with in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.

So I think that when we have processes that allow for adequate input from people with different perspectives, from Ontarians who desperately care how their laws are made but that have perspectives different from that of the government, we're going to get better legislation.

I implore the government to allow the time to reconsider these standing orders to allow adequate time for deputations, for consultation and for input so that we will have better laws, fewer mistakes and less damage.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I just want to remind everybody out there what we are talking about today: We're talking about government notice of motion number 73, on the standing orders.

What are the standing orders? When we first arrived here in the Legislature there were these green books on our desk. It really told us the rules of what we do every day and how we do it. A good book to read—it's always good to know the rules of where you are.

Today we rise to speak on the proposed changes to these standing orders. Rules of Parliament direct how we shape the debate in the Legislature, and it's important to review those rules to make sure that we can conduct business in a modern and efficient manner. These rules are a little bit out of date and we believe they should be changed.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill: We shape our houses; therefore they shape us.

We are here today to talk about how we shape the debate around issues from the largest to the smallest. I followed politics for many years and have been honoured to be a member of this chamber since June 2018. I know that we can do better; however, most of the time rules don't let us do so. Often we are bogged down by Byzantine procedures which limit our collective effectiveness and waste some of our people's time.

Perhaps the most common thing I'm asked about by my constituents, friends and even my family—who are probably watching this morning—is why we don't actually debate things. Currently, we give speeches that can rarely be called debate, and they often sometimes fill time.

Our current rules are not unlike two hockey teams playing a game of hockey on the same ice but ignoring the puck. Our debate rules encourage members to talk about things that are irrelevant because you really aren't going to be questioned on it. The rules don't ask us to think on our feet or allow us to challenge other members' opinions and assertions. We read statements; we don't debate. The government recognizes that if we open debate it will encourage people to watch and follow what we do more closely, and that's good for all of us.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we have now reached the 10 hours of debate on this motion, I would actually like to move that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Hogarth has moved that the question be now put. There being approximately 10 hours and 19 minutes, over five days, I am satisfied that there has, in fact, been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: No more business, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:30. *The House recessed from 0913 to 1030.*

WEARING OF HOCKEY JERSEY

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm seeking unanimous consent to wear my Peterborough Lakers jersey today, because the Lakers are here.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha is seeking unanimous consent of the House to wear the Peterborough Lakers sweater. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to welcome Marie Cabral from my riding, Kim Kanmacher from North Bay, and everyone from the Canadian Cancer Society to the House today.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to introduce the 2019 Mann Cup champion and Canadian national champion Peterborough Lakers.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to welcome John Cox, Bradley Stevenson and Nuala McKee from the Canadian Cancer Society, as well as Dave Westaway and Patsy Agard from the Ontario Principals' Council. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I would like to introduce Dr. Philip Laird, the vice-president of Trinity Western University from Vancouver, and Mr. Geoffrey Feng, the executive director of global recruitment and partner relations at Trinity Western University.

I would also like to introduce Mr. Nathan Zheng and Professor Guishan Li, the president and the vice-president of the Fountain Internationalization Education Group, Maple Leaf Collegiate.

Also I would like to introduce my executive assistant, Christina Liu. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to welcome students of St. Matthew Catholic school, who will be joining us a little bit later, and Dave D'Oyen. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I would like to welcome Gordon Landon and his wife, Rositta Landon, a very close and dear friend of mine. Mr. Landon served as a York region councillor for 31 years: the longest-serving councillor in the history of Markham. Thank you, Mr. Landon, for your passion and many years of public service. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Je voudrais souhaiter la bienvenue à Mauricio, mon assistant, mais aussi spécialement à sa petite fille, Nina, qui est ici aujourd'hui. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome the following people from the Canadian Cancer Society: Amy Desjardins, director in the Ottawa region; David Schneider, public issues; and Leanne Brown, volunteer. I'm looking forward to our meeting later on today.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It is my enormous pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park today the mom and sister of our page captain, Ally. Welcome, Millicent Ler and Mya Hao. Also, a little bird has told me that it's Millicent's birthday, so happy birthday, Millicent, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to introduce a co-op student of my voiceless seatmate here, Vadym Kravchenko. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm excited to welcome Carly Pettinger, my outreach coordinator, all the way from Kitchener Centre.

Also, a special shout-out to my daughters, Sofia and Danica, who are watching from home today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I would like to welcome one of my number-one volunteers from Mississauga-Lakeshore, Kristian Velkoski.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Sydney Piatkowski and Fiqir Worku, who are my constituency assistants in Waterloo. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: It's my pleasure today to recognize page Suhani Surya from Oakville North-Burlington, who is serving as the page captain. She is joined by her father, Nanda Surya, and mother, Shubha Narasimhan, who are watching today's question period from the members' gallery. Welcome.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure this morning to welcome here in this House the executive of the Ontario Principals' Council, led by the president, Nancy Brady. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the privilege of welcoming to the Legislature today my legislative assistant, Michael Zwiep, as well his family: Victoria Zwiep, his wife; as well as his two children, Ezra and Josiah, who are here today in the gallery—and Laura, who is here as well. Welcome to the Legislature. It's a privilege to have you here.

We also have members from the Ontario Craft Wineries association, Richard Linley, Len Pennachetti and Carolyn Hurst, who are here from my riding of Niagara West. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to welcome Roland LeBlanc, Julian Kitchen and Victor Chen to Queen's Park. Thank you for joining us today.

WEARING OF HOCKEY JERSEY

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: This is actually for unanimous consent—not to point fingers over at the MPP from Peterborough, but he was also supposed to seek unanimous consent for the Minister of Sport to wear the Lakers jersey as well, so I am seeking unanimous consent.

Before we do that, I wanted to also acknowledge the fact that not only are they here, but the Mann Cup will be available in the government caucus room at—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to permit her to wear the Peterborough sweater. Agreed? Agreed.

Does the minister have an introduction as well?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: No, it's not an introduction, Speaker. I'm just inviting all members of the Assembly to see the Mann Cup in room 247 over lunch.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Premier. Last night, parents watched with dismay as the Ford government scuttled any hope of a resolution that would keep schools open today. Last night, the minister claimed he had presented a new offer to high school teachers at the bargaining table, only to admit, hours later, that no offer had been made.

Why did the Ford government tell the public they had made an offer when, in reality, the government made no effort whatsoever to avert today's strike?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: This strike is not fair to parents or students in this province. We've been clear through this process that we want to turn to private mediation to get a deal. Parents deserve predictability. Throughout this process, the government has made significant moves. From online learning, we announced a change from four in the mandate to two. That was rejected. With respect to classroom sizes, we've announced a move from 28 as a provincialized average to 25. That was rejected—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek will withdraw.

Mr. Paul Miller: What did I say? Withdraw, I guess.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, the point is that we remain focused on getting a deal because parents deserve that predictability. It is unacceptable that this strike is proceeding, given that there's a tool in the tool box: private mediation that worked for CUPE, we hope, in good faith. I remain hopeful that the unions will accept this, that we can get a deal and provide predictability for the children of this province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What seemed clear to parents watching last night is that teachers were waiting at the bargaining table, ready to work, while the Ford government was organizing yet another press conference for their minister, one where the minister claimed he had made an offer that he in fact had never made.

Why is the government working so hard to avoid blame here, when they could have been working hard to actually resolve this mess?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Every time our government has made significant, reasonable proposals in good faith to the OSSTF, not only have they rejected our proposals but actually neglected to advance any new proposals since the first day our bargaining commenced. You can't have it both ways. They cannot outright reject every proposal of the government but not bring any new proposal to the table. The onus is on OSSTF to bring forth a new option if they reject the current ones we've changed.

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We've made many changes to our proposals because we are listening to parents. Our commitment to the parents of this province is to stand with them against escalation. Their kids deserve to be in class. I remain hopeful we can get a deal, because parents, students and the teachers themselves should be in class today.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, here's what people see: The Ford government rolled into office and announced they'd be firing 10,000 teachers. They said larger classes—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath:—would make students tougher. They said Alabama-style mandatory online learning was coming to Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government side, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They attacked teachers who disagreed with them.

Now, they're scrambling to avoid blame for the job action that they have been pushing for since day one. So why won't the Ford government stop putting their energy into avoiding blame, and start working to avoid further strikes by fixing this mess that they have put us all in?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I think parents in Ontario know, irrespective of the political party and the government of the day, that unions, teacher unions and their leadership choose to escalate, irrespective of the Premier. That is what unites Bob Rae, Mike Harris and Kathleen Wynne, as well as, now, Doug Ford. That is the fact and parents know it to be true.

However, with respect to how we move forward, we looked to a private mediator, a mechanism we used just a month ago with CUPE to get a deal. What is true through the process is that they have not made any new proposals,

but in addition to that, they have sort of hardened their position on the increase in compensation to \$1.5 billion across teacher tables. We're offering for taxpayers a \$750-million increase.

Teachers are well compensated—the second-highest in the country. We value their work. Mr. Speaker, \$750 million is a reasonable offer; however, they've insisted to get a deal that requires a \$1.5-billion increase. I think that's unreasonable. We're going to continue to focus on our students and invest in their futures.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. An agreement can only be reached through a fair bargaining process, but this government is ignoring the key issues. Teachers are worried about class sizes, and so are parents. Teachers are worried about e-learning, and so are students. Teachers would rather be instructing kids, and yet this government has always wanted to pick a fight.

Will this government stop ignoring the key issues and get back to the bargaining table with a sincere effort to fix the mess and reverse their damaging cuts?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It is under this government that we've increased public expenditure in the defence of public education at the highest levels ever recorded. We are on track to spend \$1.2 billion more this year than we did last year.

With respect to classroom sizes, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that in the early years, classroom sizes ought to be smaller. Under our government, we are maintaining the smallest classroom sizes for the early years of education for the youngsters of this province. When it comes to the provincial average, we moved that from 28 to 25, and that was opposed by unions. We announced a change to the online courses from four to two. That was rejected.

The constant is the escalation by the union leadership against students, and the casualty of these impacts are them out of class today. I'd hope every member of the Legislature would oppose further escalation, and stand with parents. We remain hopeful on getting deals that keep kids in class.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All the members of this government need to do is look in the mirror to see what escalation looks like. They started picking the fight a year ago.

Across Ontario this morning, however, working moms and dads had to scramble for child care options, which are tricky to pin down at the best of times. Some parents have had to take a vacation day or go a day without pay, all because this government has created chaos in our education system.

This strike absolutely could have been avoided. Why has the Ford government added more chaos into the hectic lives of working families at the same time they can least afford it?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The Leader of the Opposition has so appropriately underscored why this government believes that strikes hurt kids, and that's why we're working hard at the table. We're going to stay at the table. We're looking to private mediation in order to get a deal. Now, I find it bizarre that the teacher union leadership would make a decision to escalate to keep kids out of class today, knowing that there's a tool in the tool kit that can keep students in class by getting a voluntary agreement.

We're going to continue to invest in public education. We're going to continue to be reasonable at the table. We're going to continue to show a student-centred posture because kids in this province should be in class.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Students are losing out on a day of instruction today. The government could have absolutely avoided this, but they'd rather have a showdown with teachers and education workers in this province than keep the classrooms open. The government knew of the negative impacts on students, but chose to go down this path. In fact, they chose this path some time ago. Just like they chose to introduce Alabama-style e-learning, even though the evidence suggests that it's not going to work.

Why has the government pushed this narrow, ideological approach to education rather than what is best for the students of Ontario?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We have made a decision to be reasonable at the table. That's why we moved from a mandate of four to two. We're also ensuring more time for students to be able to take more online courses, a gold standard of online courses, to provide more STEM-focused classes for students, particularly in rural and remote parts of the province. Every student will benefit from higher class options and more time to do them.

But, Mr. Speaker, fundamentally the issue at the table is not about online learning, because the day we made that announcement it was swiftly rejected. What it is increasingly about is compensation: a request, a demand, by the unions, for a \$1.5-billion increase to teacher pay, the second-highest paid in the nation.

We value their work, Speaker, but we think as taxpayers that the fair option, the right option forward, is to put more money into front-of-class to help our kids succeed. That's the priority of our government. I hope all members of the Legislature will stand with us as we invest in the future of our province.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Minister of Education. For over a year, this government has pushed forward a radical agenda for our schools, one that's asking students and families to settle for less: fewer teachers, fewer courses and fewer resources to support their learning. Their plan pushes kids into a risky online e-learning experiment, while eliminating 10,000 caring adults in our schools. But instead of backing down, the minister has only doubled down. Today, their devastating cuts have led to

the first province-wide strike by education workers in this province in 22 years.

Speaker, did the minister really think that this would end any other way?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: To the member: It is clear, obviously, that strikes hurt kids. It's regrettable that they're out of class today. We stand with parents against any further escalation.

The fact is, Speaker, they need all parties to be reasonable and to focus on their kids, not on ourselves. That's why we made a decision to move from a 28 provincialized average to 25. It's why we announced the move in online learning from four mandated to two. It's why we've added another \$200 million in new investment into front-of-class just a month ago in the fall economic statement.

We're going to continue to invest in education, to defend the future of our province and to ensure that the students of this province can get ahead. We're going to do that at the table, and we remain hopeful that we can get a deal through private mediation.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Perhaps if the minister dedicated as much energy to negotiations as he does to defending this Premier's cuts, we wouldn't be in this position. In interview after interview he has complained about the lack of a deal. All the while, he couldn't be bothered to show up at the bargaining table to try to reach one.

Speaker, Ontarians have made themselves abundantly clear. They don't want this government's cuts to our classrooms. Will the minister drop the spin, work today to keep this to a one-day strike, and reverse his cuts to our classrooms?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The parents of this province have been abundantly clear that they oppose escalation that keeps their kids out of class. I ask the members opposite to stand with them against further escalation, because kids should be in class.

The focus of this government is to be reasonable, to be focused on getting deals. We did this with CUPE. We turned to a private mediator. I'm asking OSSTF in good faith to do so. The fact is, they put a priority on a \$1.5-billion compensation increase, where we think it is reasonable and it is fair to give them a 1% increase—a \$750-million increase—while ensuring that additional dollars go to help our kids get ahead.

That's the focus of the government. We're going to continue to be reasonable. But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to focus on keeping kids in class.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Minister of Education. Parents across my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore and across Ontario fell victim to significant disruptions in their lives at the hands of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. The OSSTF's irresponsible one-day strike has created headaches for parents

and for students alike, with many parents scrambling to find child care options for their children.

Parents know that the best way for their child to reach their full potential is to remain in the classroom. Strike action caused by unions impedes the learning environment. The union may think this posturing will help it win at the bargaining table, but this strike is only putting our children at a disadvantage.

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Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Education tell the Legislature where the government stands on the OSSTF's one-day strike?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for the question. Mr. Speaker, 100% of parents want their kids to be in class today and every member of this government agrees. It is why we stand with parents against escalation. Regrettably, it seems to be that we're the only political party that has made that clear in this Legislature.

For 205 days since we started bargaining—months ago—the OSSTF has tabled a proposal; they've not made any changes at all. Our government has, however: on online learning, for classroom sizes, for new investments, and new commitments when it comes to mental health and STEM education.

The focus of our government is to get deals that keep kids in class. Contrary to the assertions by the members opposite, we're going to continue to invest more in public education than any government in the history of this province.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe the spirit of compromise must prevail if we're going to reach an agreement. So I am tremendously encouraged that our government has been reasonable and student-centric, and is calling on unions to provide predictability to parents.

But I think there is a lot of confusion about what's really going on. I've heard from parents who are upset, and as a step-parent, we want our kids in school. Parents and guardians aren't sure why teachers are on strike today. Parents want answers, and they deserve answers, because the minister is right: Strikes do indeed hurt our children.

Could the minister please give an example or two that demonstrates how the government has been reasonable and flexible in these negotiations?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, this strike, led and initiated by the teachers' union, is unfair for parents and unfair for students. The single victim of strikes led by teacher union leadership is our kids, the most vulnerable in our classroom. For middle- and low-income families, finding child care is very difficult. We find it unacceptable that they are put in this position.

Our focus is to get a deal through mediation. We actually remain hopeful and focused on getting a deal, ensuring our team stays at the table, through our mediator, to get a deal that provides predictability. We've reduced our classroom size average. We've reduced the online

learning amount from four to two. We've invested more in education than any government in the history of this province. We're going to continue to focus on our kids. We're going to continue to focus on getting deals that provide predictability for every child in this province.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is to the Premier. It's not just high school students losing a day of education today. In communities across Ontario, elementary and secondary schools are also closed. For example, the Ottawa Citizen reports that parents are scrambling to find care for their kids as schools across the Ottawa region close for the day. These parents don't want to hear the Minister of Education play the blame game, and they certainly don't want to hear him talk about making offers that were actually never made.

When will the Ford government stop playing politics with these negotiations and start reaching a real deal?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: In the context of the families in Ottawa region, I'm proud to report, Mr. Speaker, that all four boards in Ottawa have received increased expenditures from the government, in addition to the province-wide commitment to increase spending by over \$1.2 billion this year than we did last year.

We're committed to getting a deal. For the families in Ottawa, and for families in every region of this province, it is unacceptable that teacher union leaders have decided to escalate, hurting our kids. We stand with parents against escalation. We call on unions to stay at the table and to stay focused on getting a deal that provides predictability, that ensures children in this province remain in class.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Back to the Premier: In Ottawa alone, classes are cancelled for about 100,000 elementary and secondary school students. In my community, hundreds of students will be missing school across the Peel region. Parents are scrambling and they are frustrated, and the government's response is to hold press conferences about offers that they actually never made.

When will the Ford government stop playing games, admit that their reckless cuts have created a crisis and chaos in our classrooms, and make a sincere offer to resolve this issue at the bargaining table?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, I want to continue to reaffirm my commitment to examining innovative solutions to avoid a strike. I'm open to a framework from the teachers' union that reaches the goal of keeping our kids in class. I've said that for months, Mr. Speaker. That remains true today.

I've also asserted that there is a legitimate interest in seeking a private mediator as a mechanism to get a deal. Parents deserve to have that predictability, and the fact that families in this province have to contend with a strike led and initiated by the teachers' union leadership is unacceptable. We stand with them against escalation. We will continue

to invest in education. We'll continue to be at the table, we will never turn our backs on our students and we will fight hard to ensure students of this province remain in class.

MEDICAL CLINIC

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, for a year now, the town of Wasaga Beach has operated and funded an after-hours medical clinic as a trial project. The clinic has been well-received, and the residents of Wasaga Beach and the broader health community would like to see it continue. Mayor Bifulchi, council and town staff are working collaboratively with the LHIN, the community health centre, Collingwood General and Marine Hospital, and the family health organization to find a way to extend the clinic beyond December 30. There is, of course, a cost to operating the clinic, and municipal taxpayers can't bear the burden of this cost alone.

With the news that a local doctor has just recently had his licence suspended, the need for the clinic is even greater. So I ask the minister, Mr. Speaker, if the government could provide some immediate financial assistance so the clinic can remain operational in 2020 until the town pursues and is successful with a doctor recruitment campaign.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for his question. We are certainly aware of the situation in Wasaga Beach, and we are committed to making sure that everyone in Ontario who needs a primary care provider is given that opportunity.

We do have initiatives in place that are designed to assist local communities and organizations to recruit physicians and improve the geographic distribution of physicians and services. We also offer residency training to internationally trained physicians in exchange for a commitment for them to practise medicine in a community other than in Ottawa and Toronto.

So we do have some initiatives in place. Our plan to transform our public health care system is also going to improve the coordination of every aspect of patient care.

I'll offer some more suggestions in the supplementary.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. As you know, the shortage of family physicians is rather acute in my riding at this time. To highlight the need there, I just want to quote from some constituents.

Dino from Wasaga Beach writes: "Just found out that our doctor has been suspended, which leaves us without a doctor, yet Wasaga is closing its after-hours clinic. Where is the justice here?"

Susan from Wasaga Beach says, "The Wasaga Beach pilot project for the after-hours clinic will come to a close at the end of December. Demand has been clearly demonstrated. What are the provincial funding plans for this clinic?"

Joe wrote to me on November 15. He says, "My family"—a wife and two children—"moved up here a year ago and we're still without a family doctor. We have been on the list with Health Care Connect but there doesn't seem to be anything we can do."

Minister, perhaps in the supplementary you could tell us whether the government is able to help us out with the clinic. It needs to operate for at least a few more months until we can attract some doctors to Wasaga Beach. Again, with the help of your ministry, we would like to do just that.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank you for the question. As you know, in the future, Ontario health teams will be responsible for delivering all of their patients' care, making sure it's connected and integrated. They will improve care in communities like Wasaga Beach.

But I recognize that's not an answer for right now, so I look forward to working with you and your community to see what can be done, with this one physician now being out of the picture, with the existing clinic to continue it on until other arrangements are made for new physicians to come into the community.

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you later about that, but we look forward to working with you, as I said.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: My question is for the Associate Minister of Transportation. As our population in the region of Peel and around the GTA increases, it is imperative that we continue investing in our transit and highway infrastructure to keep up with economic demands.

Highway 401, as we know, is a major artery in our region and sees hundreds of thousands of commuters and commercial vehicles each and every day. Gridlock and heavy traffic make travelling frustrating for us all. Under our government, we have seen some historic improvements and investments that are reducing congestion and finally getting Ontario moving.

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How is the associate minister continuing to solve gridlock challenges in the GTA, including in my city of Mississauga?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member for the question. As the Associate Minister of Transportation for the greater Toronto area, it is my responsibility and my priority to encourage our government to make key investments in critical infrastructure to get Ontarians moving. Last week, I joined my Mississauga and Brampton colleagues to announce a \$640-million investment in the widening of Highway 401 on one of its busiest stretches. This project includes the widening of an 18-kilometre stretch of the 401 from Credit River in Mississauga to Regional Road 25 in Milton and will also include the reconstruction of bridges and other features.

The 401 is one of the busiest highways in North America. It is absolutely critical that we continue to invest in this highway so that we can provide relief for commuters and also so that we can ensure we improve economic development across this province.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Through you, Speaker, I thank the minister for her answer and for her hard work in making our morning commute just a little easier.

Approximately 250,000 vehicles travel on Highway 401 in Peel and Halton regions on a daily basis. The section of Highway 401 between Mississauga and Milton that she mentioned is one of the busiest stretches of highway in the GTA. It affects the lives of so many workers and hard-working families and business owners in Ontario.

I know that my residents and constituents are welcoming this important project with open arms. With that said, when can we expect to see the completion of the \$640-million project, Minister?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question. I'm very pleased to announce that construction is already well under way. Drivers will be able to expect to use the expanded highway by the end of 2022. Commuters will expect to see a mix of 12- and 10-lane collector systems from Credit River in Mississauga to Regional Road 25 in Milton. This will also include a median HOV lane.

Mr. Speaker, everyone recognizes how busy the 401 is. This is why this is absolutely critical to ease congestion and improve the traffic flow along the 401 and to ease that congestion on the west side of the GTA. Our government recognizes how critical these investments are so that we can get Ontarians moving.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Earlier this week, the Conservative member for Mississauga Centre signed a letter stating that, as a registered nurse, she calls on Windsor's police chief to demand a consumption and treatment services site in Windsor. The member for Mississauga Centre wrote, "Accidental opioid-related overdoses are killing sons and daughters, moms and dads, friends, neighbours, co-workers. Nurses urge you to use your office to help put an end to this public health crisis in your community. Saving lives is everyone's job." Speaker, I couldn't agree more. These sites save lives.

Windsor's public health unit issued three alerts for high overdose-related emergency department visits in the first two weeks of November alone. Will the Deputy Premier, who is also the Minister of Health, listen to the advice from her caucus colleague and fund a consumption and treatment services site in Windsor?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. There is no doubt about the opioids issue that we're facing in Ontario right now. It's happening in communities across the province. What we need to do, though, is to make sure that we respond to the applications that we've received.

We have received and set up already 16 consumption and treatment services sites. We are waiting for municipalities to submit their applications to us. When they do, we will review them, and we will apply the same criteria that we've applied to the previous 16. We await any news or any applications that we will receive from Windsor. If there's a serious concern there—and I have no doubt of what you're saying—we want to be able to help and we want to be able to make sure that people can receive the

wraparound treatment services that they need in order to be able to remove themselves from—not taking opioids anymore—but also to be able to receive the other health and social services and treatment that they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale–High Park: supplementary.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: Back to the Deputy Premier: It's not just the member from Mississauga Centre who echoes the calls made by New Democrats, health care professionals, front-line crisis workers and those with lived experience. This past summer, the member from Peterborough–Kawartha said that he would help gather 10,000 signatures and bring a petition to Queen's Park to request a consumption and treatment site in Peterborough.

Are the members from Peterborough–Kawartha and Mississauga Centre knowingly giving Ontarians false hope that help is on the way, or is the minister finally ready to reverse her course?

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

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We are actively involved in dealing with this issue. This is a concern for all of us as legislators in this place. It's happening in all of our communities, and we want to make sure we can provide the supports that are necessary.

One is consumption treatment services sites. There are still several that are being reviewed, and we anticipate issuing licences for them to continue the work they're doing. But it's not just that. It's when people indicate a wish to be rehabilitated, who are going to these sites, that we need to make sure that those other support services are there. That's why we've indicated that we are putting \$3.8 billion over 10 years into mental health and addictions services treatment, because what often happens when people go to these sites and they want to get into a rehabilitation program, there aren't any detox beds available and so that opportunity is lost.

It's not just the consumption and treatment services sites. It's the entire progress that people need to take until they can be completely rehabilitated. That is something that we are working on as part of our total mental health and addictions plan.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Buying a home is one of the largest and most significant investments that Ontarians make. Many Ontarians have been eagerly awaiting improvements to the new home warranty program in this province after years of Liberal inaction. I know that many of my constituents and Ontarians across the province are eager to hear more about our government's plan to take action on reforming the broken new home warranty system in Ontario.

Many Ontarians, and the Auditor General, have pointed out that the governance of Tarion played a central role in

the problems with the warranty system. Could the minister please tell this House and new homebuyers across Ontario what our government is doing to fix governance at Tarion?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for this very important question because new homebuyers in Ontario and new homeowners need to have confidence in the system.

Our government has made a commitment to take a look at Tarion and make changes that will better protect new homebuyers across this province, and that is what we continue to do. Our ongoing reform of new home warranties in Ontario is focused on providing better practices for new homebuyers.

We inherited a mess, quite frankly, and our plan addresses this by ensuring—again, I really stress this—that the right leadership and oversight is in place once and for all. That is why, last week, I wrote a letter to the chair of Tarion and instructed Tarion to change its governance. These changes will overhaul Tarion's governance so there is a proper balance of consumers and home builders at the board table.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I want to thank the minister for her answer, her leadership and taking this important first step that will help put an end to the serious accountability and transparency concerns at Tarion. Our government must ensure Ontarians can have trust in their home warranty system.

It was obvious to many that the leadership at Tarion is causing hardship and adding barriers for Ontarians who are seeking help during a vulnerable time in their lives. Ontarians need to know that the government is taking sufficient steps to ensure Tarion is fulfilling its mandate to protect Ontario homebuyers and that their intentions are in the right place.

Could the minister please tell this House about the changes that she instructed Tarion's chair to make and how these changes will transfer into needed improvements to the new home warranty program in Ontario?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, thank you to the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park for this important question. We have taken decisive action, Speaker. Since receiving my letter last week, Tarion's CEO and board chair have stepped down to make way for new leadership. This will be a team that, in terms of the new leadership, would be committed to implementing a new mandate focused on consumer protection. We have listened, and we have acted.

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Additionally, before Tarion's next annual general meeting, home builders will no longer dominate the board. There will be a new board with members who have specific competencies.

Again, we have listened. An overhaul of the board, Mr. Speaker, is an important first step in rebuilding the trust and confidence of Ontarians when it comes to new home ownership. We want people across this province to have better-built homes, and we want to ensure that we have the right leadership in place to bring forth that change.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is for the Minister of Education. There is a long history of complaints of anti-Black racism in the Peel District School Board. Since the minister announced the review, Black community members not only in Peel but across the province have pushed back against the minister's decision to not appoint Black reviewers. They know that you need Black reviewers at the table to not only contextualize what the community is saying, but to provide recommendations on what is necessary to address anti-Black racism in Peel schools.

Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple: Why did the minister not find it necessary to appoint independent Black reviewers to review anti-Black racism in our schools?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Yesterday, as I was asked this question, I was very pleased to confirm that the government has deputized my associate deputy minister, Patrick Case, who is a human rights leader who is now going to be part of every single review process, who is a Black leader across the province as well as a human rights advocate in the province. He's one of my ADMs for equity. He's been asked to lead the process of the review—hands-on, in every single review. Over 120 to date have been requested. He'll be at every single review.

The question, fundamentally, I think, is knowing that we have these two reviewers in place, one of which had been doing this in York region just previously in a similar issue, knowing that we are immediately and swiftly taking action. I think the point is, we should have confidence in the three of them, in Suzanne Herbert, in Ena Chadha, as well as in Patrick Case, to sit in to make sure that these parents, students and educators have a voice, that they're able to listen and that they're ultimately able to take immediate action to end systemic racism in Peel.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Back to the minister: Just to be clear, deputizing the ADM is not the same as having an independent Black reviewer assigned to this.

Black community members continue to speak out because we have been here before: ministers who talk a good talk, then return to their offices and ignore report after report telling them how to address the root causes of anti-Black racism.

The minister announced this review two weeks ago and has still failed to appoint an independent Black reviewer. Because of public pressure, we're watching the minister scramble, and he's still failing to address the community's concerns.

Again: How are we supposed to trust this minister to help the Peel District School Board address the root causes of anti-Black racism when even public pressure has not made the minister recognize that it is mandatory to have independent Black reviewers at the table?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, allegations of discrimination and prejudice are unacceptable. When I found out about these reports brought forth to the government, we took immediate action by calling in reviewers.

In addition to the two reviewers who have been involved—Ena Chadha, who you will know is from Brampton, is the former vice-chair of the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. She is a leader of the South Asian community who will make a difference in that process. In addition, we have appointed Suzanne Herbert, who is a former deputy minister, who's been involved in a review at the York Region District School Board; as well as appointed and ensured that the lead reviewer, the lead individual involved in this process is Patrick Case, a leader in the Black community of this province. He's at the table, he's hearing every voice and he's working with the government, of course, as well as with the reviewers, to ensure that we crack down on systemic racism.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. Minister, I know you are passionate about volunteerism and recognizing those who have selflessly donated their time to support others. We know recognizing those who give so freely of their time can go a long way to keeping them motivated and encourage others to donate their time to causes in communities across Ontario. It is why I was proud to recognize dedicated constituents in Scarborough–Agincourt during my local volunteer service award ceremonies last month. Minister, can you please tell us how your ministry is recognizing volunteers across the province?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to commend the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for his question, for attending his local volunteer service awards and for his dedication in working with the ethnic media in the province of Ontario. He's put many, many hours of volunteerism himself into this province.

Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

We like to talk about our spectacular double bottom line in the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. We have a fuelled economy of a \$71-billion economic imprint, but more importantly than anything, we actually assist those across the province of Ontario with the cultural fabric of what it means to be an Ontarian. So much of what it means to be an Ontarian and a Canadian is giving back to your fellow citizens.

Speaker, that's why the ministry is pleased that we were able to recognize 7,100 committed citizens across the province in more than 50 ceremonies to recognize their good work, including over 700 volunteers who are youth. Since 1986, we have recognized over 250,000 Ontarians who have been committed to giving back to their communities and I can't wait to talk a little bit—

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her work recognizing some of Ontario's most deserving and hard working volunteers. While I was proud to celebrate those worthy recipients for their hard

work and years of dedication during my local ceremony, I know that there are many more volunteers who go unnoticed across the province.

Minister, you were able to present a number of volunteer service awards in your riding of Nepean, honouring some who have donated their time to causes for over 25 years. Can you tell us about a few of these amazing volunteer service award recipients and how our government will continue to honour their generosity?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: We will absolutely commit to honouring our volunteers across the province. That's why I'll be reaching out to all members on both sides of the aisle to ensure that we are continuing to do that in the best manner possible.

Let me tell you about a few people we were able to recognize in my own community of Nepean. Tony Lawson has given 25 years of his life to the Barrhaven Lions Club to make sure we have things like our annual Christmas parade, and they fundraise for so many other people. Victor Chan is a veteran who actually started, with a number of other veterans, the newest Legion in the province of Ontario, the Barrhaven Legion, which has one of the top numbers of members in the entire country.

Let me tell you a little bit about Malusi from Brantford, with the Polish Alliance Ladies Circle. She has given 65 years of her life to dedicate to her community. We had three members who have given over 50 years, including Bill from Sarnia–Lambton, with the Sarnia Silver Sticks; Don from Thunder Bay, with the St. George's Society; and Krista from Etobicoke North with the St. Patrick's Catholic Church.

Speaker, this is the life blood of our province. We all should thank our volunteers because they are what makes—

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

VAPING PRODUCTS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health. Today we have the Canadian Cancer Society with us. Among the issues they highlighted this morning are the health risks that children and youth face because of vaping. Just last week, the NDP tabled a private member's bill that would strengthen regulation on vaping and help protect the health of young people and all Ontarians, but this government says it needs more time to review studies.

Minister, time is of the essence. Will the minister do the right thing and support the NDP's vaping legislation?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. The uptick in vaping among our youth is very serious and alarming to all of us because we know that there are situations where vaping can sometimes lead to smoking, which is in the exact opposite direction that we want to see our young people move. I have had a number of consultations with groups of people, including several groups with young people, understanding why young people are starting to vape and what it would take to get them to stop vaping.

We have taken several steps already, which you would know, with a ministerial order, which was issued in September, requiring hospitals to report to the ministry any issues that seem to be vaping-related pulmonary illnesses.

But there's more going on than that. We know that many young people have not sought help yet for their health-related issues. We want them to come forward and seek help. There is an education program, I believe, that's going to be necessary here for young people as well as for their parents as well as for their teachers. There's a lot of work yet to be done. I look forward to speaking more about it in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The government may boast that they've responded to this growing health crisis by banning the promotion of vaping products in convenience stores and gas stations, but what the health minister won't say is that the ban was supposed to come into effect more than a year ago, until the government stepped in and paused the ban, despite warnings from health care experts.

Let me remind the Minister of Health of what she said when the NDP asked this exact question months ago. The health minister said, "I want to protect children as well. That is very important. No one wants to see a young person get started with nicotine."

My question is, will the health minister acknowledge that, one year later, she must do more to protect children from vaping by strengthening regulations?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, the short answer to the member's question is yes, of course we recognize we need to do more. We have taken the steps with the ministerial order. We have taken the steps, as of January 1, to ban vaping products from being advertised in convenience stores as well as in gas bars. But there's other work that needs to be done, including working with the federal government.

The federal government controls a lot of the other types of advertising that you might see at Union Station, that you might see on billboards in other areas. It is an issue that I plan to bring forward with the federal minister as soon as we have our first meeting, which is going to be held early in the spring.

We are also looking at other issues. I certainly look forward to reviewing the private member's bill. I know that the issue of flavoured vapes that seem to be targeting young people is a matter of concern. When you call something "peach juice" or "cotton candy," you're not looking at targeting adults that are trying to use vaping as a smoking cessation product. There's also the issue of the nicotine content. The nicotine content is very high. In some cartridges, it's as high as a pack of cigarettes. We are looking at all—

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

FARM SAFETY

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question today is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Mr. Speaker, every member in this House that comes from a rural riding

knows that it's not easy being a farmer. The whole province relies on them to provide good, safe food each and every day, and yet we are continually hearing concerns that they're not feeling safe in their own homes, in their own workplaces and on their own farms.

I know farmers in my own riding who deal with issues of trespassing on an ongoing basis. I'm even proud to say that in my riding, the city of Sarnia, as well—an urban area—passed a resolution highlighting their concern with the safety of farmers and their businesses.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, we rely on farmers to produce and process safe food each and every day. Their own safety and that of their animals and families is a priority. Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell us about our government's proposed legislation on this issue and how it will help farmers in Ontario?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Sarnia-Lambton for that excellent question. Mr. Speaker, we've received hundreds of letters about trespassing on farms and agri-food premises and obstruction to livestock transport trucks. We cannot sit back and allow farmers to continue feeling unsafe in the vital work that they do. That's why our proposed legislation, if passed, will create the necessary deterrents against trespassers, with fines of up to \$15,000 for the first offence and \$25,000 for subsequent offences.

Our message is clear: People with unauthorized access or who obtain access under duress or false pretense should not be trespassing on farms and livestock transport. We're protecting farmers, we're protecting animal health and safety, and we're protecting the integrity of our food.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Minister, for that response. People who joined us in the Legislature on Monday when this bill was introduced saw the overwhelming response and positive response from our rural community and farm organizations. However, many people in Ontario wish to know more about how this government and your ministry, through this proposed legislation, are encouraging animal welfare and safety.

Farmers maintain sensitive protocols to ensure that their livestock are not exposed to undue stress or disease. This process is crucial to keep our food system and standards safe.

I don't think a single member of this House would disagree that food safety is a paramount issue. I also don't think that anyone here would disagree that animal welfare and safety are also important. Will the minister please tell us about how the proposed legislation will address these issues?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Again, thank you to the member for the exceptional supplementary. We want everyone to know that animal welfare is a top priority for our government.

Mr. Speaker, first I want to remind people that anyone who suspects animal abuse should immediately call the authorities to report it. Our proposed legislation provides that the people who are enforcing animal health and welfare legislation have access to private property. Our government has always been deeply committed to animal welfare. Trespassers may not realize how their actions could

lead to the introduction of disease among livestock and provide them with undue stress in the process.

Animal cruelty is a serious issue. If passed, our legislation would strike the right balance and ensure protection for farmers, as well as for their animals and the integrity of Ontario's food supply.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I want to introduce you to Roland. Roland is an 86-year-old senior who lives by himself in a one-bedroom apartment on Walmer Road. Roland has lived in that apartment for nearly 50 years, but Roland just received an eviction notice which says that he has to move out because the owner, an anonymous numbered corporation, wants the building to be renovated. The property manager says all tenants have to be out, even though none of the permits for the renovation have been filed.

Roland has built his life on Walmer Road, and he doesn't think he'll be able to afford another place on his fixed income. Minister, why is this government doing nothing to protect vulnerable seniors like Roland from losing their homes?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want Roland to know that our government is doing a lot in the housing space. We've worked very diligently since the first day we were elected, recognizing that this province has a housing supply problem. It's a crisis right across Ontario. No matter where you go in this province, we need more housing and more choice for people.

We made some very quick decisions. We worked on the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe almost immediately upon being elected, and we're going to continue to work in that space to provide intensification around major transit zones and to build more housing and provide more housing opportunities. We're reviewing the provincial policy statement, because as the planning playbook for the province, we need to work with our municipal partners on getting more housing built as fast as possible, and we've got a great uptake by our 47 service managers and our two Indigenous program administrators.

Speaker, I want to say to the member, I want to say to Roland, I want to say to everyone in the province that we need to all work together. We need to leverage every single dollar that we have in the system provincially, that the federal government has and that our municipal partners have.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the minister: Minister, Roland is not going to be able to afford a 500-square-foot bachelor condo right next to a transit development that costs up to \$3,000 to rent, because that is what this government is building.

Since taking office, this government has sided with developers time and time again, and they have done nothing to make life better for tenants like Roland. This government has scrapped rent control on new units. They have sat by and allowed rents to skyrocket, and they have done

nothing to stop the rise of renovictions like the one that is happening to Roland and thousands of people across this province.

Minister, what are you going to do to help people like Roland and the people all across this province who are suffering from illegal renovictions?

Hon. Steve Clark: Over the first 10 months in 2019, there have been 3,838 rental starts in the Toronto area. That's the most rental starts since 1992. Developers have nearly 53,000 new units of rental housing planned for the Toronto area in the third quarter of 2019 alone.

Again, don't take my word for it, Speaker. RBC Economics states that over the past 12 months, purpose-built rental apartment completion surged to a quarter-century high of 4,300 units in the Toronto area.

1130

Speaker, even with those statistics, there is much more work we need to do. We need to work with every single person, not just people who build homes but also all three levels of government. We need to ensure that we're doing everything possible to build non-profit housing, to build community housing, to retain, repair and also grow.

I just got off the phone, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition, come to order.

Hon. Steve Clark: —over the heckles—with my federal colleague, Minister Hussen. We had a tremendous conversation before—

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

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. For 15 years, the previous Liberal government ignored and neglected an industry that is extremely important to communities across rural and northern Ontario, all the while supported by the NDP.

I was pleased to see the minister announce today the release of a draft forest sector strategy as a first step to unlocking the full potential of Ontario's forestry sector. It is easy to see how much passion the minister has for the forestry sector, and I am confident that with his hard work, the sector will finally be back on the right track.

Can the minister please inform the House on the next steps, now that the new draft strategy has been released?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I want to thank the great member for his question as well.

Yes, I am passionate about this industry, and I was really pleased to announce today that we have a plan to help the forest industry grow and thrive. Throughout the past year, I held seven round tables across the province, speaking directly with industry, Indigenous communities and other stakeholders, which led to the development of this plan.

Our draft forest strategy will aim to stimulate job creation and promote economic growth, reduce unnecessary burden and cost for businesses while ensuring that our

forests continue to be managed in environmentally conscious ways and with a focus on sustainability.

Our government is committed to consulting on this draft strategy, and everyone can comment on it until February 5, 2020, on the EBR registry. I'm looking forward to hearing from the people of Ontario about how we're continuing to move forward and build Ontario together.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you to the minister for the answer. I'm glad to hear how committed the minister is to creating an environment that will help the forestry sector succeed in the province of Ontario. It's unfortunate that the Liberals gave up on forestry in Ontario, costing the sector both jobs and further investment in the province. However, it is clear the minister and our government are focusing on regaining those jobs and making Ontario open for business.

Could the minister please explain how the draft strategy will support a sector that is critical to so many communities across this province, generating over \$16 billion in revenue and supporting approximately 155,000 direct and indirect jobs across Ontario?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member again for his supplemental.

Ontario is recognized as a global leader in sustainable forest management, and the draft forest strategy outlines our plan to help the sector grow and adapt to the needs of an emerging and future market. The draft strategy is built on four main pillars: promoting stewardship and sustainability; putting more wood to work; improving cost competitiveness; and fostering innovation, markets and talent.

The draft strategy also outlines an \$84-million investment our government is making to improve Ontario's forest resource inventory, which will inform forest management planning and decision-making in the future. This is a critical step that will help support future work, put more wood to work and ensure that we are doing sustainable forestry—recognized around the world as a leader, right here in Ontario.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Health. Last December, the Cambridge ambulance communications centre was relocated to Hamilton due to staffing shortages. Staff were told the move would be temporary, but ministry delays have dragged this process out for a full year. Today, there are finally enough staff to return to Cambridge, but because of a black mould problem and technical issues, they've been delayed yet again to January 2020.

Ambulance dispatch staff, whether they're in Cambridge or Thunder Bay, play a critical role in our health care system. The government shouldn't be making their lives more stressful.

Can the minister provide assurances to dispatchers that those issues will be addressed and that staff will be able to return to Cambridge by January 2020?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. I agree with her that ambulance staff and the services they provide are fundamental to the operation of our health care system.

We know that there have been some issues in your area and that they are being resolved. We want to work with them to make sure they can continue to do the great work that they do. As the member will also know, we are doing a complete review and updating our technology across the province to make sure that we can respond in a timely manner when there's a request for emergency services. We are working with Mr. Jim Pine, who is consulting with municipalities across the province to understand the best method of moving forward.

We are continuing to make our investments in ambulance services. We're increasing by 4% our investments over this year and will continue to invest—because the member is absolutely right that these are absolutely essential services.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the minister: Over the last year, Cambridge dispatch front-line workers have gone above and beyond their scope of duty. Despite their hard work, persistent delays from management and this government and a lack of direction mean another holiday away from their families. For the ministry, this means incurring thousands of dollars in additional costs, including mileage, travel time and accommodation.

This decision was never fully thought out. It was not in the best interests of the dispatchers, who have a very stressful job, and indeed, this is absolutely a waste of money.

Why hasn't the government done more to return Cambridge workers back to their homes, Minister?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, work has already been done. We are working to make sure that they can return and they can be in their home communities and continue the services that they're doing.

Patient safety is our top priority. We are committed to reducing ambulance off-load delays and other delays that are related. I recognize there's a particular issue in your community. That is something that we are working hard to rectify, because we want to make sure that our ambulance personnel are able to continue the work that they're doing to be able to focus on the needs of patients, which is what our system is about at the end of the day.

We will make sure that we offer whatever services we can to make sure that they are up and running, that people are back in their home communities and that they're able to offer the services that patients and families need in their own home jurisdictions.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: My question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. In my riding and throughout the whole city of Mississauga, I am lucky to see the beauty that art and culture create, as well as the joy it brings to families and fellow citizens. In fact,

in addition to the various programs that are offered throughout the city and supported by our government, we have permanent public art that is accessible and available to be enjoyed by all. These permanent pieces, like the Gala Gateway and the Gala Procession sculptures, tell many stories and draw their inspiration from elements of Canada and the dynamism of performing arts.

Minister, you speak so passionately about our need to support all artists so they can share their stories with others across the province. Can you please tell us how your ministry's support for art and culture is allowing artists to continue to share stories that shape Ontario's cultural identity?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the question from the member from Mississauga. It is incredibly important that we continue to support our artists and our emerging athletes. One of the opportunities I had just last week with her colleague from Mississauga, Rudy Cuzzetto, was attending an event with a number of artists from Canada who were nominated for awards in Hollywood.

Last week, I had the opportunity to see a number of artists-in-residence at Harbourfront with the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, as well as the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. Speaker, I always say that we're the world in one province. We have world-class artists from Ontario who are showcasing their talents around the entire world. That's why we're very excited to be supporting the Ontario Arts Council with a total of \$61.1 million in grants that go to emerging artists throughout the entire province.

Our artists across Ontario are contributing to the spectacular double bottom line that we talk about. They're creating great works that we're exposing to the rest of world, but they're also contributing to the bottom line of our economy to the tune of \$71 billion.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following documents have been tabled: a report concerning the review of the cabinet ministers' and opposition leaders' expense claims, complete as of December 2, 2019, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario, and the 2019 annual report from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We now have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on government order number 26 relating to changes to the standing orders.

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

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

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

On November 27, 2019, Mr. Calandra moved government notice of motion number 73, now government order 26, as amended, relating to changes to the standing orders. On November 28, 2019, Mr. Bisson moved an amendment,

and on December 2, 2019, Ms. Singh, Brampton Centre, moved an amendment to the amendment. Ms. Hogarth has moved that the question now be put.

All those in favour of Ms. Hogarth's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Natyshak, Taras
Begum, Doly	Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom
Bell, Jessica	Hassan, Faisal	Sattler, Peggy
Berns-McGown, Rima	Karpoche, Bhutila	Schreiner, Mike
Bisson, Gilles	Kernaghan, Terence	Shaw, Sandy
Bourgouin, Guy	Lindo, Laura Mae	Singh, Gurratan
Burch, Jeff	Mamakwa, Sol	Singh, Sara
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fraser, John	Miller, Paul	Stiles, Marit
French, Jennifer K.	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Yarde, Kevin
Gates, Wayne	Morrison, Suze	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 61; the nays are 32.

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

Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 73, relating to changes to the standing orders.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry, as amended? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1149 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 73, relating to changes to the standing orders.

All those in favour of the motion, as amended, will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Morrison, Suze
Begum, Doly	Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras
Bell, Jessica	Hassan, Faisal	Rakocevic, Tom
Berns-McGown, Rima	Karpoche, Bhutila	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Kernaghan, Terence	Shaw, Sandy
Bourgouin, Guy	Lindo, Laura Mae	Singh, Gurratan
Burch, Jeff	Mamakwa, Sol	Singh, Sara
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Stiles, Marit
Gates, Wayne	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Yarde, Kevin

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 63; the nays are 30.

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

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

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

The House recessed from 1153 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to introduce a group from my riding of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I'd like to welcome Cora Hurwich and the Parkview neighbourhood association to the Legislature this afternoon. They represent a wonderful part of our Hamilton community in Hamilton East, and they are here today to highlight some of the challenges they're facing in the community regarding serious noise pollution and environmental distress in their neighbourhood. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VAPING PRODUCTS

Ms. Doly Begum: Vape devices and e-cigarettes are continuing to grow in popularity in Ontario and around the world. Originally marketed as a harm-reduction product for adult smokers, more and more young people are taking up vaping, regardless of whether or not they were smokers in the past. Public health advocates have expressed concern that vaping is a new way to get youth addicted to nicotine, the active ingredient in cigarettes.

In 2018, soon after the provincial election, this Conservative government loosened regulations to allow advertisements for vapes and e-cigarettes in convenience stores and gas stations, despite numerous concerns raised at the committee on social policy—and I was sitting there—by experts and members of the public. Now the government is walking back this wrong-headed move with the announcement that point-of-sale advertisements for vaping products will be phased out again by fall of next year.

While eliminating point-of-sale advertisements is a step back in the right direction, we should go further. My colleague the MPP from Nickel Belt has brought forward a private member's bill calling for increased regulation of vaping, including a full ban on advertising and restrictions on flavours and the amount of nicotine in e-cigarettes.

Vaping is a new phenomenon, Speaker, and the long-term health effects of this are not known yet. We simply do not have enough information to allow for it to be publicly advertised like this. So I'm asking this government to take a smart and educated approach to this public health issue and ensure that we keep vaping products out of the hands of our youth.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Last Saturday, I was heartened to attend the second Project Spotlight, 2019, that was organized by Joy Beyond Vision Community, Across U-hub and BrokerTeam Insurance. This was an inclusive screening of the Hong Kong documentary film *My Voice, My Life*. It was directed by the Oscar-winning director Ruby Yang.

The success of this free event was not just the great movie but how it was presented—that touched the audience and myself the most. Through wireless headset systems, the movie was communicated to a group of visually impaired audience members. A group of young vocal talents from Across U-hub performed the live description. I was provided with a pair of tinted glasses to experience how much the visually impaired would have missed.

After the show, the audience members broke down in tears because the audio description allowed them to fully enjoy the movie with their loved ones.

This experience also teaches the young volunteers from Across U-hub to treasure what they have and how meaningful it is to support the people that need things the most. Thank you to Project Spotlight.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Jessica Bell: Today, high school teachers are on strike across our province to fight for public education and our children's future. This government's strategy is to try to divide parents and teachers and ram through these cuts. But parents are standing with teachers—parents like those in my riding who got together to start up a group called the West End Parents Network.

I have a statement from these parents that they wanted me to read at Queen's Park today. This is what it says:

"By now, it should be obvious that parents and families will not give up, and they will not back down, until this government reverses all the harmful cuts it has made to our education system.

"Last night, over 100 parents and community members crowded around the Sheraton hotel as the OSSTF negotiating team waited the whole day for the government's bargaining team" to turn up.

Guess what? They didn't turn up.

"From stopping mandatory e-learning and restoring smaller class sizes, we know that teachers are on the side of parents, and let me tell you, we are united. We cannot be divided.

"We are so proud of teachers and support staff for standing up for our kids, and we will keep up the pressure until a fair deal is reached—one that reverses the cuts to education and respects our kids and our education workers."

As a parent, I'm proud to stand up for teachers, for kids and for the West End Parents Network, and I encourage you to do the same.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Aris Babikian: I rise today in the House to speak about our government's support to invest in Ontario's infrastructure.

In particular, I want to mention the recent process that allowed community organizations to apply for funding through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program: Community, Culture and Recreation Stream. This allowed organizations in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt to apply for funding to help ensure that our community is a great place to live.

I especially want to acknowledge and thank YMCA and United Way Toronto for spending months planning and applying to build the Bridletowne Community Hub in my riding. I know that, once completed, this project will have huge benefits for families in Scarborough—Agincourt.

Additionally, I have supported the Armenian Community Centre, the Chinese Cultural Centre, the Tamil Community Centre, the Chinese Professional Association of Canada and Carefirst in the process of applying for funding through this stream. I know that they all submitted excellent applications that will have immense benefits to the families of Scarborough.

I look forward to seeing all the projects come to fruition in the future.

PEDIATRIC CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Speaker, I want to introduce you to Cindi Shoot and the son whom she calls Sweet Ethan. Ethan is seven years old, and Cindi is a single mom in Beaches—East York. Almost a year ago, on the eve of a long-promised vacation, Cindi took Ethan to a clinic for a fever that wouldn't leave. It turned out that Ethan had a brain tumour that quickly spread to his spine. Cindi and Ethan's lives turned upside down.

In the months since, Cindi has had to become an advocate for gentler treatments for childhood cancers, for more funding for childhood cancer research, and for a proton-beam therapy machine so kids don't have to travel to the US, as Ethan did, to avoid harmful radiation long-term side effects.

Cindi is lucky. She has a union job that allowed her to take time off to care full-time for Ethan and his sister, but without a GoFundMe and community support, she would not have made it through the year once her EI ran out.

Government needs to listen to Cindi and to do better to support kids with cancer and their families. Cancer is stressful enough without worrying about how to keep a roof over a family's head, and food on the table.

Ethan, who has kept his sweet smile throughout this ordeal and has been so very brave, is scheduled to begin his final round of chemo next Monday.

As we head into the holiday season, I want to ask all of you to please send prayers and light and love to Sweet Ethan and Cindi. May their next year be much smoother, healthier and happier.

LOCAL BUSINESS

Mr. Norman Miller: I rise today, as we approach the holiday season, to remind residents of Parry Sound—Muskoka and all Ontarians of the importance of shopping locally. This is particularly true in smaller communities, like the towns and villages in my riding. Buying your Christmas presents from a local store, manufacturer or artist supports jobs in your town.

Residents of Bracebridge have a great opportunity to support local jobs this year by shopping at the temporary location of Rich Hill Candles. Rich Hill Candles closed last year after a fire. While they wait for their main location to be rebuilt, they've opened a temporary store on Manitoba Street.

Buying locally grown food for your holiday festivities supports local farmers like Currie's Corner Farm in Huntsville and the Muskoka Lakes Farm and Winery in Bala.

1510

Speaking of the Muskoka Lakes Farm and Winery, I want to congratulate them on winning the Excellence in Innovation Ontario Business Achievement Award this year. This is a prestigious award from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

Buying locally produced maple syrup supports your neighbours who make maple syrup, and our area has a number of award-winning maple syrup producers. I want

to take this opportunity to congratulate Mike and Sarah Clapperton of Loring on winning two awards for their maple syrup at this year's Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, including the John David Eaton World Championship Cup.

These award-winning businesses demonstrate the high quality of products produced right in our backyard.

Whether you're buying food, decorations or presents, I encourage everyone to give this gift to your community: Shop local this Christmas.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Today, I would say unfortunately, the government has decided not to take bargaining seriously when it comes to what's happening with bargaining with teachers across the province.

The government was pretty clear: Right from the outset, they decided that they wanted to pick a fight with teachers and teachers' unions in order to advance whatever political agenda they had. Unfortunately, the people that are caught in the crossfire are students across this province and parents. I think that's rather unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. We have a responsibility as legislators on both sides of the House—and the government should take that seriously as well—to be able to find a path forward to resolve these issues.

Now, the government tries to say, "Oh, it's the unions and the teachers that are escalating everything that's going on," but when you look at what has actually happened, the government has said, "We want to increase the number of classes we teach without teachers. Instead, we're going to teach by e-learning, and we're going to increase class sizes."

First of all, how do you expect students and parents to respond to that? I don't think they're very happy. Students do not want to be in classes that are larger in size and are not interested—by and large; most of them—to do e-learning. And when it comes to parents, they know that that's not a good thing for their kids.

Teachers are out there on the picket line today trying to preserve a public system of education that has served this province well over the past number of years. I think the government has to understand it has a responsibility to make sure to preserve that system as well.

MANN CUP

Mr. Dave Smith: Since 1932, the Mann Cup has been awarded as the national championship trophy for Canadian box lacrosse. It's currently valued at more than \$175,000 to replace that cup, and it finds its permanent residence in the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame.

In September 2018, I rose in this chamber to announce that the Peterborough Lakers major series lacrosse team had won their 16th Mann Cup, to tie New Westminster with the most national box lacrosse championships in Canada.

Today, I rise to inform the House that this past September the Peterborough Lakers did something that has only been done twice before in our country's lacrosse history: They won a third consecutive national championship and now stand alone as the winningest franchise in Canadian lacrosse history. This victory marks only the third time in Canadian history that the franchise has won three consecutive national championships.

I'm sure everyone here wants to know who the other organizations were. Well, most recently, in 1994, 1995 and 1996, the Six Nations franchise from my seatmate's riding won three championships. The only other franchise to have won it three consecutive times is—wait for it—my own community of Peterborough, in 1951, 1952, 1953 and a record-setting fourth time in 1954. Since the Mann Cup is coming back to Ontario this year, I'm excited for a fourth in 2020.

WATERLOO REGION

Mr. Mike Harris: It's an honour to rise here once again and update the great constituents of Kitchener–Conestoga on how this government is making a significant difference for Waterloo region—progress that would not be possible without the strong partnership that currently exists between this government and our local municipalities, a relationship that has always been a top priority of mine.

I want to recognize Berry Vrbancovic, Les Armstrong, Joe Nowak and Sandy Shantz, the mayors of Kitchener, Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich, respectively, and also regional chair Karen Redman for their time and constructive dialogue on key issues since my election. With their help, this government has advanced the interests of Waterloo region by creating jobs, making key infrastructure investments and enhancing care for those who need it most. We have made significant progress on key initiatives, including:

- allowing fair and open tendering for public sector projects;

- protecting our rural fire services by eliminating discrimination against double-hatters and volunteer firefighters;

- approving a full slate of public transit infrastructure projects supplied for by the region through ICIP;

- expanding home, seniors' and midwifery care;

- giving the green light to the new St. Boniface school in Breslau; and

- yes, Mr. Speaker, expansion to GO train services, getting us closer to two-way, all-day GO.

I look forward to continuing the partnership we have built over the past year so that we can maintain Waterloo region as one of the top communities in this province to grow and prosper.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for members' statements this afternoon.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Mike Harris: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

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

Bill 132, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking various Regulations / Projet de loi 132, Loi visant à alléger le fardeau administratif qui pèse sur la population et les entreprises en édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et en abrogeant divers règlements.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 7, 2019, the bill is ordered for third reading.

PETITIONS

NOISE POLLUTION

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, this petition is to reduce the noise pollution in the Parkview West neighbourhood in Hamilton East.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas industrial noise pollution has increased greatly in recent years and remediation efforts have resulted in increased acoustic noise levels;

“Whereas residents’ increased exposure to noise causes stress, anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, and heart disease;

“Whereas provincial regulators and enforcement personnel have been unable to develop an acceptable solution to reduce this noise pollution;

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

“To take action by changing the acceptable operating noise levels in the Parkview West neighbourhood of Hamilton.”

I agree with this, and I’ll affix my signature.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

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

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

“Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF),

hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario’s ecosystem;

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

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

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

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

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Ms. Marit Stiles: I’m pleased to present this petition on behalf of Emilia Fernandes of Mississauga. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts represent an all-out attack on municipalities, health care, schools, universities and social services; and

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“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts are harming families, children and the most vulnerable across Ontario, making the services we all rely on less accessible and accountable; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will strip workers of their charter-protected right to free collective bargaining; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will force front-line public sector workers to accept contracts below inflation, compounding cuts that make the delivery of services more difficult;

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

“That the government of Ontario stop dismantling our social infrastructure, properly fund our public services, withdraw Bill 124, and support communities, not cuts.”

This is signed by thousands of people, Mr. Speaker. I’m very pleased to affix my signature. I fully support it, and I’m going to hand it to page Augustine to table with the Clerks.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Mike Harris: It’s a pleasure to be able to read this petition into the House today.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I again wholeheartedly support this petition and will pass it to page Sarah to bring to the table.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition titled “Communities, Not Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts represent an all-out attack on municipalities, health care, schools, universities and social services; and

“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts are harming families, children and the most vulnerable across Ontario, making the services we all rely on less accessible and accountable; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will strip workers of their charter-protected right to free collective bargaining; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will force front-line public sector workers to accept contracts below inflation, compounding cuts that make the delivery of services more difficult;

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

“That the government of Ontario stop dismantling our social infrastructure, properly fund our public services, withdraw Bill 124, and support communities, not cuts.”

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

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition here entitled: “Don’t Take Away Social and Economic Rights for Women and Marginalized People.

“Whereas Bill 47 erased many of the legislative gains achieved through Bill 148, the fairer labour laws and working conditions that had a particularly positive impact on women and marginalized people;

“Whereas statistics show that women, particularly women of colour, are most likely to be employed in precarious work, and the Bill 47 amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and Labour Relations Act, 1995 create conditions that lead to a growth in precarious employment while also eliminating protections for millions of Ontario workers;

“Whereas Bill 66 further erodes women’s and marginalized people’s social and economic rights; and

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

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

“—reinstate paid sick days, the scheduled increase to a \$15 minimum wage, legislation to increase pay transparency, regulations that support equal pay for equal work, and all other worker protections gained under the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act;

“—reverse changes to daycare regulations that allow more children per caregiver;

“—reverse the retroactive cuts to funding for the Ontario College of Midwives;

“—reinstate funding increases to sexual assault centres;

“—restore the” provincial round table on ending “violence against women; and

“—restore the child and youth advocate commissioner’s office.”

I fully endorse this petition. I will affix my signature to it and provide it to page Ally to deliver to the table.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Will Bouma: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature on it and give it to page Gio.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The petition I’d like to read into the record is entitled “Stop Ford’s Education Cuts.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas” the Ford Conservatives’ “new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes...;

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

“Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take ... classes online, with as many as 35 students in each course;

“Whereas Ford’s changes will rip over \$1 billion out of Ontario’s education system by the end of the government’s term; and

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

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

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

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

CURRICULUM

Mr. Billy Pang: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government itself has predicted increasing demand for labour in the STEM sector;

“Whereas STEM occupations will be critical for the Ontario innovations, services and economic performance in the next decade;

“Whereas current EQAO results have indicated that the current education curriculum has inadequately prepared students for future job opportunities within STEM fields;

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

“That the Ontario government make meaningful changes to the current education curriculum so that the next generation will be better equipped to be competitive in the job market.”

I support this petition and I will pass it to the assembly through Leela.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr. Kevin Yarde: This petition is entitled “Communities Not Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts represent an all-out attack on municipalities, health care, schools, universities and social services; and

“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts are harming families, children and the most vulnerable across Ontario, making the services we all rely on less accessible and accountable; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will strip workers of their charter-protected right to free collective bargaining; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will force front-line public sector workers to accept contracts below inflation, compounding cuts that make the delivery of services more difficult;

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

“That the government of Ontario stop dismantling our social infrastructure, properly fund our public services, withdraw Bill 124, and support communities, not cuts.”

I fully endorse this petition and I’ll affix my name to it.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. Mike Harris: I have a petition here entitled “In Support of Constructing a Memorial to Honour Our Heroes.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces members served in the war in Afghanistan including the 159 Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice; and

“Whereas the Premier made a commitment to the people of Ontario to build a memorial to honour the bravery and sacrifice of our armed forces; and

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“Whereas, by remembering their service and sacrifice, we recognize the values and freedoms these men and women fought to preserve; and

“Whereas the memorial will show our gratitude to our veterans, their families and to their descendants; and

“Whereas the memorial will be a place of remembrance, a form of tribute, and an important reminder to future generations of the contributions and sacrifices that have helped shape our country;

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

“That the government of Ontario immediately construct the memorial to honour the heroes of the war in Afghanistan.”

I fully endorse this petition. I’ve signed it and will pass it to page Isabella to bring to the table.

SCLÉROSE EN PLAQUES

M. Michael Mantha: J’ai une pétition :

« Clinique spécialisée en sclérose en plaques à Sudbury
« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Alors que le nord-est de l’Ontario affiche l’un des plus hauts taux de sclérose en plaques (SP) de l’Ontario; et

« Alors que des cliniques spécialisées dans la sclérose en plaques fournissent des services de soins de santé essentiels aux personnes atteintes de sclérose en plaques, à leur fournisseur de soins et à leur famille; et

« Alors que la ville du Grand Sudbury est reconnue comme un centre des soins de santé dans le nord-est de l’Ontario;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de :

« Mettre en place immédiatement une clinique spécialisée dans la sclérose en plaques dans la région de Sudbury, composée d’un(e) neurologue spécialisé(e) dans le traitement de la sclérose en plaques, d’un(e) physiothérapeute et d’un(e) travailleur(-euse) social(e) au minimum. »

Je suis complètement d’accord avec cette pétition. J’y mets ma signature, et je la présente à la page Ally pour l’apporter à la table des greffiers.

ADDICTION SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

“Work to put forward an application for a treatment and consumption services site to follow the mandatory services....”

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROVINCIAL ANIMAL WELFARE SERVICES ACT, 2019

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

Mr. Calandra, on behalf of Ms. Jones, moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will look to the government side to lead off the debate. The government house leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I'll speak only very, very briefly, just to congratulate the minister and the parliamentary assistants who have been working on this bill. It is a very comprehensive bill that I know all members of this House are in agreement with. It is a rare opportunity that we can have a bill put together that everybody on both sides of the House agrees with.

With that, I will sit down, and I look forward to the debate that ensues for the rest of the day. Thank you.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: It is with great pleasure that I once again stand up and speak about Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, and the much-needed overhaul of animal welfare in Ontario.

For over 100 years, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty for Animals, a private charity, was the only organization providing the services of animal welfare enforcement and policing for the entire province. Animal advocates and stakeholders have demanded the need for change and for a revamped cruelty enforcement regime in Ontario for a very long time.

Animal welfare charities and their donors have been subsidizing this important work with a serious lack of government funding and oversight. That is a disservice to the people of Ontario. As a private charity, the OSPCA is not subject to freedom-of-information laws or the Police Services Act, unlike nearly every other law enforcement body in Ontario. Government underfunding and the dependence on the OSPCA's fundraising from the public put a serious strain on the OSPCA's capacity to do their job effectively. When you force a charity to fundraise to do their work, and force members of the public, who are very passionate about the cause of protecting animals, to pay for it, you are taking advantage of their compassion instead of providing the adequate funding needed to make the system functional. The OSPCA did the best they could with what they had, but there has always been a need to move toward a more accountable public system.

The PAWS Act, along with the OSPCA Amendment Act, is in response to a Superior Court ruling that found the OSPCA's enforcement powers in animal cruelty investigations in Ontario to be unconstitutional. In early 2019, a Superior Court judge found that the previous animal welfare legislation violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it effectively deputized the OSPCA, a private not-for-profit organization, into a policing role. The court, Mr. Speaker, noted that “although charged with law enforcement responsibilities, the OSPCA is opaque, insular, unaccountable, and potentially subject to external influence, and as such Ontarians cannot be confident that the laws it enforces will be fairly and impartially administered.”

In the meantime, the Ontario government enacted a temporary measure to keep animals protected and ensure abusers would be brought to justice until a new framework could be established. While the decision was being appealed, the OSPCA announced it would no longer enforce the act, citing concerns over a lack of support and the safety of its officers. So on June 28, the OSPCA stepped back after 100 years of animal welfare enforcement, and the humane society took over in a temporary role. This led to the introduction of this bill, to make animal welfare enforcement a fully public function under provincial control and funding, including the hiring of public inspectors.

Those of you who have followed along with this issue will know that on November 14, the Ontario Court of Appeal decided to overturn the lower court ruling. They stated that the search and seizure powers of the OSPCA do not violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The court deemed the overall question a matter of public policy and out of the courts' purview. The appeal court stated, “The design of a proper regime of law enforcement, one that ensures that peace officers are accountable, that their actions are subject to public scrutiny and that the law is enforced with integrity, are questions of public policy, not individual legal rights” protected by the charter. Bill 136 will hopefully become that public policy—an animal welfare regime that provides accountability, integrity and transparency.

The PAWS Act was not introduced in response to or by the direction of any court decision. We hope that the government simply realized it was the right thing to do and the smart thing to do for the people and animals of Ontario. The decision of the Court of Appeal should not hinder but rather strengthen the will of this government to further build on the PAWS Act.

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In response to the appeal court's decision, Animal Justice executive director Camille Labchuk stated that this case "prompted a serious public discussion about how animal welfare laws should be enforced in Ontario and beyond. Animal Justice's key concern was always ensuring that a robust, public, well-funded enforcement system be put into place, and we are pleased that the province of Ontario is moving toward such a system with Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act. A strong enforcement system sends a signal that our government agrees with citizens that animals matter, and that ensuring their protection is an important public value."

The PAWS Act is a first step in implementing a new provincial enforcement model, a more detailed oversight structure and a modernized legislative framework for animal welfare in Ontario. This bill is just the beginning of what we hope will be an all-around better animal welfare system. There is no going back to the way it was before. Ontario is the only province to move toward a fully public model of animal law enforcement, and that is a significant step in the right direction. By employing public servants who are properly trained to handle the unique situations involved in animal welfare, it becomes much safer and more accountable.

This bill is introducing the strongest penalties in Canada for animal cruelty offenders. We're happy to see that tougher penalties are being established for individuals and corporations and vary from minor to major offences. Fines will increase for these offences. A first major offence committed by a corporation constitutes a fine of half a million dollars. The top fine is \$1 million for a corporation convicted of repeated major offences.

An individual convicted of a major offence under the new legislation could be fined up to \$130,000 and up to two years in prison. If an individual is convicted of a second offence, the maximum fine doubles.

Certain mandatory minimum sentences are established, including a \$25,000 fine for causing distress to an animal that results in death, animal fighting or harming a service or law enforcement animal. Animal welfare inspectors will have greater powers of enforcement, giving them a lot more capacity to go out, make these seizures and enforce these tougher penalties for animal abusers.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to see that the new penalties for animal cruelty will be the strongest in Ontario and the strongest in Canada. They aim to improve oversight and ensure increased transparency and accountability, including establishing a one-window complaints mechanism for the public. This will help build public trust in this new model.

The hope is that this bill will provide dedicated animal welfare officers with adequate support and resources to

effectively police animal cruelty complaints and that crown prosecutors will effectively enforce the law by prosecuting offences, including the new offences in the bill.

We need to ensure that proper training is being provided for these inspectors and prosecutors as well. However, as always with this government, the wording is always strong, but the resources and finances aren't always there. In northern Ontario, there are large distances between communities. These areas will require resources and funding necessary to represent such a large area of the province. In 2016, there were only 91 investigation officers to serve the entire province; by this year, that number had dropped to around 60. That's not nearly enough to serve a province the size of Ontario. Even the best legislation won't be able to protect our animals if the funding and resources fall short. So, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to hold this government to account. We need to ensure that enough animal inspectors are hired and trained to serve the needs of Ontario.

Under Bill 136, inspectors will be empowered to enter a home or business with authorization or with a warrant to conduct searches. They may ask for police assistance and they may use reasonable force to execute a warrant. Special provisions will allow entry to a place where there are reasonable grounds to expect there is an animal in distress. And inspectors may enter if the time required to obtain a warrant may result in serious injury or death to the animal.

Mr. Speaker, we need public servants who are properly trained to handle the unique and often dangerous situations involved in animal welfare enforcement, such as conducting these searches that I just mentioned. We need to take workers' safety seriously when moving forward on strengthening animal welfare enforcement in Ontario.

Many who abuse animals will also display violent behaviour to their family members. They could end up abusing children, women, the elderly and other vulnerable people, and show signs of anti-social and destructive behaviour. If we can shut down animal abusers, it could help prevent domestic violence from happening.

Dogfighting, Mr. Speaker, continues, unfortunately, to be a problem in Ontario and across Canada. Just as animal cruelty can be connected to domestic violence, there is also a link between animal cruelty and gang violence and organized crime. Studies have shown that when these dogfighting rings are raided, illegal drugs and weapons are also seized about two thirds of the time. I applaud the focus on combatting this horrible practice within the PAWS Act to also help prevent more serious violent crimes.

There will always be risks in enforcement work, but with more training, resources and protections for animal inspectors, we can make their job much safer and prevent future violent crimes from occurring.

Mr. Speaker, this bill allows inspectors to order the animal owner to seek care for an animal in distress, take possession of the animal and, if necessary, euthanize an animal on the advice of a veterinarian. The police may be called to assist, and reasonable force may be used to take

possession of the animal. We, on this side of the aisle, are in support of the amendments to clarify when euthanasia would be the most humane course of action for an animal. This would include instances such as: if immediate treatment cannot prolong the animal's life, or if such treatment would result in undue suffering. These are some of the amendments we dealt with the other day with the government. Also, adjusting the wording to remove the ability of a veterinarian to euthanize an animal if it is simply "sick" or "in pain" provides more clarity on the guidelines for the veterinarian making this determination. Once again, we are pleased to see the extra thought taken in these amendments. The proper protections need to be in place for animals and pet owners when these tough decisions need to be made.

We also voiced our concerns during the clause-by-clause discussions the other day regarding equity and the forfeiture of animals because an owner can't pay. We support the amendment that adds more specific wording to help protect low-income pet owners. This is very important. It will allow for an agreement to extend the time for payment or reduce the amount that is to be paid—and that wasn't originally in the PAWS Act. We cannot revictimize the most vulnerable. We are happy to see that this government listened to our concerns and they made the changes with this amendment. There are people, as we know, Mr. Speaker, who can't pay their vet bills. And who's going to suffer the most? That would be the animal that is removed from the person they know and love. So, in that section, we're pleased to see that the government was willing to make some changes.

1550

Ontarians care about animals. Some 60% of Ontario families own at least one pet, and we are prepared to financially support an effective, modern animal welfare system and law enforcement regime. It is encouraging to see partnerships with members of health and social services to deal with issues such as the hoarding of animals and the linkages between animal abuse and domestic abuse cases. I'm happy that the Solicitor General has consulted with the police, veterinarians, humane societies, academics and the public as well.

While bringing this into the public sector, it will require funding. The majority of Ontario pet owners understand the importance of protecting them like family and making sure that all other animals in Ontario are protected as well. That includes pets, agricultural animals, wildlife in the wild and in captivity, and animals in research. We consider the investment to be well worth the return.

It's easy to think of just our cats and our dogs and our other pets when thinking about the PAWS Act, but our farmers and agricultural industry partners also play an integral role in animal welfare in this province. Livestock and agricultural organizations have been effectively involved in the consultation process, and we need to keep working with them in the long run. We need to ensure that there are adequate regulations and protections for all animals, regardless of their location, context or industry. The ministry is planning to develop more regulations, but it is difficult to evaluate what is still to come.

We have the opportunity to create new regulations around animals that advocates have been pushing for and that have been long overdue. We have the opportunity to reopen discussions about Ontario's captive wildlife standards. Ontario is the only province that doesn't have any exotic animal legislation, besides a ban on orcas. Ontario has fallen behind other provinces when it comes to this issue.

According to World Animal Protection, exotic pets in Canada present a range of risks to both animals and individuals. They say, "What was once a niche interest is now a multi-billion dollar industry that has outpaced current laws and regulations. From animals self-mutilating due to chronic stress, to Canadians falling victim to diseases transferred by wild animals, the issues related to exotic pet ownership are vast and concerning."

The number of exotic wild animals being kept as pets in people's homes is 42% of all exotic pets in Canada. We need to address these unsustainable trends that continue to go unsupervised. We need a comprehensive approach in consultation with the experts. Wild animals continue to suffer as pets in peoples' homes and in captive environments that cannot provide for their unique needs. We need to work with our stakeholders to find solutions to this issue and finally regulate exotic animals in Ontario. As of now, the PAWS Act does not address these significant legislative gaps, and I fear that this could have a trickle-down effect on future regulations if they continue to go unaddressed.

Interjection: It's coming.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Let's hope so.

New legislation could also regulate other industries such as zoos and aquariums. Proper licensing of captive wildlife could put an end to roadside zoos, which are notorious for their poor treatment of animals, and strengthening existing captive wildlife standards would better protect animals and people's safety. This is something that the people of Ontario have long called for, and now is the chance to establish stricter regulations on these industries.

Moreover, specific animal practices, such as medically unnecessary surgeries on pets, including cat declawing and tail docking and ear cropping of dogs, could be regulated here.

The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association has agreed that veterinarians have a responsibility to look out for the best interests of animals in their care, and has long opposed these cosmetic alterations. In a letter to the Solicitor General, they recommend including legislation in the PAWS Act to ban these practices. They wrote: "The development of a new animal welfare act provides opportunity for Ontario to join the growing list of Canadian provinces that have enacted a ban on unnecessary surgeries. The province is strongly encouraged to include a ban on elective and non-therapeutic canine ear cropping and tail docking and feline declawing in any new or amended legislation."

The veterinarians' society has encouraged cat owners to avoid unnecessary partial digital amputation, or feline declawing, by educating them on alternative solutions.

Modernizing regulations on these practices is something that many animal activists have been advocating for for a very long time. This is the opportunity so many people have been waiting for to strengthen many animal protections. Now is the time we can finally do it.

An integral part of the long-term success of this animal welfare model is establishing a multidisciplinary advisory table. A wide range of experts, including veterinarians, agricultural representatives, academics, animal advocates and members of the public will provide ongoing advice to the ministry to improve animal welfare.

It is extremely important to keep building on this new model and to keep improving conditions for animals in Ontario. The PAWS Act is just the beginning, and we need to build on this foundation to create a broader set of animal welfare legislation. We need regulations around exotic animal ownership. We need more accountability from the captive wildlife industry, and to strengthen their standards, to keep animals and the public safe. Public consultations need to continue with stakeholders, to improve our animal welfare regime.

As stated, Mr. Speaker, much more is needed to be revealed by this government in implementing new regulations necessary for a modernized animal welfare model in this province. This model will work only if it is public and well funded. Adequate resources need to be devoted to enforcement. If this work isn't funded, even the best legislation won't be able to protect animals.

In the past, the proper funding was not provided for animal welfare, and this was one of the downfalls of the OSPCA. Former governments did not provide the necessary funding for them to do their job effectively. Indeed, the OSPCA, whose officers had police powers and led both provincial offence and criminal cruelty charges, said that that lack of funding and years of financial losses led to their decision to no longer provide their services.

The PAWS Act continues to be a work-in-progress. The fundamental goal in all of this is to create legislation that focuses on protecting animals, has transparency and accountability to build public trust, and to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, to ensure justice for animals.

This government needs to continue to listen to stakeholders, to build on the foundation that this bill is creating.

We are cautiously optimistic, Mr. Speaker, but we will be watching the government to ensure that this new model stays on the right track.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Before I start, I have to give a shout-out to my husband, Paul, on our fifth wedding anniversary today—five years. Wow!

Another favourite thing I like to talk about is animals, so I'm happy to join in this debate today. I'm pleased to begin third reading of Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019. I would like to thank this House for its thoughtful deliberations of this proposed bill,

and the compassion the honourable members here have shown for our animals.

I do appreciate the member opposite, his support and his words, and their support at committee for long-overdue legislation and the amendments we brought forward at committee. It's very important that we all do this for the animals.

1600

Since the Solicitor General first introduced Bill 136 in the House, the landscape has shifted once again. On November 14, the Ontario Court of Appeal overturned the lower court ruling that had declared certain parts of the province's animal well-being enforcement regime to be unconstitutional. That said, we know that the current act was flawed and needed an overhaul, including bringing the entire animal welfare system under provincial control.

For over 100 years, the enforcement of animal welfare laws in the province was the responsibility of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the OSPCA. A private charity was the agency responsible for appointing a chief inspector for animal welfare and the inspectors who would enforce those laws. The enforcement framework under the OSPCA Act was the most detached from government and offered the least amount of control, oversight and priority-setting. In short, the province was sidelined when it came to direct involvement in the well-being and protection of our animals. The old model also resulted in enforcement gaps and a lack of coverage in parts of this province.

These points, and others, were driven home time and time again in consultations with over 50 groups and organizations, including technical experts, academics, the agricultural community, veterinary experts, shelter organizations and advocacy groups. We also received input from 155 municipalities and 45 police services, and received feedback from more than 16,000 members of the public who responded thoughtfully to an online survey. As a result of such an extensive consultation, the government is convinced that Bill 136 is in the best interests of Ontario's animals and what is best for animal welfare enforcement.

I just want to share a quote from one of the consultations I had in Etobicoke–Lakeshore. This is from Elizabeth: "There is no place in Ontario for cruelty to animals. I support the passing of Bill 136, designed to improve the lives of all creatures, wild and domestic, across the province, to respect the sentient nature of animals and to reflect society's changing attitude to animal welfare. It is my further hope that other provinces and territories across Canada will follow Ontario's lead in passing similar updated laws."

This legislation is a made-in-Ontario solution, Speaker, and it is a first for Canada. Indeed, other jurisdictions are already taking note of what PAWS will achieve for animal welfare. Under the government's proposed in-house model, the province will have:

—the highest degree of direct provincial oversight and direct accountability and transparency of animal welfare enforcement and investigation;

- the greatest flexibility to rapidly respond to operational uncertainties, such as a surge in call volume;
- stable funding set by the province.

Bill 136, if passed, is the next step in our work to review and modernize the animal welfare system in Ontario. It will allow us to establish a provincial animal welfare system under the Ministry of the Solicitor General that will enable the appointment of provincially employed inspectors to enforce animal welfare laws across Ontario. It is not an SPCA enforcement model like those which still exist in three Canadian provinces and used to exist in Ontario. It is not a police enforcement model, which would have put the burden of animal welfare enforcement on already stretched municipalities. It is not a hybrid model where enforcement is delivered by a combination of government-employed inspectors, police services or charitable organizations, as exists in a majority of Canadian provinces and in jurisdictions such as the UK and New Zealand.

The government carefully examined each of these models and decided that the best approach was a made-in-Ontario, provincially led model that increases coverage over what we have experienced in the past. It delivers an unprecedented level of stability to animal welfare enforcement. This is a first for the province, it is a first for Canada, and it makes Ontario a leader in animal welfare protection and enforcement.

I want to share a couple of comments we heard at committee on Friday. This is from the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association CEO, Doug Raven. He said that he's very excited about the bill and he is in full support.

Keith Currie from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said, "This bill is a step in the right direction."

Mike Zimmerman from Animal Welfare Watch said, "This is the best law in Canada, possibly North America, and maybe the best in the world."

Our government's proposed Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act—what will it do? Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker. It will protect animals across this province. It will provide appropriate powers and tools for inspectors. It will build public trust by increasing responsiveness, accountability and transparency compared to the previous model. And it will introduce the strongest penalties in Canada for offenders.

I'd like to remind the honourable members of the government's swift action after this House passed the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals interim act, 2019.

In June, the Solicitor General appointed Paula Milne, an experienced OPP investigator, as Ontario's interim chief animal welfare inspector, to take over the role previously appointed by the OSPCA. The government launched 1-833-9ANIMAL, a toll-free number for the public to report concerns about cruelty to animals. Just so everybody knows out there, that number remains in service today.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General reached out to local SPCAs and humane societies, asking for their

support during this challenging time. Many did, including those that stepped forward even before they were asked.

The chief inspector has appointed over 66 provincial inspectors, including provincial employees and some who worked for the local SPCAs and humane societies, and some with expertise in inspecting zoos, aquariums, equine and livestock.

As someone who has been a lifelong advocate for greater protection of animal well-being, let me tell you about a few messages that we heard personally, and from my constituents.

Juliette from my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore: "As a lifelong advocate, I am encouraged by what I see happening in Ontario today, and I did not think I would ever see such support by a government in my lifetime. I know enforcement will be crucial to the success of this, but I believe our government is listening and acting."

Here is another quote, from Irene in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore: "As a no-kill advocate and a cat rescuer, Bill 136 takes us a long way to a dream come true, where companion animals have a chance at a wonderful life with people who love them. Let's aim for a cruelty-free Ontario." Thanks, Irene.

None of these things just happen—leadership by government to cover the enforcement gap left behind when the OSPCA suddenly withdrew from their job. The leadership by the honourable members who passed this interim legislation—I have to say thank you to everybody here for unanimously supporting that legislation, because we were in a time crunch. I have to thank the leadership of the outstanding men and women who supported the government during the transition and helped to build a robust, transparent and accountable animal protection system. Everybody has stories out there, and we appreciate all the feedback that we received to try to get the best law possible.

Today we have been given another opportunity to lead. A single, direct-control animal welfare enforcement model is the right model for a province as large and diverse as Ontario. It's night and day. Our new act, if passed, will provide inspectors with the specific powers they need to carry out their duties rather than the broad, police-like powers that were provided under the OSPCA Act. They will be able to establish a mandatory code of conduct for the chief animal welfare inspector and animal welfare inspectors. We will introduce an oversight and accountability framework, including a one-window public complaints process to review a complaint submitted by the public on an animal welfare inspector's conduct. I know that's very important to people out there.

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We will also be establishing prohibitions, offences and requirements such as compliance with prescribed standards of care, including strengthened provisions related to harming an animal that works with a peace officer, or a service animal.

We're going to introduce penalties on conviction that will be the strongest in Canada and will differentiate between individuals and corporations.

We are going to allow inspectors to enter motor vehicles to respond to pets in critical distress. Please, out there, please do not leave your dog or cat in a car when it's hot or when it's too cold.

We're going to require veterinarians to report animal abuse to the province, something veterinarians have been asking for.

We are going to establish regulation-making authority such as enabling the government to develop regulations that prohibit possession of certain animals or certain procedures or require a licence to possess or to breed certain animals.

I would like to highlight specific changes to the animal welfare enforcement model if the government's proposed Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act is passed today by this House.

Here is some information about our chief animal welfare inspector:

Under the previous legislation, the OSPCA had the power to appoint the chief inspector for Ontario. That responsibility fell to the Solicitor General with the passing of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals interim act, 2019—it would have been nice if that was a shorter title. Under the proposed legislation, that responsibility will rest permanently with the Solicitor General. I can't overstate the importance of this appointment. The chief animal welfare inspector will be the lead enforcer and administrator of the PAWS Act in the province of Ontario. They will be responsible for the necessities of care of animals in distress that are seized under the proposed legislation.

The chief animal welfare inspector will be responsible for appointing qualified—I want to underline that: qualified—animal welfare inspectors, ensuring they are properly trained and that the province is adequately covered; upholding the government's expectation of public accountability and transparency; and administering the appropriate disciplinary action in response to any inspector found to have violated the code of conduct, including suspension or revoking of an appointment. This is something that was sorely missed prior to this legislation.

Animals rely on members of the public to protect them. They rely on us. They have no voice. Earlier this year, our government set up a call centre. It is a toll-free line for the public to report an animal in distress or animal abuse. I'd like to report that the public acceptance of 1-833-9ANIMAL has exceeded expectations. From June 29 to November 17 of this year, the animal welfare call centre received over 17,000 calls, with most reporting an incident of abuse or concern for an animal in distress. These reports are directed to the provincially employed inspectors or local police services who can enforce animal welfare laws in Ontario.

Under the proposed legislation, the animal welfare call centre will be made permanent. I encourage all honourable members and all members of the public to keep 1-833-9ANIMAL in your smart phone, should you witness an act of cruelty against an animal or an animal in distress. It is all our responsibility to look after these animals.

Animal welfare inspectors serve on the front lines in the prevention of animal cruelty. They care deeply about their work, making a real difference to the well-being of animals and educating the owners who care for them. It is also extremely demanding and specialized work. Recently, the numbers have just not been there to support the job that they do. What we have heard through consultations was that a lack of inspectors had a significant impact on response times. When you don't have enough people, they're not getting out to do the job that needs to be done. Calls were going unaddressed. There was a greater reliance on local police attending calls, and little or no human resources for follow-ups on compliance for those inspections. I'll tell you, we heard this over and over again during our consultations. The system just wasn't working. It wasn't working for people; it wasn't working for animals. There was no follow-up. Things were just not getting done, and animals were in distress and people couldn't do anything about it.

This has been one of my personal and our government's biggest concerns during this transition period. If Bill 136 is passed, the government will be adding more inspectors. The government will be adding inspectors who will specialize in agriculture, in zoos, aquariums and equine. More inspectors, Mr. Speaker, will result in better response times compared to the previous OSPCA enforcement model. It will increase the coverage province-wide so no matter where you live there will be people to help. There will be less reliance on already stretched front-line police officers to attend animal welfare calls, and it will result in reduced dependence on overtime by overworked inspectors, which will also result in lower rates of occupational stress and burnout.

I would like to remind the honourable members that all provincial animal welfare inspectors will be appropriately trained. They will have to comply with a mandatory code of conduct and they will be subject to a robust public complaints process. This is very key to this legislation.

Speaker, causing animals distress takes on many forms and it is not always obvious. According to the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, all vets encounter animal abuse in their careers, including physical abuse such as inflicted injuries; causing unnecessary pain and cruelty; and inappropriate methods of training, such as taping a dog's mouth shut to prevent it from barking.

Every year in North America, pets die from heat exhaustion because they were left in parked vehicles while the owner just popped into a store, or they left for longer periods of time with maybe the window just opened a crack.

Dogfighting, surprisingly enough, is still around. It's a vicious blood sport where a fight can last between one or two hours, exposing dogs to severe injury and a prolonged and extremely painful death.

In my private member's bill, I spoke about puppy and kitten mills where dogs and cats are mass-produced, often in the cruelest, dirtiest, disgusting conditions.

I'm ashamed to say, Mr. Speaker, that there are far too many of these cases and the penalty has not fit the offence.

If this legislation is passed, we are proposing to change that and increase those penalties that will be the toughest in Canada, to address the serious offences and repeat offenders. The proposed legislation sets the strongest penalties in Canada for offences. This includes higher penalties for subsequent offences and distinguishes between individuals and corporations. This includes new mandatory minimum fines for specific offences.

These penalties are intended to deter future offences and take into account when highly egregious offences are committed, such as causing distress or animal fighting. Once again—we talked about animal fighting—it still happens today. My sister actually has a dog that was bred to be a fighter—it's a bulldog—and it was rescued from a shed. These animals fighting—they're still out there, and they're harming our law enforcement and they're making our rescuers go out and save these animals for no reason. It just is very unjust, so I get a little personal when it comes to animal fighting. We need to include higher fines. This legislation includes significant fines and even jail sentences for those individuals, and higher fines for corporations. I'm really excited that this is part of this legislation.

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Animal welfare is important to the people of Ontario, and it's important to our government. A better animal welfare enforcement model is within our reach. It is what our stakeholders have asked for, and it is what the public demands.

I would like to thank the SPCAs and the humane societies who supported our government's leadership by helping with the transition of the new animal welfare enforcement model, and by providing animal welfare enforcement during this interim period. These outstanding men and women helped the government to build a more robust, transparent and accountable animal protection system in the province of Ontario. I am proud of the partnerships that we have formed, and I know that the Solicitor General looks forward to working with the SPCAs and the humane societies in the months ahead.

This legislation, if passed by the House, is the next step towards a new, modern and transparent animal welfare system that will deliver more inspectors, better province-wide coverage, a one-window public complaints process and the toughest penalties for offenders in Canada.

This government's proposed animal welfare legislation will meet today's protection needs and will have built-in flexibility to respond to future challenges, in consultation with animal welfare experts and organizations, and input from the public.

Speaker, every day, the Ministry of the Solicitor General is touched by the acts of heroism performed by those serving on the front lines of community safety. I'm thinking of our police officers, firefighters and correctional workers, to name a few. Ontario's animal welfare inspectors are the front-line heroes to animals, who rely on them to rescue them from abuse and prevent distress. These heroes work hard, and they work in partnership with our veterinarians, our police officers, local humane

societies and others, and with the support of the public, who care so passionately about the well-being of all of our animals.

I share this passion, Mr. Speaker, and I believe passionately in Bill 136. It brings together diverse components of animal welfare under a provincially operated enforcement team, it strengthens where the province was once weak, and it covers where there were once gaps in animal welfare and enforcement. It makes Ontario a leader in animal well-being and enforcement.

I ask the honourable members to join me in support of the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act. Let's do this for our animals.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's a pleasure to once again rise to speak to Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, on behalf of my riding of Davenport and all of the good people there, especially those who care about their pets and about animals.

I know we've spoken before, throughout debate and committee and such, about our caucus's general support for this piece of legislation. Certainly, in our society, I think it's fair to say that we all have a responsibility to ensure that all animals are treated humanely, and, as well, that all Ontarians should have an understanding of their rights and their responsibilities, and how animal protection and enforcement will work in this province.

Under the previous Liberal government, we saw the animal protection system in this province crumble. We saw this government, over a period of months, take things, I think, from bad to worse, leaving Ontario with no animal protection system in place for many months.

Having said that—whatever it takes, we support this bill. We are supportive, but we have made some suggestions of ways—and I look to my colleague the critic for his leadership in bringing forward some suggested amendments. We still hope that the government will listen, will do the right thing and will actually work with us to make this legislation stronger, because that's what our animals deserve. It's what Ontarians deserve.

Some of the questions that we have that remain—I'll get into some of this in more detail later—include whether or not this government is willing to actually fully fund the inspection and enforcement and the training that this legislation requires to be effective. We have questions such as how many inspectors and enforcement officers will be hired, how training will take place, what resources will be in place to support them. These are all important considerations. Again, we've said this before many times in this House, but any law, any regulation, is only as strong as the people behind it and the resources behind it. Otherwise, it's just paper, and it really is unenforceable. So I wanted to mention that off the top.

The other thing—and I mentioned this the last time I spoke on this bill—was that I wanted to acknowledge the work of someone who had approached me and my colleague the critic several times over the last year with deep concerns about the state of animal welfare protection in

the province of Ontario. I want to acknowledge the work of Mike Zimmerman, and also particularly Animal Welfare Watch Ontario, the organization that he and others created in response to what was taking place.

I know that Mr. Zimmerman—I've spoken to him since the legislation was introduced—has spoken generally in support of the bill, and that's great. He does have some remaining concerns; I'll go through those as well. But I thought I would just share and read out for you something they provided us with, which is a document called *One Strong Voice for Animals: Our Analysis of the November 14 Decision* by the Ontario Court of Appeal. I think it's really important that this be part of the record of this debate because I think it's important that we learn from the past, we learn from our mistakes, we learn how to move forward, but we don't forget how we got here so we don't repeat this.

I'm going to start by reading this document. It starts with, "The bottom line"—because this came out right after the November 14 decision by the Ontario Court of Appeal. It says, "The appalling decision yesterday by the Ontario Court of Appeal (OCA) should not in any way change or hinder the provincial government's plan to bring animal welfare law enforcement into the public sector via Bill 136."

And then it talks about the background: "For years, concerned Ontarians (such as those of us involved with AWWO) told the government the OSPCA had become ineffective and unaccountable. We urged the government to bring animal welfare law enforcement into the public sector.

"We banged at the door and got nowhere." Those words really rang true: "We banged at the door and got nowhere." How many times has that happened? "The government kept giving the OSPCA our tax dollars to support their ever-declining level of service while becoming more and more secretive and unaccountable about governance and operations.

"On January 2, 2019 the Superior Court of Ontario (SCO) ruled that law enforcement should not be conducted by a private organization because any such entity inherently lacked the appropriate level of accountability and transparency." And we know how we got there. We understand. But this was a really important decision: "The decision also declared this to be a new principle of constitutionality. Therefore, law enforcement by a private charity such as the OSPCA was deemed unconstitutional. The decision also gave the government a year before taking effect to accommodate the implementation of a new animal welfare enforcement system.

"Disappointingly, the government appealed the SCO decision to the OCA"—the Ontario Court of Appeal—"which meant the decision (including its one-year grace period) would not take effect until the OCA ruled on the appeal. More disappointingly, this meant the OSPCA could keep enforcing the law even though their service continued to deteriorate.

And then it continues: "Not too long after, in a shocking move, the OSPCA announced that their enforcement

activity would end in June even though the SCO decision was still months away from taking effect. The government responded with hastily assembled interim animal protection measures at the end of June just as the Legislature adjourned until October." Remember: five months? I remember.

"On October 29, the government introduced Bill 136 which would create a new provincial animal welfare system" now known as—and this is what we are here debating today—the new Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act. Again, to be clear, "this was done in response to the gap in service created by the OSPCA's shirking of its responsibilities, not as the result of the" court "decision, which was still under appeal to the OCA and therefore not in effect."

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I'm not going to keep going on this. But I do want to mention a few more things that he talks about here. Ultimately, Animal Welfare Watch Ontario takes the position that the November 14 decision was irrelevant. The SCO decision never took effect, and the OCA decision means it's now gone, as if it never happened.

In the meantime, the OSPCA had taken themselves permanently out of the picture. The government, because action was required in the wake of their behaviour and not because they were compelled to by the courts—that's why the government introduced Bill 136.

Animal Welfare Watch Ontario says, "We'd like to think some of the hard work that obviously went into Bill 136 was accomplished simply because the government felt it was the right and smart thing to do."

They support Bill 136. However, they do have some minor suggestions that I'm going to share as well. I do want to note that they do say we are back on track.

I guess the reason I wanted to read this is that we know that this didn't just come out of nowhere, and we want to thank those folks who did continue to try to put this on the radar and keep the pressure on the government to make it so. I also thank my colleague the critic for all of his work to that effect.

I want to go through some of the things that Animal Welfare Watch have actually identified, though, as concerns still remaining within the legislation.

One is, as I mentioned earlier, that the system must include stable, dedicated funding. It needs that; it requires it; it's critical.

There are other things. While the new law is a step in the right direction, they urge the government to ensure that the new system is adequately, securely financed.

As a member opposite mentioned, protection for exotic and vulnerable animals—

Interjection.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Actually, it was my colleague the critic who mentioned this.

"We appreciate," they say, "that there is a special section in the law on orcas, but there are many more animals that, for their own welfare, should not be kept by private individuals." We know that's the case. We need to do better. This legislation needs to do more.

Finally, I just want to mention, in the remaining time that I have, something that I mentioned the last time I spoke to this legislation, and that is another important item missing from this legislation. As was mentioned by my colleague, that is the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association's recommendations that this legislation deal with, as well as address and ban, in fact, medically unnecessary procedures for pets. It's cats and dogs that we're really talking about here, in this case.

I wanted to share with you the notes from a meeting that I had. The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association has, in fact, presented these recommendations to the Ministry of the Solicitor General in advance of this legislation being introduced, during consultations around their specific issues. One of them was this, so I want to read this to you.

The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association "has long opposed cosmetic alteration of companion animals, such as canine ear cropping and tail docking. In April 2017, OVMA endorsed the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association's position statement opposing medically unnecessary partial digital amputation, commonly known as feline declawing. Over the past two years, OVMA has encouraged veterinarians to educate their clients about feline declawing and alternatives to that procedure."

For those who don't know, this is a growing movement. It has really shifted with veterinary medicine—the way that veterinary medicine has shifted—and understandings about the impact of these procedures, particularly the digital amputation, and what the impact is. This used to be a very common thing. People would get their cats declawed so that they didn't tear up the furniture. We were all told that it was something that was kind of not very invasive, and that they didn't really feel much etc.

But there's a lot of research that has been done since. That's why the veterinarians themselves have come out and are opposing this and, increasingly, veterinarians are not actually performing these surgeries. But the concern is that if we as a province don't ban it, even if veterinarians say, "We're not going to do this anymore," it's going to be other folks who are just going to continue to perform the procedure who do not have the professional experience and the medical knowledge to be able to do it properly, and that will lead to even further risk for the animals. It's really an important piece of this. We are slow to the game here in Ontario. Many other jurisdictions across Canada now have done this. It's time for us to move there. Throughout Europe, this is no longer something that's acceptable; it's not performed. We need to get with the program on this.

I wanted to also acknowledge the OVMA for taking advantage of the fact that there was this opening that this legislation was introduced. They said that "a key factor" in the OVMA's decision to push for Ontario to join the growing list of Canadian provinces that have decided to enact a ban on elective declawing was the opportunity presented by the OSPCA's withdrawal from animal welfare investigation and enforcement services. "That decision has forced the province of Ontario to begin a process to replace the OSPCA Act," as we know, "with new

animal welfare legislation." This was presenting "a rare opportunity to introduce restrictions on performing" these surgeries "that pertain to all Ontarians, not just licensed veterinarians"—again, that's critical. "OVMA is actively lobbying the province of Ontario to incorporate" that ban.

I have to say, I was surprised that the government didn't go there. To say that this is going to be included, potentially, in regulation is just not good enough. It's simply not. We're beyond that now. This is widely accepted. When we talk about not causing harm to our pets, to animals, this is really critically important.

I just want to wrap up by telling you a little bit about this kind of surgery and why it matters so much. I have a whole position statement here on what is called onychectomy, or declawing, of the domestic feline. It's partial digital amputation. I won't get into all of the details of it, but just to say, for anybody watching, that scratching is normal feline behaviour. It's a way that cats mark their territory. It can be a real pain when they tear up your furniture, but there are other things we can do to prevent that, other techniques and training we can use. Those nails are really critical to how cats function. That surgical amputation is really the removal of not just the nail, which is what most people think, but it's actually the removal of the third phalanx of each digit. So imagine: It's like removing the top of your finger.

Ms. Doly Begum: Ow!

Ms. Marit Stiles: I know. It's horrible. I don't even like to think about it. But that is what it is, right? It does cause pain. It's widely accepted now that this does cause cats pain. It causes them a lot of other issues. I've got a long list of things that the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association outlines as concerns.

This is something that I've been proud to present petitions here on behalf of members of my community and across the province on, and this was the opportunity to do that. So I urge the government again to consider moving forward on banning declawing. Let's get this right the first time.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm happy to rise today on third reading of Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act. As a long-time advocate for stronger animal welfare protection in Ontario, I want to thank the animal welfare advocates, humane societies and others who have advocated so strongly for changes to Ontario's animal welfare laws.

In the spring, when it looked like there was going to be a gap and a void in animal welfare protection and enforcement in Ontario, hundreds of my constituents in Guelph reached out to me to make sure we had rules in place and legislation in place so that animals are protected in Ontario. I just want to acknowledge a couple of my constituency staff who are in the gallery today, Brandy and Ran, who received many of those emails and phone calls and letters and passed that information along to me so I could advocate here in the House that legislation be passed to cover that gap.

I especially want to thank the work of the Guelph Humane Society's executive director, Adrienne McBride, who gave me the information and the inspiration to ask the government questions and to advocate for action to ensure that we avoided any gaps in services in the spring.

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So I want to acknowledge that the Solicitor General did bring forward Bill 117, which this Legislature passed in June, to provide a stopgap solution after the ruling by Justice Minnema, essentially getting rid of our existing animal welfare laws and really precipitating the need for us to act quickly.

I wish the government had actually done it on their own, but thankfully, enough pressure was put on the government that the Solicitor General did come forward with that bill. I was pleased to see that Bill 136 has come forward now to provide a more permanent solution, because we need to keep moving forward with changes. Ontario needs a robust, public, well-funded enforcement system to protect animals to be in place, not an outdated system that relied on a private charity not subject to freedom-of-information laws or even the Police Services Act.

Ontario needs a strong enforcement system to send a signal that our government agrees with citizens across this province that animals matter and that ensuring their protection is an important public value. It's clear from the letters and the phone calls and the emails that I've received that people across Ontario do not want to see animals mistreated. People want a more humane province for animals, a province where animal welfare enforcement is strong and transparent.

Bill 136 is a step forward to strengthen animal welfare legislation in Ontario. It's an especially important step that this bill ensures that enforcement of animal cruelty laws is under public jurisdiction, not a private charity; and that it addresses transparency and accountability concerns that many animal welfare advocates have, because this is important to promote public confidence that the act will be fairly and impartially administered. It's an important step that this bill increases enforcement and penalties. And it's good that the Solicitor General has indicated that additional resources will be provided for this, because the only way for this bill to work is that adequate funding and adequate resources are in place to provide for training and enforcement.

If I could quote Animal Justice in their submission to committee, "For this new law to make a real difference in the lives of animals, animal welfare inspectors will need adequate funding to do their jobs safely and effectively. Much of the promise of the new law comes in the form of regulations, and I urge the government to move quickly to pass those regulations." And I agree. We are going to need some regulations pretty quick, and we're going to need some strong regulations.

During second reading, Speaker, I offered some suggestions for strengthening animal welfare laws even more in Ontario, and those suggestions, unfortunately, were not incorporated into Bill 136 at committee. But I'm going to

offer them again today, because I see them as an important step that this government could take at least in the regulatory aspect as they develop them and move forward with them.

The first one is that important work had been done federally to prohibit whales and dolphins from being held or bred in captivity, and there is a potential loophole that has been brought to my attention in this bill that could open the door for the province to issue a licence permitting the breeding of captive ocean animals for scientific research or to have them forced to perform tricks for human entertainment. This should be closed.

Second, the government needs to have a plan for the regulations to be developed to cover zoos and breeders.

Finally, we should be following the lead of other provinces to ban cosmetic mutilations that do harm to animals for no reason other than their aesthetics. I want to just comment—my colleague from Davenport went into some detail on some of those, for those who want more details, but the work actually doesn't stop even in incorporating these into the regulations. I want to just ask a few questions that the Guelph Humane Society has asked me, and that I think the government needs to answer as we move forward with animal welfare protections. The first is: What will happen to animals that are protected under the new act? Where will they go? How will they be housed? And will there be enough budget to provide them veterinarian care and other essential care? These are all important questions that need to be asked if we're truly going to fulfill the promise of Bill 136.

Speaker, I'll be voting for Bill 136, but I'll also be working hard to hold the government accountable, so that when they bring forward these regulations, they address the concerns that I've brought up and other members have brought up in this chamber, that they address the concerns that animal welfare advocates have raised so that we can truly have a system that protects animals properly in this province.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 136, An Act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 and make consequential amendments with respect to animal protection—or, in short, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act. I'm so grateful to be able to speak to this important piece of legislation.

I want to begin by thanking the Solicitor General and her parliamentary assistant for bringing forward this bill, something that has become very dear to my heart. This bill concerns one of my closest and dearest family members: my dog Baxter, who is a Goldendoodle and my baby boy. I promise you will hear plenty about my fur baby a little later.

Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that this government is introducing a made-in-Ontario animal welfare model which, if passed, will better protect so many animals in this province. In a province that has such a strong connection with animals, and where animals are essential to our

provincial culture, it is so refreshing to see our government take an in-house approach to create legislation that promotes the values we hold so dear as Ontarians when it comes to protecting animals.

Ce modèle, conçu en Ontario, démontre que notre gouvernement comprend l'importance attachée au bien-être des animaux par la population de cette province. Ce nouveau système de protection des animaux proposé a été élaboré à partir des avis reçus de municipalités, de services de police, de secteurs d'activité, d'experts techniques, d'associations de vétérinaires, de refuges pour animaux et d'organismes de défense des droits des animaux, ainsi que du grand public. Si ce projet est adopté, le gouvernement continuera de collaborer avec ses partenaires pour assurer la meilleure protection possible et un soutien aux animaux.

With our government taking modern, practical approaches to so many province-wide issues, I'm happy to see that we have continued this practice with the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act. With the new enforcement model, a modernized legislative framework, stiffer penalties and a modernized oversight framework, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act has everything that Ontarians expect from an effective, modern piece of legislation, with the main goal of protecting the animals of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this government is going to take a proactive approach. This government will not wait around for something tragic to happen. We want to guarantee the safety of animals in a clear, concise way, to avoid any acts of abuse or neglect. This is why I am honoured to speak to this bill today. The Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act includes proactive, risk-based inspections and investigations to collect information, avoid animal neglect and determine whether or not to lay charges.

Mr. Speaker, to so many of us, animals are part of our family, and we want these processes to be in place to protect our family. Instead of simply reacting after the fact, this bill is here to ensure that neglect and abuse does not happen to animals. The PAWS Act is the next step in our work to renew and modernize the animal welfare system in Ontario.

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Before I get into talking about the animals that are so near and dear in my heart and have a huge presence in my life, I think it is important to discuss the importance of this legislation and the agricultural sector, something that is so important, especially in the great riding of Carleton.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege to spend time and speak with so many of Carleton's farmers. These people are hard-working, caring people and they know the importance of their work in this province. I have been fortunate enough to meet farmers who care deeply about their livestock and do whatever it takes to ensure that their farming practices follow the guidelines and that they treat their animals with dignity and respect.

Working in the agricultural sector is a noble trade, and when it involves taking care of living things that are so important to the livelihoods of every citizen of this province, it adds a substantial layer of responsibility. These

men and women who work so hard ensuring they respect their animals to the highest degree are the gold standard. These are the kinds of people our government spoke to when conducting consultations for this bill.

I've heard from farmers in my riding, as well as pet owners. They are pleased to see that now there will be certainty around protection for animals. Farmers know the significance of their trade, and I'm happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that the 4-H clubs in and around the riding of Carleton are thriving and doing very well. And 4-H is a very important part of everything that's going on because 4-H is what teaches young farmers and future farmers in Ontario how to care for and to respect their livestock and their animals.

Farmers know the significance of their trade and they want to see strong rules and strict punishment for those that do not respect the responsibility that comes with raising these animals and—as my colleague from Niagara West said—bring discredit and harm to the honourable profession of farming and agriculture.

Ontario is already a leader when it comes to animal welfare. What this bill is going to do is enforce our presence not just in Canada but on the world stage as animal advocates. At the same time, it's going to continue to innovate and empower the industries that make this province thrive.

Mr. Speaker, recently the court ruled that the current model of using the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals as the enforcement partner in protecting animals in Ontario didn't have the oversight that we needed. That is something that I had also heard in my riding of Carleton. That is something that was brought to me by the Carleton Landowners Association, Tom and Marlene Black as well as Shirley Dolan and others. I will be speaking about the Carleton landowners further on in my speech.

But the enforcement issue and the lack of oversight for the OSPCA was a big problem, not just for landowners but also for farmers in general. There was a lack of accountability, and this lack of accountability was problematic. Because our government campaigned on being accountable and bringing more accountability to the province and the way it operates, I am so happy to be supportive of this bill, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act.

Our government is taking the necessary steps to provide legislation that works in today's Ontario. If passed, this legislation will be the strongest in Canada, and it will focus on non-compliance and repeat offenders and it will differentiate between individuals and corporations. That's really important, Mr. Speaker, because oftentimes the way that an animal is being treated by an individual is very different from how corporations treat animals. There should be a distinction there, so I'm happy to see our government doing that and focusing on that distinction.

Through important regulations, Mr. Speaker, this bill will take the important step of requiring veterinarians and others to report animal abuse to the province. We are giving them a voice. We are finally giving a voice to the voiceless, and I think that is so critical and it's such a

positive aspect of this bill. By providing inspectors with the specific powers they need to carry out their duties, instead of broad, police-like powers, we will be able to enforce the important regulations set out in this bill to effectively protect our animals. Inspectors will be able to free animals in critical distress from hot or cold vehicles. That is something that is long overdue—something that the animals need. We have heard this over and over again, and I'm proud to be part of a government that has finally listened.

This is just one example of the rational approach that our government took when drafting this bill—looking at what we need and making it a reality. The sad fact, Mr. Speaker, is that the increase of animal welfare abuses continues to rise. This is something that this government takes very seriously. Animal abuse needs to be stopped.

On a personal note, I cannot imagine anyone hurting my goldendoodle, Baxter. He is the sweetest, kindest, gentlest little creature that I've ever met. When he sees a baby squirrel or a rabbit, all he wants to do is chase them and give them a big lick and just be friends with them. He's actually scared of the neighbour's cat, even though he tries to be friends with the neighbour's cat. He'll whine and try to lick the cat, and the cat will hiss at him and he'll run away.

When I see a creature like Baxter, this dog, that is innocent and so trusting and so loving and just wants to be friends with everyone, Mr. Speaker, I can't even begin to understand how anyone would want to abuse a creature like that, or harm a creature like that—a creature that is essentially defenceless and has no voice. That's why I'm so proud to be a part of a government that is taking animal abuse very seriously.

Bill 136 suggests a 116% increase on the penalties for animal welfare abuses. That's a great start. If someone harmed my fur baby, I don't know if that would be enough, but I'm happy to support that because I think it's an excellent first step. I know that the Solicitor General and the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore have worked diligently, receiving input from 155 municipalities, 45 police services and more than 1,600 members of the public. This impressive level of engagement shows us, Mr. Speaker, and it shows Ontarians and everyone here in the House today that the changes proposed in this bill are valued by the people of Ontario.

We are aware of this because we have listened. As a government for the people, we made sure that citizens had their input on this bill, one that we know will govern this province for the better. So many people that we spoke to had concerns about the enforcement of animal welfare laws, and everybody has a story to tell. As members, when we talk to constituents, so many have a story to tell about an animal in distress, an animal of concern—a pet, for example, which is really part of their family, Mr. Speaker. They are genuine stories from people who really care, and we have to make sure that their pets are protected. We know that, and we know that we can do better.

Mr. Speaker, after these consultations, I witnessed my colleagues attentively draft legislation that reflects the

desires of Ontarians. Our government created this bill based on their input. I think it is so important to have a government that listens, that cares about what people have to say. After 15 years of being ignored by the previous government, it's refreshing. People are telling me—my constituents in Carleton are telling me—that it's refreshing to finally have a government that is taking the time to listen and that is engaging in meaningful consultation with stakeholders.

1700

We are putting their words into force by putting forward a bill that will make the lives of Ontarians—farmers, pet owners, their livestock, their pets, their family—essentially, we are putting forward a bill that is going to make their lives and their families, which includes their pets, safer.

Animals are not just a part of our lives; for some of us, they are our entire lives. I know, as a pet owner—I hate saying “pet owner.” I prefer the terms “fur mom” or “dog mom.” As a mother of a fur child, as a friend of pet owners and a friend of those who work with animals—all creatures deserve legislation that guarantees their protection. Those who disregard these important rules need to be properly punished.

Merci à tous ceux qui ont participé aux consultations et participé au sondage, qui ont écrit des lettres, envoyé des courriels et appelé nos bureaux pour assurer que ce projet de loi contient ce qui est important pour la population de l'Ontario et ses animaux. C'est à cause de ces consultations que nous nous sommes engagés à prendre des mesures pour mettre en place un système moderne d'application du bien-être des animaux, pour garantir la sécurité des animaux.

Monsieur le Président, il est clair que le public et les parties prenantes souhaitent un régime unique, clair et responsable en matière de bien-être des animaux, avec la surveillance et la transparence appropriées et la formation professionnelle et standardisée. L'exemple le plus simple est la ligne d'assistance téléphonique : 1-833-9ANIMAL. Il est maintenant beaucoup plus facile pour le public de signaler s'il constate un acte de cruauté envers les animaux.

Nous avons la possibilité, monsieur le Président, de poursuivre cette initiative avec une meilleure réponse dans une zone de couverture plus large, la participation du public, la formation avancée et une plus grande responsabilisation.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the Carleton Landowners Association earlier on in my speech. I'd like to now go back and speak about them a little bit. I first met Tom and Marlene Black, and a number of Carleton landowners, including Shirley Dolan, who is the current president, back in Tom and Marlene's kitchen. I think this would have been in 2015. We have engaged in dialogue ever since. Their home is actually just, I would say, maybe a 10-minute drive from my constituency office, so they're pretty nearby. We've always had a very good relationship. One thing I've always said to them is that it doesn't matter what my personal views and what my personal beliefs are.

As the MPP for Carleton, I'm here to speak on behalf of everyone, and I'm here to represent everyone's voices and everyone's concerns.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want to read an article that was published on December 1, 2019—so it was published only recently—by Shirley Dolan, who, as I mentioned, is the president of the Carleton Landowners Association. I think this article will really demonstrate how our government is taking these consultations very seriously. Even though we can't always please everyone, it's very obvious that our government is listening and is taking in as much feedback as possible and taking in those suggestions, to help make a positive difference.

My message to Shirley, and Tom and Marlene, and everyone at the Carleton Landowners Association is: I promised you that I would be a strong voice and I would relay and share your concerns with the government, and I've done that. In return, I'm also going to read their comments here in the Legislature today and Shirley Dolan's article. Her article is entitled "You Don't Always Get What You Want."

"You don't always get what you want" goes the lyrics of an old Rolling Stones song. This may be the sentiment of many people across the province when the Ontario Court of Appeal overturned a lower court 'that found it was unconstitutional for the province to hand over policing powers to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) without imposing accountability and transparency standards on the agency.'

"Despite the loss, I believe the Ontario Landowners Association ... got a lot of what we wanted.

"First, heartfelt thanks to Jeff Bogaerts, the appellant in the charter challenge that was filed in the Superior Court of Justice in October 2013. It took over five years for the court to render a judgement, one that led to the provincial government developing a new animal welfare model—a significant achievement by any yardstick.

"Thanks also to Kurtis Andrews, lead counsel for the application, for his excellent representation of the complex questions presented to the court. ...

"Many thanks to the individuals and organizations who supported this charter challenge with donations and volunteer hours.

"Following the decision in our favour, in January 2019, the OLA drafted recommendations for a new animal care act for Ontario. So, what did we get?

"(1) The government has proposed new legislation called the Provincial Animal Welfare Services ... Act which will replace the old OSPCA Act. Our recommendation was to consider a new name for the legislation, animal care act—close enough. At least we are rid of the title Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... which was anathema to so many.

"(2) The proposed legislation brings the animal welfare system under provincial control and funding, something the OLA advocated.

"(3) During the court case, calls to the OLA asking for help because of abuse by an overzealous and abusive organization fell significantly.

"(4) We raised awareness of the issues related to a bad law. Despite the appeal of Justice Minnema's ruling, the government did redraft the OSPCA Act, as the court had asked.

"As we stated on our website, www.fixthelaw.ca, 'the purpose of this application is to seek a declaration from the court respecting the constitutionality of the OSPCA Act. The objective of this application is not to undermine the protection of animals. On the contrary, if this application is successful, it is expected that the law will be changed to ensure that animals are better protected in a manner expected by Ontario residents.'

"The old law was struck down. It remains to be seen whether animals (and their owners) will be better protected by the new proposed legislation."

Mr. Speaker, my message to Shirley Dolan, Tom and Marlene Black and everyone at the Carleton Landowners Association—in fact, landowners all across the province in Ontario—is that this act, the PAWS Act, will in fact better protect animals and it will better protect their owners. It will also ensure that investigators do not have those broad policing powers that are unaccountable.

Mr. Speaker, on a quick side note, I also wanted to mention that as of March 1, 2019, Kurtis Andrews, the lawyer who was on this case, was actually appointed vice-chair of Ontario's Normal Farm Practices Protection Board. As a result, Kurtis cannot represent parties as it relates to that board or the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal anymore. However, I just wanted to congratulate Kurtis on his appointment. I think that's an excellent choice. He obviously has a lot of experience with farm practices and animal welfare and protection, so it's great to see someone like Kurtis be recognized by our province and be appointed as vice-chair of Ontario's Normal Farm Practices Protection Board.

1710

In the time that I have remaining, I also just want to briefly talk about the meeting that I had with Bruce Roney in my constituency office. Bruce Roney is the executive director of the Ottawa Humane Society, and I met with him on November 8. It was interesting, Mr. Speaker, because prior to that meeting—this was before we had actually introduced the legislation—he had sent an email with a list of concerns. He wasn't aware of what we were doing, what was going on, what it was all going to look like. However, one of the first things he said to me was that he was relieved and delighted with the legislation we had released. So the president and executive director of the Ottawa Humane Society—the first thing he said to me was he was relieved and delighted with the legislation that was released.

I think that goes a long way to show you how much our government has actually listened, how much our government has actually worked hard to ensure that people's voices are being heard. Mr. Roney told me that he was worried about powers being lost and he was worried that inspectors would not have the ability to go after animal abusers. However, again, with this legislation and the proposed changes here, he said that, if anything, there's

actually more power being given to inspectors. So it just shows how much we are actually working to protect our animals.

For me, now I can sleep soundly at night knowing that Baxter, my fur baby, is protected. That is very important to me, and I think it's important to everyone as well. The last thing we want is to have a bunch of sad, abused, neglected animals, with Sarah McLachlan music playing in the background. That commercial always makes me cry. It's terrible.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I see my time is up. Again, I just wanted to thank the Solicitor General, I wanted to thank her parliamentary assistant and I wanted to thank everyone in this House for speaking to this bill. I think it's so important. It's critical to represent those who don't have a voice. I can't remember the exact words, but Gandhi has a quote where he says—I think it's something along the lines of, the character of a nation is judged by how it defends and represents those who don't have a voice. Don't quote me on that directly, but it's something along those lines. I think this bill speaks a lot about how we as a government care for everyone in this province and what we're doing to not just protect animals but also protect animal owners as well, and our farmers.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House, and today, to speak on the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act that I think is better known as PAWS, Bill 136.

I've spent the afternoon in the House listening to the debate. It's not often that we actually all kind of agree that something needs to be done and all are in favour of a bill proposed by this government. It has a few issues, but in general, I think the people who have pets and pets will be well served by it. I also think farmers and people who have livestock will be well served.

I'm going to concentrate on the livestock portion. A lot of people have experience with pets and a few of us have experience with livestock and farmers, and I'm going to concentrate on that part.

It's a long road. As has been talked about today before, the OSPCA used to be responsible for this by themselves, and in many cases, as far as livestock is concerned, they did a pretty good job with the resources they had. In most cases, with livestock organizations, they had memorandums of understanding with the OSPCA, and by and large, it worked well. But it didn't always work. And that's what—there was a court challenge. It didn't always work, and hopefully this bill will address that. We'll go through some of the issues of why it didn't work and hopefully will work.

One of the things why it didn't work is because the OSPCA was largely a volunteer organization. It had paid, but it was volunteer—and they relied on donations. It wasn't seen as authoritative, and in some cases it wasn't.

In some cases, the training wasn't adequate for the inspectors. I've given this example before, but I think this example fits in this context: We used to have a dairy farm

on one side of the road, and my wife had a gift store on the other side of the road. The local OSPCA inspector was one of my wife's customers; she came on a regular basis. My wife had a horse. We had lots of dairy cows, but my wife had a horse.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: "A" horse.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. I am not a horse person, just to make that clear, but my wife loves horses more than she loves me.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I can't understand why.

Mr. John Vanthof: Anyway, the OSPCA inspector was shopping at my wife's store and the horse was lying in the field across the road—like, a two-acre field, an exercise yard. It was lying flat, as horses do. Horses tend to lie flat out, and the OSPCA inspector was looking out the window, saw the horse lying flat out and assumed that the horse had died, and that it had died abusively, because it was lying by itself in the middle of the field, being unattended. She said something like, "My God, that horse is dead," and Ria said, "What horse? That horse? That's my horse." She walked out on the veranda and said, "Velvet," and the horse stood up, came and walked to the fence, and the inspector got to know the horse.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And the horse wasn't dead.

Mr. John Vanthof: And the horse wasn't dead. The inspector was very well-meaning—it's no slight on the inspector—but she just didn't have the training to know how animals react differently. Often if a cow is lying flat out, I'd get worried.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Heck, if I'm lying flat out, you'd be worried.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, man. I don't have to worry about being heckled by the other side; it's my own side.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mr. John Vanthof: It all ended well for everyone, including Velvet, but it's a demonstration of how lack of training—if that same inspector had come to my barn and said something that obviously she—he or she; in this case it was a she—didn't have the training for, right away you'd get—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Conflict.

Mr. John Vanthof: Conflict—thank you for that. That is a big issue.

Also, for the OSPCA and for the people who work for them, often when livestock isn't treated correctly—and it happens—in every occupation, there are great people in their occupation and some people who are not so great, and sometimes bad things happen. It happens in all walks of life, and in many cases—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just like the Legislature.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes—sometimes that has to do with mental health issues. Like all walks of life, farming big or small or with a lot of livestock can be very stressful, and sometimes mental health issues come into play. Sometimes, if you're an OSPCA inspector, you're in over your head very quickly. You're out in the country with no backup, and things can escalate very badly. That's also something that we need to avoid.

The fact that the government has put forward this legislation, which we support, which is actually going to make

a public service inspection agency with fully trained inspectors across the province—I believe 100 inspectors—is a step forward. They need to be fully trained. They need to be able to walk in—and they have the right to walk into homes and businesses with warrants. Sometimes, if there's an animal in distress, they don't even have to wait for the warrant. I'm not opposed to that, but they need to be fully and completely trained, and not just to deal with animals, but to deal with the owners who are under perhaps severe mental stress, severe financial stress. They have to be fully trained for that, and not only do you have to have a love of animals to do that job, you will have to have a way with people, a love of people. This isn't the job where you can just push your way through things. I just want to put that on the record.

1720

With this bill, we will have—provided that the government comes through with the funding, and that's something that's very important—fully trained public servants who will be able to assess the situation and, in some cases, remove the animals, direct that the animals be better taken care of, and, in some cases—and it happens, Speaker—will order those animals euthanized. In some cases, that will have to happen, and in some cases, that is the best outcome for the animal. But the fact that we're going to have a fully trained force to do that is a huge step forward.

The fact that this bill allows for the strongest penalties in the country for animal abuse is also a good thing. It is up to \$500,000 for a corporation for an incident, and \$130,000 for an individual. That is a deterrent, a serious deterrent. The officer can go into the home or onto the farm—I'm going to concentrate on livestock—and into the livestock premises. They will have to be fully trained. They will have to be aware of biosecurity and how to protect biosecurity. But he or she has the power to go in there and to lay those charges. That is a huge deterrent.

Also, this bill provides for a one-window complaint mechanism. If you see something that you think—so, in the case of Velvet lying out flat in the field, if someone drove by our road, they could call and say they've seen a dead horse in a field and it's being abused, and the officer will have the ability to come and check out Velvet and realize, being fully trained, that Velvet is fine—and that's good. That's good.

There is a bit of a problem that the bill doesn't address. There are a few problems that the bill doesn't address. This one came to light again this morning with the Auditor General's report. There is a huge court backlog in this province, and that's actually a civil rights issue and a human rights issue as well. So, because there is a huge court backlog, it will likely be a long time before these cases ever get brought to court—on both sides. As is always the case, there will be cases where the person with the animal will dispute, and could very well be right. There could be circumstances where that animal wasn't abused. Again, that will hang over that owner, possibly for years. That is an issue that hasn't been addressed in this bill. You can make the fines as big as you want, but if it takes years and years and years to get to court, who are we serving?

That, again, is mostly a funding issue. It's an organizational issue and a court docket issue, but it's also a funding issue. If there is a big backlog, you have got to find ways to get more court hours. You've got to do something.

If you're going to create a force with 100 more inspectors who are doing their jobs—I fully believe that the government is going to find the right people and train the right people, and if they don't, we are going to hold them to account. But if you have that force out there, and they start to see that they're trying to do the right thing and they're trying to lay fines, and the fines never get to court—if you fine a corporation—I know a lot of people don't like factory farms. That could be a factory farm. It could be a family farm. It could be a processing plant. It could be a trucking company. It could be any of those things. You lay a fine, but things just keep going on, and then if they're big enough, you can lay another fine, but that fine never comes to fruition unless you get to court.

So if it takes three or four years, by the time you get to court the company could be gone or have changed its name.

So we have to make sure that we actually have the resources—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Good point.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's something I've been thinking about for a while.

We agree with the government on the purpose of this bill, on the severity of this bill. As a farmer, I've talked to farm organizations. There's one issue that I, as a farmer, have a problem with in this, and I'm going to get to that in a minute. But by and large, farm organizations are very much in favour of this, because there is no one who has hurt more and who feels more empathy for animals, and for people who face challenges that cause them to hurt animals, than other farmers. Because it hurts all our reputation, but it hurts us in the heart and in the gut as well.

I don't believe that anyone in the livestock industry, regardless of where they are in the industry, gets in the industry to abuse an animal. That's just not in our DNA. If they do, they don't last long. Sometimes things happen, and that's something that we really need to address.

I guess the biggest issue with this whole thing is that it needs stable funding. It needs adequate funding at every level. It can't be ignored. If we do this, we get farmers to buy in. We have farmers now who are feeling—they're in favour of this. You know what? Some of us may not like to have somebody show up and say, "I've got the bio-hazard suit on and I'm coming because I got a complaint. The neighbour three miles down, he didn't like the smell of your barn and so he's complaining, and I'm going to come inspect." I probably wouldn't like it either. But that's possible under this bill, and if the inspector is well trained and if there's nothing going wrong, then that's the way it goes.

The inspectors have to be very well trained so that it's not subjective. There are regulations on how animals are to be handled in this province, and it has to be very clear that if the farmer, he or she, is obeying the laws of the land, the inspector is aware of that and that inspection should go

off without a hitch. Farmers now are inspected—as a dairy farmer, we have an inspection program. It's a kind of a self-regulation program, and some people don't trust that. I do; some people don't. So that's why this is a better alternative.

I hope that those inspectors will also sign memorandums of understanding with the livestock organizations so that when an inspection is done, there could be somebody, an industry representative, there as well. Because if there is a serious problem on a dairy farm, you want someone from Dairy Farmers of Ontario because you want to make sure that milk is quality milk coming out of there. Quality milk, to me, is milk that is produced by cows who are leading a quality life from the day they are born till the day they leave.

The one thing I'm sometimes having an issue with or having a hard time understanding: There is a section in this bill talking about whether an animal is subject to physical—I can't even say the word—

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Psychological.

Mr. John Vanthof: —psychological distress. My question is, who determines what psychological distress of an animal is? As a farmer, I know—I believe I know—when cows are under distress. I'll give you an example. In my later career, I had a free stall barn where cows can walk at will. They can walk to their feed, they can walk to their sleeping areas, and in my barn in the summertime, I had a door and they could walk outside whenever they wanted. That was, I thought, a very stress-free environment.

1730

But before I built that barn, I had a tie-stall barn. The cows were tied up all winter, and in the summertime I would let them out and then bring them back in to milk. But all winter they were tied up. I always played the radio in the barn—usually classic rock; I'm an old guy. I left the radio on at night and—most farmers do this—at about 10, 10:30 at night, I'd go back to the barn to do a check, to make sure there is nothing broken, that there's no water broken. For farmers—I don't know how many times I've talked about this in the Legislature—who use artificial insemination, that's when you check that cows are in estrus, because everyone is calm except for the cow that is ready to be bred, so that's the best time to catch that. But the nicest thing is that you walk into the barn—at that time, I milked 40 cows—and if 40 cows are all lying down and the barn is quiet, then you know you're doing your job.

One night, I walked into the barn and all 40 cows were at the end of their chains and they were all breathing quickly. They were frightened. What they were frightened of—

Hon. Bill Walker: They saw you.

Mr. John Vanthof: That was before they saw me. What they were frightened of was that on the radio, CBC usually doesn't scare cows, but they were playing a nature program and they had wolves howling. The majority of my cows, I'm sure, have never seen a wolf, but somewhere in their DNA they knew that if wolves were howling, wolves were hunting, and they were tied in a barn and they weren't happy. Now that was—

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Psychological.

Mr. John Vanthof: —psychological stress. There was no real stress coming, but I could tell that those cows were stressed. But how do you tell? When an inspector comes, when is an animal stressed or when isn't it? That's obvious stress, Speaker. But how do you tell? I struggle with that. I really would like to see the definition of when. When we were talking about this at caucus—I know whatever we talk about stays in caucus, but I wanted to know who was going to be the pig whisperer? How do you tell?

Hon. Todd Smith: You're stressing me out.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, you stress me out all the time, but that's kind of the job. We're supposed to stress each other out, right? We could use a few inspectors here too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Yes.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, that's supposed to be the Speaker. My apologies, Speaker.

But it's not often, and I would like to see it, because unless we have something that determines that, there are people who are, and who have every right to be, completely opposed to animal agriculture and believe that any time an animal is part of the agriculture system, it's under stress. How do we do that? I'm leaving this with a question.

We fully support this, but we are going to fight like crazy to make sure it's funded. We are going to fight like crazy to make sure that the court system can actually handle it and that the court system can actually handle people. Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that most of the people in our provincial jails are on remand? They have never been actually convicted of anything; they just haven't made bail. And we're going to dump this on the court system, too? That is a big issue, and a big issue not just for people who love animals; it's a big issue for all types of people.

But the biggest question that this bill leaves is who is going to be the judge of what is—what's the word again?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Psychological.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to get that yet, Speaker. Who is going to be the judge of what is psychological distress in a farm animal? It's a big question.

Thank you for your time, Speaker, and we will be supporting the final reading of this bill.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: There have been a lot of people who have been waxing poetically about this today. One of the things that we need to keep in mind is that the legislation had to be put forward because of what happened with the lawsuit. What has come forward is something that I think is very effective for the province of Ontario.

The big change that I see in this, and I think it's one of the most valuable things that is different about this, is that they are provincial inspectors. We all know why it had to go from the OSPCA to something else. I don't want to speak ill of any of the OSPCA member agencies because, for the most part, they tried very hard to do a very good job. But one of the big differences that this legislation will

do is, with the provincially trained inspectors, we recognize that there is a difference between farm animals or working animals and those that are family pets. We didn't have that differentiation under the OSPCA.

The member from up north—I forget his riding; I apologize.

Interjections: Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. Dave Smith: —Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about the horse across the street.

I grew up in Prince Edward county. I lived in Wellington for most of my life before I went off to university. I worked on a number of different farms. So when I moved to the big city of Peterborough, one of the things that I heard people talking about, that I laughed at, was cow tipping. They would ask me if I ever got involved in cow tipping. They would talk about how cows wouldn't sleep lying down, and how horses would never lie down.

I thought, "This is actually somebody who has no idea what they're talking about." The term that we coined, when I grew up in Prince Edward county, for people like that was that they were "cidiots." They grew up in the city, and they had no idea what it was like in rural areas.

Cow tipping is not really something that goes on. I can't imagine someone being able to run up—I'm 260 pounds, give or take 15. I could very easily run up to something and knock it over, but there's no way I'm knocking over a cow, because cows don't sleep standing up, and I'm not about to lean into it and try to knock it over. That's not something that actually happens.

But you need to have inspectors who understand the difference between farm animals and family pets. That's something that this law, if it's passed, will differentiate between.

I want to talk just briefly about some of the comments that were made during committee. Rob Laidlaw from Zoocheck described this as "a positive step forward, a long time coming," and it was "a breath of fresh air."

It really is a different approach to it. Many of us here are pet owners. My colleague from Carleton talked about her fur baby. I also have pets as well. I have, right now, two border collies, Maggie and Finnie. They are a great comfort to my wife when I am here, and but they're also a great comfort to me. Pets are something that become a huge part of your family when you're growing up.

I'm going to touch on something personal on it. I won't go into too many details. Just suffice to say that my daughter had cancer at one point. When she was done with her treatment, her doctors asked her what she wanted as a gift or a prize for successfully beating cancer. Her response was that she wanted a puppy. So we went out and we did get a puppy for her. It was a border collie-lab cross—a wonderful dog. It comforted her, but it also helped raise her.

Dogs, cats—most people's pets become part of their family. They truly are another family member. My wife has described our two border collies as being two-year-olds that she'll have for the next 15 years. I think that's a very apt description.

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But we also have to recognize that there is a difference between that family pet and a working animal. There is a difference between a dairy cow and your cat. There is a difference between a barn cat and your house cat, and you have to recognize that. I think this legislation does a very, very good job of finding that balance, making sure that we're not treating farm animals or working animals the same way we are treating our family pets. Recognizing that although they are our family pets and that we love them a great deal, sometimes that love is misplaced.

I know many of us have seen incidences where you've gone to the mall and there is an animal inside a car. It's not that that pet owner is trying to do something malicious. For the most part, I'd like to believe that those pet owners believe they're doing what the pet wants: They're including the pet with them. The pet is coming with them to these different things, and they think that if they have the window cracked just a little bit, there's enough airflow and their pet will be fine. They are not trying to do something malicious. They think they're doing the right thing. This gives us a tool now to help that animal when that animal is in distress.

We still have to address the education piece for that pet owner. We still have to make sure the pet owner realizes it's not appropriate to leave their animal in a hot car or a cold car and crack the window open. But we have a tool in the toolbox now to help that animal when it's in distress and to recognize that it can be in distress.

Liz White from Animal Alliance of Canada has described this bill as being ground-breaking, and Kaitlyn Mitchell from Animal Justice has said that this is a Canadian first. Ontario is leading the rest of the country in this legislation. Ontario is setting the path for others to follow, and we're doing it in intelligent, effective and balanced ways.

We have the strongest penalties in Canada. I know it has been talked about already, but I need to repeat it because I think it's a very valuable point: \$130,000 for an individual as a penalty for cruelty to animals. That's outstanding. No other province is doing something like this. And \$500,000 as a penalty for a corporation. Again, no other province has something like this.

But then, I come back to one of the keys in this piece of legislation is that it differentiates between working animals, between farm animals and those that are family pets. I believe we're finding the balance so that we can have very good legislation so that those people who live in the city, who don't know about rural animals and how a farm works, have the legislation to protect their valued family pet, but we're not penalizing our agriculture industry. We're not penalizing farmers. We have found a very, very good balance that way.

Kevin Strooband actually said something that was a little bit misquoted throughout this process, but what he said was, "This is an exciting time for animal protection in our province," and that the PAWS Act is "a critical first step in establishing a solution for protecting animals in Canada."

We've got a number of different animal advocates who have stepped up and said Ontario is getting it right. If this bill passes, we're setting a precedent. We're showing that Ontario is getting it right. I'm really happy to hear so many people from the opposition, so many independent members, who have spoken in favour of this.

We do have differences. There have been some recommendations from different people that perhaps we should do this a little bit differently and perhaps we should do that a little bit differently. We're looking forward to some of the things that come forward in regulation. But the overwhelming response from everyone is a very positive response.

We're moving forward in a direction that is protecting animals in Ontario. We're doing something that makes sense. I joked, prior to getting into politics, that government doesn't use common sense when they do something, but this is an example of common sense coming through. We've changed the legislation. We've introduced a piece of legislation that makes sense for everyone. It finds the perfect balance in it.

The regulations will do some more for us. I understand that there is going to be a need for some input from the opposition on it as well. I'm sure that the opposition is going to oppose because that is part of their job; I get that. But it's nice to see those smiling faces. It's nice to see the support that they're giving this because we all recognize that this is a bill that is getting it right. This is a bill that is going to serve the people of Ontario very, very well.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I can relate a little bit to my good friend here from Timiskaming–Cochrane. It is my pleasure to speak to this bill, Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act—in short, PAWS, which I think was a genius move by the government members, whoever thought of that.

My good friend here from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about his cows, so I just wanted to share that, growing up in a small village in Bangladesh, I also had three beautiful goats, and ducks. To this day, I cannot eat some seafood because that's what I used to feed the ducks. It just doesn't work that way: How can I eat my ducks' food?

It is my pleasure to speak to this. As my good friend here from Brampton North spoke a lot about the bill itself and the measures that were taken, first I want to start by saying that in our society, it is our responsibility to take care of each other but also the animals we have. Whether it's pets or whether it's farm animals, we have to make sure that we behave in the most humane way possible. It is unfortunate that sometimes that doesn't happen. The cruelty we have and we see for other human beings I sometimes cannot even fathom, and it's obviously the same for animals.

All Ontarians should understand their rights and their responsibilities in terms of how animals should be protected, as well as the enforcement that is necessary. It

is really unfortunate, because when we talk about this bill, before we pat ourselves or pat the government on the back, saying that this is so great, we have to be mindful of the fact that this bill was brought because we didn't have anything else protecting animals. Part of that goes back to the Liberals, who failed for so many years, like they failed with so many other laws when it came to protecting the rights of students, our elders, and animals, because they didn't really take any proactive steps to do what was necessary and is in this bill.

This is a thank-you note to the OSPCA, because they were a voluntary organization that was doing this, and they were doing this for over 100 years. Maybe some of them didn't have that experience or the expertise; it is really important to point out that they were doing this voluntarily, and they were doing this for over 100 years. I want to say a big thank-you to all of the people who have ever worked there, who have ever volunteered there, because they did something that we as government should have done many, many years ago. That failure lies with the Liberals, as well as the Conservative governments that have in the past governed this province, as well as this current one, which only thought about it after the court cases and after this was something where—chop-chop—we need to get it done.

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It's really sad to see that animal abuses continue to occur in this day and age, especially because we have so many people like the member who spoke so dearly about her pets. They love their pets and they take care of them and treat their pets like members of the family. We know that about 60% of Ontario families own at least one pet. When I go door-knocking in Scarborough Southwest, many of my favourite moments are meeting the animals that come out with the constituents when you open the door. It's pretty fantastic. Just the other day I spoke about Bonnie, who I met while knocking on doors as well.

This government, along with the previous Liberal governments, has known that the system that we had in place wasn't working, but both of them let animals and the people of this province down. This government failed to act until now, when the situation clearly reached a crisis point and there was no choice.

When we talk about this bill, I also want to emphasize that we are supporting it, but I want to be a little bit critical, because it's important how we regulate, what kind of regulations are put in place, and the proper training that's necessary for crown attorneys, for animal inspectors—we just heard a lot about inspectors, for animal inspectors—we just heard a lot about inspectors—and OPP officers. This is very important, and it needs to be taken very seriously. We've all seen cases where the cruelty charges were withdrawn when they should have been prosecuted to the full context.

If you remember, my good friend from Niagara Falls talked about Dr. Mahavir Rekhi, who was suspended after a video that was leaked in 2015 of the doctor himself, who abused animals despite being a vet. That happened. There are a lot of people—it's unfortunate, but it happens, and these people, I honestly think, should never own a pet and should never be able to go near a pet. I don't know how

we have gone through so many years without having such strict laws.

I want to go on a little bit about this bill in terms of its background, because I think it's really important to talk about how it came into effect. This bill was introduced as a permanent replacement for Bill 117, which is the OSCPA Amendment Act, which received royal assent in June 2019. Early in March 2019, the OSPCA notified the government that as of March 30, they would no longer be providing animal welfare enforcement. This is when the transfer payment agreement with the province ended, and the humane society offered to extend, through a signed agreement, a three-month grace period to the end of June.

This is a volunteer organization that we're talking about that decided, "You know what? We'll let the government figure their stuff out and give you three months." So we're very lucky that we had that opportunity.

Now, about the bill itself: When we talk about Bill 136, it creates the framework that is necessary for animal inspectors, who are members of the public service, and who will be accountable to the chief animal welfare inspector, appointed under this act. The PAWS Act, in effect, also continues—or I hope will continue—to strengthen many of the existing temporary initiatives as well that were taken in Bill 117; for example, providing the provincial chief inspector, as well as the OPS—there will be some sort of accountability or public oversight.

As we heard from the member opposite, there will be a toll-free number, which already exists, to report animal welfare concerns or complaints regarding inspector conduct. Now, when I saw that, first I laughed and then I was a little concerned, because we have heard that, when Legal Aid Ontario was cancelled, the Premier actually gave out his number and said, "Toll-free, call me, if you need legal services." Then people were devastated in this province, and they are still devastated. I don't think the Premier really picks up, and these people don't have legal services and they don't have any help.

So I really, really hope that this toll-free number does not end up like that one, because people will be calling, and if there is a service that you're providing, I hope that we are able to do as we say and there are proper regulations and proper funding. Because if there is a phone there and it rings and no one picks up and there aren't enough people employed, then it doesn't matter whether we have a toll-free number.

This bill will also update prohibitions and obligations and stronger penalties for offenders, including repeat offenders. I want to talk a little bit about prohibitions, because I think that's really important. Like I was saying before, if there is somebody who has assaulted or has done

something cruel maybe to their own pet or their partner's or spouse's or their neighbour's or anyone else's, that person, in my opinion, should never be able to have a pet. I think it's really important that we have guidelines and regulations, so that we are not placing, whether it's a dog or a cat or whatever pet that person wants—I don't think it's very safe for us to place a dog with that person, because we don't know what kind of treatment that they will give to that pet.

The other one that I want to add, which is not in this bill, is restitution. That's important, because as much as we would like to think of our pets as members of our family, unfortunately, under the law, pets are seen as private property. So if someone breaks your window, for example, or something on your private property, what happens? So if it's your neighbour, that person is asked to pay the fines. Unfortunately, when it comes to your pets, you end up with the bills for your vet. I think it's only fair if we have whoever caused that damage—in my opinion, Speaker, we should ask that person to pay that fine as well. Isn't that only fair: to make the person who did the harm to take up the cost? That cost can be very expensive. It can be very expensive dealing with that. We have to make sure that we provide people, especially people in our province who take care of animals in our province—to be able to have laws that actually help them as well. It's the only way they will feel protected as well. It's actually a way of protecting pet owners, as well as animals.

The other part I want to talk about in this bill is that the government has promised in this bill that eventually there will be a body that's tasked with informing and recommending new regulations, standards and courses of action. I really hope that happens, because we have seen the government pass legislation in this House without really consulting, without really listening to experts, without really listening to the public. So I really hope there will be an ongoing discussion with stakeholders, because that will inform us better in terms of the regulations that we put in place, and stakeholder consultations need to continue in the long term. These consultations have already helped inform decisions such as introducing new offences to combat activities such as dogfighting, giving inspectors necessary powers to help animals in distress—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much to the member. When debate resumes, you will have time, should you choose.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 6 o'clock. This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Rudy Cuzzetto, Parm Gill
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Marit Stiles, Vijay Thanigasalam
John Vanthof
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Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Roman Baber
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Roman Baber, Will Bouma
Lorne Coe, Parm Gill
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Gurratan Singh, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Jill Andrew, Toby Barrett
Stan Cho, Stephen Crawford
Catherine Fife, John Fraser
Goldie Ghamari, France Gélinas
Norman Miller, Michael Parsa
Nina Tangri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Will Bouma, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie