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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 9 December 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 9 décembre 2019

The House met at 1030.

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

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I seek the House's attention. I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: a report entitled Economic and Budget Outlook, Fall 2019, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Today we are honoured to remember and pay tribute to a former member of our provincial Legislature, the late Mr. James Roos Breithaupt, who was the MPP for Kitchener during the 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st and 32nd Parliaments. Mr. Breithaupt's family are here with us in the Speaker's gallery: daughter Martha Oner, grandson Emre Oner and granddaughter Alara Oner.

Also in the Speaker's gallery are Mr. David Warner, who was the Speaker during the 35th Parliament and is currently the chair of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians; Patrick Reid, who was the MPP for Rainy River for five terms; and also Norm Sterling, who was an MPP for many years and is here as well. Welcome back to Queen's Park. It's wonderful to have all of you here.

Please join me in welcoming our guests.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's not often I get the chance to introduce staff from my constituency office from Timmins. They're here for the week working at Queen's Park. I'd like to introduce Sylvie Lamothe and Courtney Laforest.

Hon. John Yakabuski: It's an introduction, of sorts. I'd like to wish our son Zachary—today is his 41st birthday. And yesterday, our grandson, Leo, turned four.

Mr. Jamie West: I'd like to welcome the many Unifor health care sector workers. I'll be having a meeting this afternoon with Dave Eales, Andrea Morneau, Lisa Irwin and Melissa Wood from the long-term care sector.

Mr. Will Bouma: It's my pleasure to welcome representatives from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture today, and especially, from my riding, Mr. Larry Davis.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure to welcome Unifor—the PSWs who are here—as well as the Ontario Health Coalition here to the Legislature today. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture who are visiting us here today, including Keith Currie, Cathy Lennon, Peter Seemann, Paul Vickers, Larry Davis, Brent Royce, Jackie Kelly-Pemberton and Teresa Van Raay.

I'd also like to invite all the members here to their reception later on this afternoon here at the Legislature.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I would like to welcome and thank the members from Unifor for a wonderful, informative meeting about health care this morning: Kari Jefford, Lauren Hall, Lisa Fleming and Sandy Carricato.

Also, I would like to welcome Sarah Essig, mother of today's page captain Mathias Essig, from wonderful Port Dalhousie in St. Catharines. Sarah, welcome to your House. Welcome to our House.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to add my welcome to an amazing agri-food champion from Huron country, Teresa Van Raay. It's great to see you here.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I'm pleased to welcome Suleiman Sualim, a resident of the great riding of York South-Weston. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: This morning, I would like to introduce some very special guests to the Legislature. I'd like to introduce Danny Minogue, Marc Minogue, Robert MacKenzie and Dr. L. Joan Murphy. Our guests are here to mark robotic-assisted surgery day, and I encourage all members to stop in to the reception today to hear more about the great work they do to advance health care technology in Canada.

To our guests: Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: We have a lot of folks here today. I'd like to welcome Melissa Holden, Kelly-Anne Orr, Amy Cake and Lance Livingstone, health care workers from Unifor; Mark Reusser, Louis Roesch, Ryan DeVries and Rosemary MacLellan, visiting from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; Tony Irwin, Asquith Allen, Ted Whitehead, Allan Drewlo and Patti-Jo McLellan Shaw, from the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario; and lastly, Denise Erickson and Richard Mullin, the folks visiting today from the Ontario Federation of All-Terrain Vehicle Clubs. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Gravelle: I would like to welcome the Unifor members who are here for their lobby day: Kari Jefford, Angie Martz, Holly Lane, Carrie Moffitt, Tara Kraehling, Kelly Godick, Anna Grizans and Lisa Fleming.

I also want to welcome the vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Peggy Brekveld. She is from Thunder Bay.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd also like to welcome members of the OFA who are here today, especially Brent Royce, who is from my riding of Perth-Wellington.

Ms. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to welcome some Unifor members from Windsor. Shelley Smith is here today. Shelley and I have done a lot of work back in my riding. I'd also like to welcome an incredible advocate and activist, Gary Parent, who is a very active member of Unifor Local 444 back home.

Mr. Mike Harris: She's not here, but I know she's at home, watching on TV. I'd just like to say a big hello to Barbara Stevens.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: It's not every day that we have the pleasure in this House of introducing someone who has been part of a movement that has shaped culture across the world and has helped put Toronto on a global stage—especially working with communities that are at risk in his work with the Remix Project. It is my esteemed pleasure to introduce in this House Noah “40” Shebib, world-renowned producer and mix engineer of many artists, but best known for his work with Drake, and co-founder of OVO.

It is an honour to have you here in the House today.

1040

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to welcome Angie Martz, Janice Platek, Lina Moore and Holly Lane from Thunder Bay, and all the long-term-care workers from Unifor who are here today in the House.

I'd also like to welcome Peggy Brekveld from the OFA, who is from my riding.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I would like to welcome Katie Allan and Roberta Scott from Cardiac Arrest Response and Education to the Legislature this morning. They will be holding an instructional session to train us on CPR and AEDs this afternoon, which I encourage everyone to attend.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's my pleasure to do my daily welcome of autism families and advocates. Today, with us we have Faith Munoz; and Evan Lynch, Amanda Mooyer and their son, Finn Lynch. We have Michau van Speyk, Laura Kirby-McIntosh and Myra Villanueva. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jane McKenna: One of the best things right now at Christmastime is listening to all the great voices down at the choir. John T. Tuck is here today from Burlington, for which I'm thrilled. There are two choirs from the school—65 kids. Everybody at 12:15 p.m. today is welcome to come down and listen to them. They have beautiful voices. Tania Laurie is their music, drama and dance teacher, and she's here. We're so looking forward to it.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to introduce Katie Allan and Heather Cartwright from Cardiac Arrest Response and Education. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Parm Gill: I'd like to welcome the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario for their lobby day here today. We have Allan Drewlo, Patti-Jo McLellan Shaw, Tony Irwin, Asquith Allen and Ted Whitehead. All members are invited to the reception starting at 5:30 p.m. in the legislative dining room.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd like to welcome my good friend Judy Donnelly to Queen's Park. Judy was my witness

when I got married in New Orleans many years ago. Judy is visiting us now all the way from Australia. Welcome to Queen's Park, Judy.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome Jackie Pemberton from the OFA. She's here today to meet us. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm delighted to welcome London West constituent Amy Cake, who is here today with the Unifor delegation. I am looking forward to my meeting with Unifor later on today.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Friends from Unifor are here today to be welcomed: Les MacDonald, Janice Hammond, Alicia Rivera, Shelley Smith and, of course, the one and only Gary Parent. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I'd also be remiss if I did not introduce two other amazing people in the assembly today who are here as guests. We have Fateh Singh, also known as Fateh Doe, an amazing rapper and performer out of Brampton, known worldwide, along with Issey Abraha, one of the best-connected young guys in this community and in Toronto as a whole. It's an honour to have you both here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Lastly, I want to draw attention to the fact that we have another former member in the House who served here for four decades: Jim Bradley, the former MPP for St. Catharines. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

JAMES ROOS BREITHAUPT

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe you will find we have unanimous consent to recognize a former member of provincial Parliament from the riding of Kitchener, Mr. James Roos Breithaupt, with five minutes being allocated to the government, five minutes being allocated to the official opposition, five minutes being allocated to the independent Liberals and five minutes being allocated to the independent Green member, with the independent Green member going first, followed by the official opposition, followed by the government and, finally, by the independent Liberal member.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to recognize a former member of provincial Parliament from the riding of Kitchener, Mr. James Roos Breithaupt. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Speaker. It's an honour today to rise on behalf of the Green Party to pay tribute to former MPP and retired Lieutenant-Colonel James Roos Breithaupt. I'd like to welcome his family and former colleagues to the Legislature today.

Mr. Breithaupt held an impressive number of respected roles throughout his life, including being a father; a husband; an honoured member of the Royal Canadian Artillery, with 24 years of experience, numerous military awards and medals; a lawyer, called to the bar in 1962; a

judge; a volunteer on many boards; and a respected politician with 17 years of service here at the Ontario Legislature. Mr. Breithaupt was first elected in 1967 as the MPP for Kitchener and served until 1984.

Mr. Breithaupt was known for his fairness, his quiet dignity and for never letting political partisanship get in the way of friendship with his colleagues or in the way of getting work done, even when he was serving as the Liberal House leader.

Former MPP and cabinet minister John Milloy describes Mr. Breithaupt: "He was always very popular. He had a good way with people."

It's not surprising, given his collegiality and the way in which he treated others, that he became the longest-serving MPP for his riding of Kitchener, having been elected by his constituents five times.

Mr. Breithaupt may have retired from this Legislature and from politics in 1984, but he remained active in public service. He chaired the Ontario Law Reform Commission from 1984 to 1989 and the Commercial Registration Appeal Tribunal from 1989 to 1993.

During his career, Mr. Breithaupt also served as the vice-chairman of the board of governors for Waterloo Lutheran University, now known as Wilfrid Laurier University, a name he suggested in 1973—and I've decided that my daughter, who is now in her third year at Laurier, has the answer to a good trivia question.

Mr. Breithaupt was an avid lover of history. He was a lifetime member—and past president, serving from 1996 to 1998—of the Waterloo Historical Society.

As I reflect on his distinguished career, his long-time service to his riding and the variety of ways in which he served in the military, served as a volunteer and served as an active member of his community, I think all of us here at Queen's Park have an opportunity to be inspired and to strive for the kinds of accomplishments that Mr. Breithaupt accomplished in his life, for how respected and effective he was throughout his life in public service and especially here in the Legislature.

I want to thank him for his lifetime of service. I want to thank his family for sharing Mr. Breithaupt with us.

May he rest in peace.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, I'll recognize the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is an honour to stand in this House today and pay tribute to Kitchener's longest-serving MPP, James Breithaupt.

We are joined today by his daughter Martha and grandchildren Emre and Alara. We want to thank you for being here today to celebrate Jim's life and service to the Kitchener-Waterloo community.

Jim was first elected in 1967 and served the people of Kitchener until 1984. He was re-elected an impressive four times: in 1971, 1975, 1977 and 1981.

I never had the opportunity to meet Jim, but from my reading about him, he was a proud, conscientious and extremely active person. In addition to serving as MPP for nearly two decades, Jim had a career as a lawyer, economist and instructor at Wilfrid Laurier University. As has

already been mentioned, Jim was a major contributor to Laurier's name on the former Waterloo Lutheran University.

He also had an unparalleled record of service at a number of organizations, including St. John Ambulance, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Concordia Club and the Waterloo Historical Society, among others.

In fact, it seems like he did so much that I could probably spend my entire time here today listing his different commitments, but I want to highlight his military service.

1050

Jim was commissioned in the Royal Canadian Artillery after completing officer training in the early 1950s. Upon returning to Waterloo to practise law, Jim was transferred to the Scots Fusiliers of Canada, becoming the eighth officer in his family and the first third-generation officer.

His involvement in military service extended to his charity work. Jim was involved in the Last Post Fund, which ensures that no veteran is denied a dignified burial due to insufficient funds at the time of death.

As an MPP and public servant, Jim left his mark on the province of Ontario. Elected in Kitchener in 1967, Jim represented a city that was the fastest-growing in the province. Manufacturing, housing and education were top priorities for him. During his inaugural speech, he touched on a few things that I think everyone in this House will find interesting, if not familiar. In the late 1960s, Waterloo county was engaged in a local government review, and pushed for a working system of regional government. He also advocated for a renewed and revitalized downtown area and a system of pollution control. His speech may have been 50 years ago, but some things in Ontario don't change too much.

Jim was also not afraid to get a gentle barb in at the government when it was required and when it was needed. On his election success and the redrawing of the riding boundaries, Jim said, "We were exceptionally happy in our part of Waterloo county to be able to replace one Conservative member with two Liberals."

During Jim's time as MPP, he also served as Liberal House leader and as chair of the public accounts committee, a role which I now have the privilege of serving in, and it is the best committee in the Legislature. Near the end of his political career, Jim ran for leader of the Liberal Party. After a car accident sidelined him from the campaign, his wife Jane campaigned on his behalf. In a leadership campaign, his wife travelled the province in his stead. Kudos to Jane for stepping up. It goes to show you that politics really is a family affair.

While Jim didn't win, Hugh Segal commented that he was a "gentleman to the end. One of the great, classy people in Ontario politics."

Jim transitioned to the public service a few years later, serving as chair of the Ontario Law Reform Commission from 1984 to 1989. There, Jim worked on creating new legislation, including the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which everyone in this House is very familiar with.

After retiring from politics, he commented on his role in the public service. He said, "I didn't realize life could be so pleasant." Everyone in the House understands the sacrifice that politicians and their families make.

On behalf of the entire NDP caucus and for the people of Kitchener-Waterloo, I would like to thank the Breithaupt family for their sacrifices and for your service. Thank you to Jim Breithaupt for his years of dedication to the people of Kitchener-Waterloo and indeed the province of Ontario. It is a stronger place because of him.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next I'll call upon the member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to be able to rise in the House today and pay tribute to James Breithaupt, better known as Jim to his constituents and members of this House.

I would like to welcome his daughter Martha, and his grandchildren, and the rest of his family and friends who have joined us here today to celebrate Jim's legacy.

Representing the riding of Kitchener from 1967 until his resignation in 1985, Jim still holds the record for the longest-serving member of provincial Parliament from Waterloo region. Although I never had the opportunity to meet him, I've had enough conversations with my colleagues and local residents to know that Jim served with honour and dignity, never losing sight of the responsibility he had towards his community through the 18 years he was in office. I think I can speak for all members of this House from Waterloo region when I say that this impact will not soon be forgotten.

Before serving his community here at Queen's Park, Jim was a gunner in the Royal Canadian Artillery, rising to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in the Canadian reserves. He was made an honorary colonel in the 7th Toronto Regiment.

Jim's support for our troops and veterans did not diminish after leaving the armed forces. He remained a strong supporter of the Last Post Fund, serving as president of the Ontario board of directors. For those of you who do not know, the Last Post Fund is dedicated to ensuring that no veteran is denied a funeral, burial or military gravestone due to financial hardship.

Jim's lasting impact on Waterloo region and beyond cannot be understated. Jim served as vice-chairman of Waterloo Lutheran University's board of governors and had various other active roles on the campus for over 30 years. While many of us may not recognize the name "Waterloo Lutheran University," I'm sure that many here will know Wilfrid Laurier University, and it was Jim who suggested that name for the university in 1973.

He was an active volunteer with St. John Ambulance for over 40 years and was honoured with a Knight of Justice of the Order of St. John. He also worked with countless other organizations that do incredible work in Waterloo region, including the Royal Canadian Legion, Concordia Club and the Waterloo Historical Society.

In this place, Jim is remembered fondly by his colleagues as a dignified, courteous and respectful "man of the House," to use the words of Sean Conway. Norm

Sterling—who has joined us today—who spent years on the opposite side of the House from him, recalls Jim for his love of his role as an elected official and as a trusted voice here in this Legislature. Jim will always be remembered for his duty inside of this House, as well as to his country and of course his community.

It is that sense of honour and duty that serves as an inspiration to myself and, I would like to imagine, to all other members of this House. We are all here with the responsibility to serve our constituents to the absolute best of our abilities. Even after five consecutive successful elections, Jim never lost sight of that. He left a positive lasting impression on those who met him, both in his personal and civic life. The awards he received after his service as an MPP are far too numerous to list in this short amount of time, but notably he was made a Knight of Merit by the government of Poland and received the Queen's diamond Jubilee Medal.

Jim deserves today's tribute from all sides of the House for his life full of service to the people of Waterloo region, our province and our country. So many of us come into this role hoping to make a positive mark on our community. Jim's career and legacy is a bar worth striving for.

Thank you again to Martha and his grandchildren, who have joined us here today. It's an honour to remember your father, your grandfather.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next I'll recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's an honour to rise to pay tribute to James Roos—or Jim—Breithaupt, MPP for Kitchener from 1967 to 1985. His life was one of service to his community, his province and his country. Jim served his community as an MPP, a lawyer, a deputy judge and as a volunteer for St. John Ambulance and local historical societies. He's the one who suggested the name for Wilfrid Laurier University, where he was a student, a teacher and, later, on the board of governors.

Jim served his country in the Canadian Forces, advocated for veterans through the Last Post Fund and honoured those who lost their lives in war by being deeply involved with the cenotaphs in his community. There are too many things to mention in this brief time. What stands out most to me is that his commitment to these things lasted decades or a lifetime. He served in this Legislature as a Liberal, as House leader, critic for finance and Treasury Board and long-standing Chair of public accounts. He ran for leader, although circumstances put him at a disadvantage.

Last night I was reading his Hansard—and there's a lot of it, 17 years' worth of Hansard; I didn't read it all. He knew history, and he was always well prepared for debate. I could tell that. He kept his attention squarely focused on the public purse. There are many interesting exchanges. I found an exchange with Premier Bill Davis over the probity of awarding contracts for government advertising and their value, especially during the pre-writ period. Speaker, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

He was also a champion for the rights of individuals, and this is important. Here's what he had to say in 1984

when debating the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act: “It is time to raise the shutters on the house of government. It is time to let the people peer in so that government can better reach out.” He also said, “Closed government at its best alienates and cuts off the people it is intended to serve, because it presupposes the individual is unworthy of trust or incapable of assimilating information.”

Speaker, he was also funny as well, and you can pick this up in the heckles in Hansard—so if you ever think you’re getting away with it, they appear, folks. Once when debating the Dog Licensing and Live Stock and Poultry Protection Act, his heckle was, “They are going to have Noah as the chairman of the tribunal.” Then there’s the time-honoured classic of “when you change your leader.” It appears a few times; we’ve all used that at one point.

1100

Jim was honoured with his own coat of arms. You can find it online. I actually have it right here; you can see it later on my desk. It’s beautiful, and it’s very Canadian. The motto on it sums up his life of service and mission in this Legislature—pardon my Latin; it has been 40 years: “Emenda ut conserves.” What it means is, “Correct it, so that you may preserve it,” and that speaks to what he did in this Legislature and in his community.

To his daughter Martha, and his grandchildren who are here, and to all his family—like all families of members in this Legislature, you made sacrifices to share him with us. He made a big difference, and we thank you for that.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On behalf of all the members of the House, we give thanks for the life of Jim Breithaupt and for his extraordinary public service. We’re delighted to have you here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. Last week, Ontario parents and students saw schools across Ontario close in the first province-wide strike this province has seen in 22 years. As the Premier is well aware, his reckless education cuts caused the conflict we’re seeing in classrooms. Teachers have made it clear that they will cancel Wednesday’s walkout if this government backs away from their cuts.

My question, again to the Premier, and I hope he will answer it personally because these really are his decisions to make: Will the Premier do the right thing, stand in his place and announce a reversal of these cuts today?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, it is time for OSSTF to call off this needless strike and to accept private mediation without preconditions. This demonstrates yet again that OSSTF, if they don’t get their demands, including a \$1.5-billion increase in compensation, are prepared to walk out

again. I believe that parents in this province see that as unacceptable, and this government agrees.

The union leaders should agree to private mediation. They should stay at the table. Most importantly, Speaker, they should work with us in good faith to get a deal that keeps our kids in class. Our focus is on fighting for new investments in our children, not for compensation.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, I’m going to turn back to the Premier again because, as I said, this is his decision to make. Parents, students, teachers and education workers are all saying the same thing: Larger classes and fewer courses will be bad for students. Mandatory, Alabama-style online learning will be bad for students.

The Premier has a clear opportunity right now to de-escalate this conflict and maintain quality education. Will he admit that these reckless cuts were poorly planned, and reverse his plans for larger classes and mandatory online learning?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The focus of the government is to get a deal that keeps kids in class. It is interesting that the one omission from the question is that one of the top three priorities mentioned by OSSTF, or the top three demands, in fact, is for a \$1.5-billion increase. It’s interesting that that wasn’t mentioned in the question.

But, Speaker, the focus of the government is to keep kids in class and to be reasonable at the table. We’re offering a \$750-million increase for teachers, the second-highest-paid in the nation. On average, OSSTF teachers make about \$92,000 a year. These are our friends and family, our neighbours and our caucus members. We value their contribution. But the taxpayer and the government is being reasonable, and it is unfair that they will strike again if they do not get an additional \$750 million. My request of all parties is to focus on our kids, not on compensation.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: The Minister of Education knows that that is not what the issue is. He knows perfectly well. The Premier is creating chaos for students and parents in communities across this province solely because of his stubborn and ideological commitment to classroom cuts and his need to pick a fight. Thousands and thousands of parents told the Premier that they didn’t want those cuts, when they were asked in the government’s own million-dollar survey. Thousands of students told the Premier that they didn’t want those cuts, when they marched out of class in the spring. The Premier’s response was to blame teachers and call them thugs.

Well, now he has the fight he wanted, and our kids are paying the price. How does the Premier justify that?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, every Premier and every political party, including New Democrats, has faced these escalation attempts, so that’s the facts. This happens cyclically every three years. The fact is that what unites parents is that they oppose escalation. They want their kids in class on Wednesday. This government agrees. I’m calling on OSSTF to end this needless strike and to accept

private mediation without precondition, just like CUPE did one month ago.

Speaker, just to contextualize, since 2003-04, we have 12% more teachers in the system and less than 1% more students in the system, and an 80% increase in the bill for wages and pay for our teachers over that period of time.

Our focus is to be reasonable. A \$750-million increase in pay for the second-highest-remunerated educators in the nation is, I think, more than reasonable. The focus for our government is to invest in kids, to invest in the classroom, not in compensation.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Last week, the Auditor General revealed that the Ford government has no plan to deal with the climate crisis and will not even come close to meeting Ontario's greenhouse gas reduction goals. The environment minister hesitated to even use the word "plan" to describe what the government has been doing. But the Premier, against all of this evidence, insisted Friday that all was well and the government was on track.

It's important for the Premier to provide an answer, because it's his credibility that's on the line. Why would anyone believe him over the Auditor General?

Hon. Doug Ford: House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question. We appreciate the work that the Auditor General did on this file. What she did say is that we are progressing to reduce GHG emissions—we're very happy about that—but at the same time she highlighted a number of things that have to change as we continue to make sure we meet those targets.

The Premier has been very clear to our caucus and to this cabinet that this is a very high priority for him. He intends that this government will meet those reduction targets, and we will.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I thought the Premier would speak for himself, but we'll see if he will on the second try.

On Friday, the Premier also stated, "We have a 10-year plan and I don't know how many people ... can criticize it until we get to 2030." Is the Premier saying that the people of Ontario have to wait a decade before they're allowed to point out that this government has no plan to deal with the climate crisis?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, obviously one of the very first things that we did was to set to work on meeting those targets. We've brought forward a made-in-Ontario environmental plan—I think it's a very aggressive plan—in order to meet those targets. But as the Auditor General said and as the minister has already said, this is a living, breathing document that changes, that will constantly change. As circumstances change, the plan will need to be updated.

At the same time, we're looking to all members of the House to contribute to this plan. We note that the NDP

have yet to put forward any solutions whatsoever. We will work with the independent Green and Liberals in order to make this plan better, and I would encourage the opposition NDP to participate in this.

Ontario has a great track record for many decades of being environmental leaders, and this government will continue on with that legacy.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, I'm surprised the Premier won't speak to this. I'll try one more time.

The government claims that new renewable energy projects will help them reach their greenhouse gas reduction goals, but the auditor notes that the Premier is currently spending hundreds of millions of dollars to ensure that those renewable energy projects are never built, the ones he's counting on in his plan.

Did the Premier not understand that those projects were supposed to help him reach the target, or did he simply not care?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, we know that renewables are very important. They're an important mix in us meeting not only our energy goals, but our environmental goals at the same time.

It was the opposition—it was this member, in fact—who put forward a plan that has cost Ontario taxpayers \$4 billion a year for high energy contracts that we simply cannot afford.

Going forward, we're going to continue to work with all parties. We're going to continue to make sure that Ontario has the greenest electricity sector in North America. We do, and it's built on the backs of our nuclear workers, those reactors which have given us a constant stream of clean, reliable, cheap energy for many, many decades.

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We should all be very proud of that. I know that I am, Mr. Speaker, but I still wait for the member opposite and the Leader of the Opposition to stand in her place and help us. Give us an idea of what it is that they want to do to help us meet our greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again I try—a question to the Premier: We're coming up on the one-year anniversary of the Premier's failing Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan. That plan's centrepiece was a \$400-million carbon trust, but there's no evidence in the expenditure estimates that this plan, including the trust, is funded this year. Why didn't the government fund its own environment plan?

Hon. Doug Ford: The House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: We continue to focus on real results for the people of the province of Ontario in cleaning up the environment. The Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan focuses not only on GHG emissions, it does even more than that, Mr. Speaker. It focuses on litter, Mr. Speaker. I know the members opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —as they do just now—like to make fun of the fact that this government can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We can focus on lakes, rivers and streams and make sure that they are clean. We can build an energy sector that is clean. It is a model for the entire world. I'm very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

What I'm even more proud of is the fact that for generations, Ontarians have been leaders on the energy file. It doesn't matter whether it's been Conservative, Liberal or NDP; we have always focused on creating a clean environment and have been world leaders on this, and we will continue to do so.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I thought I knew where the buck stopped, but maybe I was wrong.

Again to the Premier: The Premier spent his first year in office declaring war on the climate and our kids' future. He spent \$231 million tearing up clean energy contracts and tearing down wind farms. He spent millions fighting pollution pricing in court and putting stickers that don't stick on every gas pump in Ontario. His energy minister's favourite periodical is a climate-change-denying conspiracy blog, and he appointed a man who says we should consider the benefits of climate change in charge of electricity planning. Now the Premier says that we should trust him. Why would anyone believe a word the Premier says on climate change?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think that question sums up entirely what has happened to the NDP. They are just a party with zero policies. They have nothing to offer the people of the province of Ontario. In all of that, all he did was cast aspersions on all of us.

I'll tell you who the buck stops with: The buck stops with the people of the province of Ontario. It stops with all of us. It stops with all of the members in this Legislature, as it has for decades—as it did when Bill Davis invested in our nuclear capacity to give us a clean energy grid; as it did when Mike Harris and Ernie Eves decided to phase us out of coal and invest back in nuclear; as it did when the member for Don Valley West invested in green energy. I might not appreciate the way it was done, but it is part of our clean energy mix.

What does the NDP have to offer? What does this member have to offer? Nothing. The buck stops with all of us, and it's about time that you remembered that.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Premier this morning. When our government was first elected, Ontario was facing a jobs and economic crisis like never before in its history. Business and individual confidence in the strength of our economy was diminishing due to increasing regulations like Bill 148, increasing taxes and some of the highest electricity costs in all of North America, thanks to the Green Energy Act. I know all too well the negative personal impact that many of these policies were having on my constituents, on their families and their jobs.

Premier, can you speak to the House today about the recent Statistics Canada job numbers and what that means for the economic situation in Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our all-star MPP from Sarnia–Lambton. I've got to remind everyone that the MPP has been elected four consecutive times. They love him out in Sarnia–Lambton.

As the MPP just wanted to remind everyone, we inherited scandal, mismanagement, waste and backroom deals done by the NDP and the Liberals. Over 15 years, they've destroyed this province—the highest subnational debt in the entire world; a \$15-billion deficit.

But the good news for the people of Ontario is that since we've taken office, we've created the environment for companies and people to thrive and prosper and grow in this province, and the numbers don't lie. Stats Canada came out with another gain of 15,400 jobs, totalling 271,600 jobs since we've taken office—

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the Premier: Premier, that's amazing news, that our plan for the province is working and that we are once again open for business.

Premier, the important factor, as well reported by Stats Canada, is the return of employment confidence in this province, with more people starting to look for and find work once again. This is a great sign that people and business are supporting our plan and seeing the results for themselves. I know in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton and in my region, individuals I speak with are saying the same thing. They're starting to see these positive results for themselves.

Premier, can you once more elaborate on the positive impact that our policies are having on the regions throughout this great province?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our great MPP once again. I just want to repeat those numbers again: 271,600 more families are working, putting food on the table, paying a mortgage, paying rent, compared to under the NDP and the Liberal leadership, 300,000 families lost their jobs because of your policies, because of the ridiculous, as I call it, green energy scam, which was the biggest scam and made more people rich—the political insiders—than any other thing in the history of Ontario, lining the pockets of their buddies.

Finally, we have a government that respects the taxpayers, puts money back into their pockets—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the Premier. I ask him to take his seat.

The official opposition has to come to order. I have to be able to hear the response.

I apologize to the Premier. Please conclude your answer.

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, we have this economy booming. Everywhere I'm going—no matter if it was the visit to Washington this week or talking to people right around the world, they all come up to me and say, “What are you doing in Ontario? The economy is booming.”

We are an economic powerhouse anywhere in North America. The Americans know it. We know it. When the rest of Canada is losing 71,000 jobs, who comes to the top again? The cream comes to the top. Ontario are the champions.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The House will come to order so we can resume question period. Please start the clock.

I recognize the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question this morning is for the Premier. Today, the Financial Accountability Officer issued a stark warning for this government: The cuts that this government is making will leave a massive, \$5-billion funding gap between what the government plans to spend and what the people of Ontario actually need. In order to close that gap, the FAO suggests that more painful cuts are coming, either by further underfunding the already cash-strapped services that Ontarians rely on or by restricting access to those services, forcing everyday families to go without.

Premier, 15 years of chronic underfunding under the previous Liberal government left us a hallway medicine crisis and crumbling schools. But this Conservative government's reckless cuts have only made things worse. So my question for the Premier: Will he come clean and tell Ontarians what more cuts they have in store?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for that question, and I thank the FAO for his review. It is a very sobering but very important document that demonstrates the exact challenges that our government has talked about.

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We have put forward a fall economic statement that balances three important priorities: making sure we invest in critical services, and we're doing that—\$1.2 billion more into education, \$1.9 billion more into health care; making sure that we also put more money into people's pockets, and we've done that to the tune of \$3 billion to people through our low-income tax cuts and getting rid of the carbon tax cap-and-trade system; and making sure that we balance the budget in a prudent way in 2023.

Mr. Speaker, I recommend the FAO's report. It is an excellent document. I'll have further to say on the follow-up question.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Back to the Premier: Fifteen years of Liberal government did leave our health and education system starved for resources, resulting in a legacy of hallway medicine and crumbling or closed schools. But a year and a half of this Conservative government—this government—and the situation has only gone from bad to worse. Our education system is in chaos, and too many people continue to be treated in the hallways of hospitals.

Today, the Financial Accountability Officer unveiled that the Conservatives are secretly planning to plow ahead with \$2.3 billion worth of tax cuts that will disproportionately help wealthy Ontarians while leaving low-income Ontarians behind.

Can the Premier please tell us how much more he is planning to rip out of our hospitals and our schools so that he can hand out a \$2.3-billion tax cut to his wealthy friends?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, our priorities and our plan have been clear. We are going to put more money back into people's pockets, we are going to invest more in health care, and we are going to make sure that we balance the budget in a responsible way.

But I'd ask the member, if she's so concerned about hallway health care, how can she vote against the \$27 billion that we talk about investing in health care? How can the opposition not support the kind of critical investments that the Minister of Health, under the leadership of this Premier, wants to make in health care?

Mr. Speaker, you can't suck and blow. We support putting money back in people's pockets, we want to make sure that we balance the budget, and we want to make sure that we're investing in critical services.

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

Hon. Rod Phillips: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The Premier promised that he would address Highway 3 and said, "Not a year down the road, but immediately." Two years later, nothing has happened. The people of Windsor and Essex want an update.

My question is this: How long will they have to wait for the minister to get this project going?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member opposite for the question.

Mr. Speaker, one of the first acts that I took as Minister of Transportation was to go down to southwestern Ontario to announce the widening of Highway 3. Improving Highway 3 is a priority for the people of southwestern Ontario, and therefore it's a priority for this government. I was pleased to be joined by members of the opposition who were there, and I'm sorry that the member opposite had not followed the news that day, because it was a great celebration. People in the area have been waiting a long time for a government to take action on Highway 3. That's why it's a priority for us. We've taken important steps. We are moving quickly, Mr. Speaker, to get shovels in the ground, and we will be announcing more information as we have details.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: Back to the minister: Thank you for that update, but I have another question about delays on promised infrastructure. The Premier was up in Bradford this August with big fanfare about the Highway 400-

404 link. The minister, as the local MPP, said getting the Bradford bypass built was her number one priority.

So here's my question: What progress has actually been made since August? The good people of York–Simcoe would like to know.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'm very happy to address the member opposite's question. As he knows, the previous Liberal government cancelled all progress on the Bradford bypass when they cancelled the EA in 2003.

Mr. Speaker, the people of York–Simcoe and the people of York region and Simcoe county have been waiting for this important link to connect people and to connect goods between the 400 and the 404. Our government announced plans to restart the EA, and we're in the process of doing that work. As we move forward with the EA, we'll have more to say in the future. But as he knows, Mr. Speaker, it was his government that cancelled the EA on that project.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

Recently, our Premier signed a memorandum of understanding with Premier Higgs from New Brunswick and Premier Moe from Saskatchewan. This MOU is an important step in developing small modular reactors, also known as SMRs, right here in Canada.

We have a long history of developing nuclear technology here in Canada—proven technology that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and replaces coal, like Candu technology, developed here in Canada, that we use at the Darlington nuclear plant.

In addition, we know that SMRs will generate clean, low-cost energy for both on-grid and off-grid communities.

Will the minister please tell us how Ontario is well positioned to be a leader in developing SMR technology, and how this has the potential to not only create good jobs in Ontario, but also lower our greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member for Durham for her leadership. Just last week, we met with Women in Nuclear, and it was really exciting to hear all of the enthusiasm about moving forward with SMRs.

Ontario is ready. As world-class operators in safety, refurbishment and decommissioning, we're now ready to leverage that entire ecosystem to move forward and lead the world in SMR technology.

This is an exciting opportunity. It has attracted the attention of several provinces across this country, which culminated in the signing of the MOU, led by our Premier. We appreciate that opportunity.

Shortly thereafter, I had conversations with other provinces that want to get on board because they understand that this is a world-class nuclear industry we have here in Ontario. More than 60% of Ontario's clean energy comes from it, and we're going to lead—

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the minister for his answer.

It's apparent that Ontario can be a leader in the nuclear energy space, as we have been in the past. Nuclear power supports over 60,000 jobs in Ontario, many of them in Durham, where I live.

This important announcement ensures that we will continue to build on Ontario's success in this industry. I must say, this is great news for not only Ontario, but this technology has the potential to help reduce greenhouse gases in other provinces, to meet our international climate change targets as a country.

Ontario Power Generation will be working closely with SaskPower to build SMRs to replace coal and lower GHG emissions.

Would the minister please tell us more about the potential benefits of SMR technology?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Work is well under way in 2019. Global First Power initiated an environmental assessment for a five-megawatt demonstration reactor at Chalk River. There's an incredible amount of enthusiasm from stakeholders in the nuclear sector to move forward on other options in greenfield and brownfield sites in Ontario, to show the world this incredible technology.

I was involved in Saskatchewan's carbon capture storage, an expensive way to move forward on coal generation. Saskatchewan is turning its eyes now to small modular reactor technology. They have a basic resource that goes into helping us with this, and on the other end of it, of course, some technology that, like Ontario, could potentially provide one of the greenest sources of energy known the world over—the safest jurisdiction in the world.

We appreciate Saskatchewan's relationship, and we're going to work with them to lead the world in small modular reactor technology.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Gurratan Singh: This spring's budget omnibus bill hid a lot of legislation that this Conservative government would prefer not to debate, including changes to the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act that make it difficult or impossible to sue the government. Ontarians are seeing this government use this heavy-handed tool to trample on citizens who are trying to fight for justice. This law puts hurdles in front of citizens who are trying to get rid of corruption.

My question is to the Premier. The Ford government said that this law wouldn't change anything. Then why is this government using this law to suppress at least eight class action lawsuits?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: His question is very confusing; I don't even know what his question was. But I'll tell you what—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Doug Ford: There are a lot of reports happening right now. I want to congratulate Minister Freeland for

doing a great job, because rumours have it that the USMCA deal got done, which is absolutely spectacular.

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We actually do trade of \$390 billion a year with the US. We're responsible for nine million jobs there, and they're responsible for as many jobs up here. That's absolutely incredible news, Mr. Speaker, that we're the number one customer to 19 states, and we're number two to nine other states. Again, congratulations to Minister Freeland for doing a great job.

The economy is booming. We're an economic powerhouse in North America.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Back to the Premier—and hopefully, you pay attention this time, because we're talking about the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act.

This Conservative government has already shown a reckless attitude when it comes to the democratic rights of Ontarians. The Premier tried to make his family friend the OPP commissioner. He overrode the Charter of Rights. And now, instead of making it easier to fix difficult cases, this government has made it near impossible for Ontarians to sue over negligent conduct of public officials.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association says that the Ford government's new law has set a dangerous precedent that harms individual rights.

Only a government that planned to be sued would make it against the law to sue them. Why is this Premier placing himself above the law?

Hon. Doug Ford: Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Through you, Speaker: The people of Ontario are spending tens of millions of dollars a year on lawsuits to fight over settled principles of law—the principles of law that have, frankly, been emphasized over and over again by the Supreme Court of Canada.

The member opposite needs to hear this: To be clear, the changes do not grant immunity for the government from lawsuits. For example, disputes involving contracts, constitutional issues, human rights and judicial review of government decisions are not impacted by these changes at all, and the government would remain liable for negligent acts of its employees, if proven in court.

The bottom line: People in Ontario can always sue in Ontario courts to receive the justice they deserve. But the principles of law that we are codifying with the changes that we've made have been emphasized by the Supreme Court of Canada.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: My question is for the Solicitor General. Last week, this Legislature gave third reading to Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act—the PAWS Act, for short.

Passage of this bill responds to our government's commitment to having a long-term animal welfare system in place before 2020. The animal welfare system enacted through the PAWS legislation will ensure that animals

remain protected through a robust, transparent and accountable enforcement model. Additionally, it creates the strongest fines in Canada for offenders.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General tell this House what penalties would be in place for animal abusers under this new enforcement system?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the interest from the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I know that he and I have spoken often about the importance of protecting our animals—our pets and also, of course, our agricultural side.

I'd like to remind the member that fines for major offences, such as causing distress, dogfighting and harming a service animal, increase under our new model—

Interruption.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: —although not for cellphone infractions.

It is from a maximum of \$60,000 to, for individuals, a maximum of \$130,000 for the first offence and \$260,000 for subsequent offences. For corporations, it increases to \$500,000 for first offences and \$1 million for subsequent offences.

The new system also ensures that equipment used to harm an animal, such as for dogfighting, does not get returned to the offender—a common-sense improvement that I'm sure all of us can agree is long overdue.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, through you, thank you to the Solicitor General for that response.

During times of the year with extreme temperatures, we often hear reports in the media of pets being left in a vehicle. I think, for example, of a family travelling for their Christmas shopping. They may leave their dog in the car while they're doing that shopping, and all too often these stories can end in tragedy, with the dog being injured or even dying from extreme cold—or, in the summer, extreme heat—while they're in a car.

Can the Solicitor General tell this House how the PAWS legislation addresses tragic situations like that?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member is absolutely right: This time of year, while it is very exciting for young people—frankly, a lot of us can get distracted with the many things that we need to do. I want to start by reminding everyone, especially during this time of year, where the temperatures can drop quickly, to never leave your pets inside a car unattended.

Under the PAWS Act, provincial animal inspectors will have the power to enter cars if there is a concern about an animal being in immediate distress due to extreme temperatures. We will also be expanding the list of individuals with the power to enter cars through a regulatory development. Consultations on long-term regulations will seek advice from a multidisciplinary table comprised of a wide range of experts such as veterinarians, animal advocates, agricultural experts and academics, among others.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, through you to the Premier: Last fall, the Premier's chief of staff, Dean French—we remember him—left office after attempting to award a \$120,000 agent-general position in New York City to a 26-year-old whose main qualification was playing lacrosse with the chief of staff's son. At the time, the Premier said that these were important roles that had to be filled.

Speaker, a pretty simple question here for the Premier—I'm sure he can handle this one, a yes-or-no question: Has the Premier filled that position yet?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Economic Development.
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The question is referred to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for the question. Ontario operates an international network of trade and investment offices that are responsible for attracting investment and driving exports that lead to job creation in this province. That's exactly why we saw the province of Ontario create 15,400 jobs last month, when the rest of Canada lost 75,000.

These trade and investment offices serve to keep Ontario top of mind for decision-makers in nine priority markets that offer the best opportunity for investment attraction and trade promotion. They were very helpful as we were in India, in Japan and in South Korea recently, bringing deals back home to the people of Ontario and helping to create 271,600 jobs since our election.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, that's a lot of words from the economic development minister to just simply say that, no, they haven't filled that position.

It has now been nearly six months since these events occurred. Six months is a long time to leave a position that was so critical to the Ontario economy that it demanded a six-figure salary, complimentary housing abroad, and untold perks. The Premier still has his former PC Party president taking home six figures a year to supposedly represent Ontario's interests in Dallas, Texas, but the position in New York remains conspicuously empty.

If the office of the agent general in New York City can be left to gather dust for half a year, it begs the question to the Premier: Why was it created in the first place?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: In fiscal year 2018-19, our Ontario trade offices generated \$394.5 million in investment attraction. That led to the creation of 1,640 jobs. Just from their work, they facilitated access to 640 Ontario companies that reported close to \$70 million in sales.

I can tell you, Speaker, that when we were in India just last month, our office there had 150 business-to-business meetings set up for the 12 companies from Ontario that came across.

In South Korea, we did a \$20-million deal with Dayli Partners. In India, we did the location of VVDN Technologies, creating 200-plus engineering jobs in Kitchener-Waterloo. That is the work that our valuable—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The next question.

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JOB CREATION

Mr. Mike Harris: My question is also to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Minister, last Friday, Stats Canada released their monthly labour force survey. This survey provides Canada with facts and figures about job creation, labour force trends and province-specific employment metrics. Many other provinces experienced stagnant or negative growth, and overall the country lost 71,000 jobs. However, the story in Ontario looked much different.

Can the minister provide this House with an update on November's jobs report and how Ontario has shown such strong growth?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: As the member from Kitchener-Conestoga mentioned, Canada lost nearly 71,000 jobs in November. However, Speaker, as you've heard, we are pleased to report that, here in Ontario, our businesses created 15,400 new jobs. Our plan to attract investment, encourage innovation and grow small business is working, and every day our government will continue our work to create the right environment for job creators and make Ontario the economic engine of Canada.

We are seeing growth and prosperity, and continue to lead the nation in job creation, and we're very pleased to say that since taking office in 2018, businesses have responded to our government's new policies and have created 271,600 jobs for the people and families of Ontario.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Minister. It's great to hear that thousands of women and men have been provided an opportunity to go to work every day because of our government's swift action on making Ontario open for business and open for jobs. More people working means more opportunity and more prosperity.

I'm happy to see that we have a government and a minister committed to restoring Ontario's competitiveness in creating good jobs for the people of Ontario. I know the minister has been hard at work reducing the cost of doing business and facilitating the right environment for businesses to thrive.

Can the minister please provide more detail about what specific actions have been taken to make Ontario open for business and open for jobs?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Since taking office, our government has lowered the cost of doing business by over \$5

billion, and we have saved the business community hundreds of millions more through our efforts to reduce red tape. We have shown leadership in prioritizing the province's role in trade and investment, given that we live in a globally competitive world.

Speaker, it's these actions and much more that are the reason why businesses have such a renewed confidence in Ontario. In fact, since taking office in 2018, we're proud to say that our government helped create 85,000 self-employed positions in the province of Ontario. That's the confidence that the business community has in the work that our government is doing. We will continue our efforts to create the right conditions for growth, and send the message to job creators that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ian Arthur: Speaker, through you to the Premier: Our health care system is in desperate need of investment, and people are falling through the cracks. Rural and small-town Ontario are some of the hardest-hit by these gaps in care. There are nearly 100 elderly patients in Trenton who need dialysis treatment. Currently, they have to drive long distances to towns like Belleville or my riding of Kingston for the care they need, because the government will not fund a local dialysis unit in Trenton Memorial Hospital. Even worse, patients who are not able to drive safely end up skipping treatment because of the difficulties associated with making that trip.

Why does the Premier think it's acceptable for these patients to drive long distances to receive the care that they so desperately need?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for that important question. I want to commend the Minister of Health for her excellent work. She is working hard every single day to make sure that we can transform our health care system to be patient-centred.

We know that there are certain hospitals that need additional support during the year, and that's why our government is investing \$384 million in our hospital sector and \$68 million to support small and medium-sized hospitals.

We have developed a comprehensive, four-pillar plan to address hallway health care. Issues such as dialysis are also being addressed. We want to keep Ontarians healthy and out of hospitals through health promotional initiatives. We know that hospitals aren't always the best place for patients to receive care.

In my Ministry of Long-Term Care, we are working hard every day to make sure we expand capacity and improve access.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you, Speaker, and through you again to the Premier: If dialysis was being addressed, I would not be standing here having to ask this question right now. Trenton's health care advocates have had to

fight for the care they deserve under this government, just like they did under the last Liberal government.

It's been over a year since the Minister of Health promised to help Trenton Memorial Hospital get a dialysis unit so that elderly patients don't have to make the difficult trip to another city to receive treatment. But no help has come, Speaker. The health minister loves to talk about patient-centred care—we heard it again from the deputy minister—but I'd like to remind her that patient-centred-care programs mean not forcing those very patients to go to other parts of Ontario to receive their treatment.

Will the Premier instruct the Minister of Health to follow through on her promises and fully fund a dialysis unit in Trenton?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Let me acknowledge the importance of dialysis for patients. This is a critical service, and I know our Minister of Health is working very hard to accomplish and create capacity within the system.

We have a tremendous plan for transformation. We know how important it is to all Ontarians, everywhere, for every specific need that they have. We are working on that as we speak, and the Minister of Health is doing an amazing job. We want an integrated health care system that is resident-centred, that provides care for people when they need it and where they need it.

As the Minister of Long-Term Care, I understand the importance of the integration of all the different levels of our care system. We are putting residents at the centre. We are putting long-term-care residents at the centre and patients at the centre. We are making a transformational difference in Ontario's health care system that will last for generations to come.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Vincent Ke: My question is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Speaker, constituents in my riding of Don Valley North continue to raise concerns with me about the ongoing struggles that so many Ontarians are facing as a result of mental health and addictions. I know the minister has been incredibly positive about Bill 116 and how this important piece of legislation would, if passed, relieve the many problems that Ontarians face when navigating the province's mental health and addictions system.

Minister, could you please explain how Bill 116 will assist Ontarians in locating the mental health and addictions services they need?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I want to thank the member from Don Valley North for that great question. As I've stated many times in the House, Ontario families have waited far too long to receive the services and supports they require to successfully overcome their mental health and addiction challenges.

I want to thank every member here today for voting unanimously during the second reading of Bill 116. This important piece of legislation lays the foundation that will ensure our historic investment of \$3.8 billion is invested

in a way that meets the needs of Ontarians across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen first-hand how our current system is not meeting the needs of Ontarians. We need to take action to address the extensive wait times, the barriers to access, the inconsistent quality, the lack of standardized data and widespread fragmentation that currently exist. Bill 116 is an important step toward doing this.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: I want to thank the minister for his response. Too many people and too many families continue to be impacted by mental health and addictions challenges each and every day across the province.

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I am proud to stand here knowing that our government will continue standing up for the people of Ontario, and continue working hard to ensure that all Ontarians can access mental health and addictions services and supports where and when they need them.

Minister, could you please explain how the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence will support our work in improving Ontario's mental health and addictions system?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I want to thank the member again for that great question.

Mr. Speaker, if Bill 116 should pass, it would deliver on a key recommendation of the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions in 2010. Bill 116 would address one of the committee's most significant recommendations, which called for the creation of a new umbrella organization to ensure that a single body is responsible for designing, managing and coordinating the mental health and addictions system. That is why Bill 116 proposes the establishment of the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence within Ontario Health. This centre would put into operation our \$3.8-billion mental health and addictions strategy and allow us to develop clinical, quality and service standards for mental health and addictions, and to monitor the performance of our system.

Ontarians have waited long enough to receive the mental health supports they require, and we're going to do something about that.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, my question is to the Premier.

Earlier today, Unifor and the Ontario Health Coalition released *Caring in Crisis*, yet another report detailing the shortage of personal support workers we have in the province. This widespread PSW shortage has also been recognized by the Ontario Long Term Care Association, AdvantAge Ontario, the Auditor General, health sector employers, and unions representing health care workers. But this government still doesn't seem to grasp the urgency of this issue.

When there are not enough PSWs, the consequences are felt throughout the health care system. It is our loved ones who feel the impacts when they miss a bath or when they're waiting hours to be toileted.

Will the Premier finally recognize that there is a critical shortage of caring PSWs in our health care system?

Hon. Paul Calandra: To the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for that very important question.

Our government understands the critical aspect of proper staffing for our long-term-care homes. I feel this personally; as a family member who has lived this with my own parent, I know how critical this is.

We want to make sure that the residents in long-term-care homes can get the care they need, and we've been working with the sector to understand the challenges that they've had in recruitment and retention of personal support workers.

We know that a robust workforce for our long-term-care system is absolutely essential, and sustainable long-term care is our goal. We know that we can create an efficient and effective use of Ontario's long-term-care workforce and improve working conditions to promote better retention and create better recruitment for personal support workers.

Thank you very much for that question. It's very important.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The personal support workers who are here with us today will share stories about how overwhelmed they are due to a staffing shortage first created under the Liberals, but maintained by this government.

Three years ago, the NDP introduced the Time to Care Act, which passed second reading with unanimous support prior to the election. The act would have established a minimum standard of four hours of care for long-term-care home residents. I reintroduced this bill again in July.

With the crisis of care in the long-term-care homes sector, will this government support my bill, end the staffing shortage in our long-term-care homes and properly fund the care that our seniors deserve?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: We want to ensure that we are providing important supports for staff in the long-term-care sector. That's why our government has been clear that we need to address issues surrounding staffing in the long-term-care sector, and that's why we announced that we'll be working to develop a comprehensive staffing strategy as we go forward.

We're working hard every day, not only looking forward at the capacity but dealing with the issues now. Our government currently provides funding for a number of staffing initiatives: \$4.1 million through the Personal Support Worker Education and Training Fund to deliver more training opportunities for front-line staff in long-term care to improve their staff's skills and retain a very valued workforce. We also have \$19.4 million to maintain direct-

care staffing levels in all long-term-care homes, and additional staffing support for small home operators. We want to build on these existing supports to help bring the long-term-care sector into the 21st century. We value the personal support workers who work every day.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Stan Cho: In the spring of this year, our government announced the creation of the Audit and Accountability Fund. For 15 years, the Liberals mismanaged Ontario's finances while piling on time-consuming administrative burdens and excessive red tape. This created a culture of inefficiency and waste which benefits no one. Our government was elected on the mandate to find efficiency, to do things differently, to do things better.

My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Could the honourable member please explain how the Audit and Accountability Fund builds on our government's commitment to find efficiencies and ensure that every taxpayer dollar is wisely spent?

Hon. Steve Clark: I would like to thank the member for Willowdale for that question. When we were elected, we knew that the status quo just wasn't working. There's only one taxpayer. The job of finding savings and protecting core services rests with every elected official in Ontario. We knew that more had to be done to ensure that our partners had the tools they needed to efficiently and effectively deliver services to the people across Ontario.

In response—the member is correct—our government created the Audit and Accountability Fund. We provided \$7.35 million for large municipalities to conduct line-by-line reviews. I'm proud to say that 100% of eligible municipalities took us up on that offer. We made it very clear that, together with our municipal partners, we are building Ontario together.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you to the minister for that response. It's not only important; it's encouraging to hear that our government is treating every taxpayer dollar with respect.

Speaker, I understand that many of these focused reviews of programs and services have been completed. Through you, could the minister please share with the House any examples of savings found through the first round of our government-funded Audit and Accountability Fund for municipalities?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, thank you for that supplementary question. I want to take this opportunity to highlight some of the savings that our municipal partners have found, thanks to the Audit and Accountability Fund. Last week, Mayor Tory announced that, thanks to their Ernst and Young audit, they found "tens of millions in savings." But, Mr. Speaker, that's not all. The city of Barrie identified over \$600,000 in annual savings; the city of London found \$167,000 in savings; and the city of Richmond Hill has identified savings up to a whopping \$3.77 million. But I'm still not done. Thunder Bay has found cost savings of at least \$8 million.

That's why I was so proud to announce, a few weeks ago, that we are extending the Audit and Accountability Fund for another three years: because we're committed to respecting taxpayers' dollars, keeping taxes low and making life more affordable—

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

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Highway conditions in northern Ontario with winter road maintenance are getting worse every day. Just last week sometime, Gord and Nancy Hopcraft were going from Timmins to Sudbury on Highway 144. Imagine their surprise—which is no longer a surprise—when they get past the watershed and there's a 10-kilometre section that has not even been plowed. They were held up on the highway for a couple of hours, trying to get through this particularly bad stretch of highway.

Minister, what are you going to do to make sure that people like Gord and Nancy don't get stranded in the middle of Highway 144, or anywhere else across Northern Ontario, in such circumstances?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'm very sorry to hear that Gord and Nancy experienced difficulties during our winter months. Obviously, across Ontario but especially in the north, winter conditions are difficult. The Ministry of Transportation is always working very hard to ensure the safety of our motorists and to make sure that we are clearing our roads as quickly as possible, for the safe passage of motorists but also for goods, which is so critical to our economy, Mr. Speaker.

Our government is working very hard to invest in winter road maintenance. We've invested millions of dollars more over the last few years and we are beating records to get to bare pavement.

Mr. Speaker, what I think Gord and Nancy should ask is why the NDP continually vote against measures that will help motorists in the north, like voting against the budget to ensure we're investing \$125 million in northern road maintenance. They're not doing it. They voted against it.

We are going to continue to do what we need to do and to find ways to improve our records, but people in the north should ask why the NDP—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of Transportation: What people want to know is why your government is not plowing roads.

Now, let me give you this story. You say in this House time and time again that you have an eight-hour circuit time when it comes to taking the snow off the roads. Gordon and Nancy got stuck the one day, in the afternoon. They went to do what they had to do in Sudbury. Guess what happened when they drove back to the same stretch of highway? It hadn't been plowed. It had been over 24 hours.

So my question is a very simple one: Why are you, as a government, not doing what needs to be done to make sure

that our highways are safe and people are not taking risks when it comes to travelling across northern Ontario?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to find ways to improve our records in the north. We are doing a good job, but we know that we can continue to do better to clear our roads more quickly.

We need to make sure we're investing in our northern roads, and that is what our government is doing, while members of the opposition vote against funds that will go to improving road conditions in the north—things like construction of Highway 11 from Highway 65 north to Highway 569 in the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane. They voted against that.

Mr. Speaker, they voted against rehabilitation to the Montreal River bridges along Highways 65 and 556, west and east of Matachewan. They voted against that.

They voted against rehabilitation of the Indian Point bridge, the Manitou River bridge and the Manitoulin Island bridge.

I could go on and on. It's clear that when we put forward measures that will help improve road conditions in the—

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

That concludes question period for today.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Brampton East has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kingston and the Islands has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Long-Term Care concerning dialysis treatment in Trenton, Ontario. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for London–Fanshawe has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Long-Term Care concerning the PSW shortage. This matter will be debated Wednesday at 6 p.m.

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Doug Downey: I would like to welcome a number of people here from the Law Society of Ontario: Malcolm Mercer, treasurer, Diana Miles and Sheena Weir; from Legal Aid Ontario Charles Harnick, David Field, Stanley Jenkins, Aileen Page, Keith Taller, Heather Morgan, Kathleen Murphy and Graeme Burk; and we're also

joined by Lindsay Jolie and Barbara McIntyre from Boost Child and Youth Advocacy Centre. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Welcome to Queen's Park.

I should point out that Charles Harnick is a former distinguished member of the Legislature and former Attorney General who served in the 35th and 36th Parliaments, if I'm not mistaken. Welcome.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's a real honour to introduce Nathan Skoufis today from my riding of Guelph. He's a member of Team Canada for martial arts. He has won 16 world titles, and he's also coach of the winter games junior team. I'd also like to welcome his mother, Sophie Skoufis, and his grandparents Ignatios and Marlene Nikolaidis. Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for your great work.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to welcome today Madame Helen Vari, her daughter Agnes Hilken, who likes to be called Aggie, her granddaughter Alexandra, or Alex, Hilken, and her niece Victoria DeLuca; as well as Stefánia Szabó, the former consul general for Hungary, Tudor Alexis, the consul general for France, and Kevin McGurgan, the consul general for the UK to Ontario. They're all here today to hear a tribute to the late George Vari.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE CANDLELIGHT STROLL

Mr. Wayne Gates: I would like to rise today and talk about one of the best Christmas traditions in all of Canada, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Candlelight Stroll. Every year, we begin at the courthouse, singing carols together before the town crier kicks off the event. We walk the historic streets of the old town together as a community. At each street corner, we see local residents singing and entertaining us. This year we had over 15 choirs and a group of magicians from across Niagara.

It's truly unique and truly special. This year was even more special and shows just how caring a community it is. This year, proceeds from the stroll went to a man named Delroy Castella. Delroy is from Jamaica and has been working on the local farms for over three decades. This year he suffered a stroke while working in the orchard and is still recovering from the results of that stroke. This year's proceeds are going to Delroy and his family to cover the costs of travel not covered by either Jamaica or our government and the expensive costs of rehabilitation.

He is just one of the many workers who come from around the world to make Niagara-on-the-Lake and our agricultural industry work. Delroy's situation is one that shows us that our community depends on many people, both local and from afar, to be the community we love. Watching our community come together to raise money for Delroy is such an incredible example of what Christmas is all about and shows what I always say in this Legislature: There is no community that cares more about one another than Niagara.

I want to thank the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the chamber of commerce for making this event happen, and all the organizers and the volunteers for their incredible work. I want to thank Delroy for sharing his moving story and all the workers who join us and continue to come and work in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

I hope these are lessons we can carry on with us throughout the year.

I want to say to everybody here today, merry Christmas and happy new year.

TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: The month of January is proclaimed as Tamil Heritage Month in the province of Ontario. This is a recognition of the valuable contributions that Tamil Canadians have made to Ontario's social, economic, political and societal fabric, and the enrichment they bring to our culture through arts, food and the Tamil classical language.

The main festival during this month is Thai Pongal. This festival marks the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the Tamil calendar year. Thanks are given to nature, the sun and farm cattle for providing grain and harvest. A special dish of Pongal is made. You let this dish boil until it boils over the pot, in the belief that doing so will result in a bountiful year. Thai Pongal is also remarkable in showing how close Tamils were to nature.

I wish Iniya Thai Pongal Vazhthukkal to all the Tamils that are celebrating this wonderful festival.

At this time, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Honourable Minister Todd Smith, on behalf of Tamil people in Ontario, for moving the Tamil Heritage Month Act in this House in 2014.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Today, I rise to speak about a serious environmental issue in Windsor. On November 27, a dock collapsed at the former Revere Copper site, along the American side of the Detroit River. The site is now leased by Detroit Bulk Storage, a Canadian company, and it is believed that the collapse occurred after a large amount of aggregate was deposited on the dock, all of it spilling directly into the Detroit River. The spill is of great concern to me and to my constituents.

For many years, Revere Copper was involved with the processing of uranium for the manufacturing of nuclear weapons. There was also use of other dangerous chemicals, like beryllium and thorium. Aside from the contamination of the site itself, there is concern that the gravel spilled from the dock could possibly disrupt the sediment along the river's bottom. According to Dr. Ken Drouillard from the University of Windsor's Great Lakes Institute of Environmental Research, the sediment is "very highly contaminated" and contains toxic chemicals due to the heavy industry along the river—chemicals like mercury, PCBs, lead and nickel.

On Friday, I sent a letter to both the Premier and the Minister of the Environment, asking that they fully support

any effort to investigate the impact of the spill. We need to ensure the health and safety of not only our environment and local species, but also the drinking water supply that both Canadian and American citizens rely on.

This Conservative government has continued to fail Ontarians when it comes to the environment. Now is the opportunity to show some leadership. Please co-operate with our partners at the federal and international levels and clean up this mess.

ZONTA CLUB OF OAKVILLE

Mr. Stephen Crawford: As always, it's an honour to be able to speak here in the Legislature. This afternoon, I have the pleasure to speak about a noteworthy event that took place in my riding of Oakville just last Friday.

This past Friday, as we all know, was the 30th anniversary of the tragedy of the Montreal massacre at École Polytechnique. That is why the Zonta Club of Oakville, a branch of Zonta International, a global organization of professionals aimed at empowering women worldwide, held a walking demonstration on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. I want to congratulate the Zonta Club of Oakville for raising public awareness, making a statement against gender-based violence, and empowering girls and women right here in our community and worldwide. I'd also like to extend congratulations to Zonta International for their 100th year.

As a parent of four daughters, I know I want them to have the same opportunities as boys in their classes do. I am thankful that, in Canada, my girls can aspire to and achieve anything they set their mind to. I certainly want all girls and women to have the same opportunities. That's why I'm proud to be part of this government that is investing more than \$166 million in supports for survivors and violence prevention initiatives.

As we get closer to the new year, I want to extend an invitation to attend the Zonta Club of Oakville celebration for International Women's Day on Tuesday, March 3, 2020. This event will raise money for the Oakville Hospital Foundation, Zonta Club of Oakville and Zonta International. I look forward to attending and encourage all of my legislative colleagues to attend as well.

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LIGHTS AND SIRENS TOY DRIVE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The holiday season is officially upon us. Last weekend, I was thrilled to attend Lights and Sirens, an annual toy drive sponsored by emergency service workers to support Life*Spin, a local non-profit organization which provides toys to low-income families with their Christmas sponsorship program.

London's fire department generously opened its doors to host the Christmas event, and local paramedics, police officers and other emergency workers partnered with Life*Spin to make Lights and Sirens a success. Kids got an up-close and personal look at the fire trucks on display,

and Santa and Mrs. Claus even took time out of their busy schedules to pose for pictures.

Through Life*Spin's sponsorship program, 1,400 London families with around 3,000 children will have gifts to unwrap on Christmas morning.

Life*Spin is an incredible organization that assists and empowers low-income Londoners. Life*Spin was started as a charity in 1989 by a group of single mothers seeking to eliminate poverty in our city. Their work has grown since then to include legal and housing supports, the Old East Common community garden, a free store, and yes, ensuring that Londoners can enjoy Christmas, regardless of their income.

I'm proud that London is such a giving community, and I want to thank Jackie Thompson, Life*Spin, London's emergency workers and everyone else who is giving generously this holiday season.

Merry Christmas and happy holidays.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Since the government started its attack on college and university services, thousands of University of Guelph students and students from other campuses have sent me petition signatures against the so-called Student Choice Initiative. They've told me that defunding student media, campus food banks, and social justice groups is a recipe for worsening the student experience and undoing efforts to make campus life safe and equitable.

These services promote the quality of campus life and reflect student democracy. For example, both CFRU 93.3 FM and the Ontario at the University of Guelph not only provide local and campus news, but are sources for training and real-life work experience for students. These services play an important role in life on campus and in our communities—a role I hope they can continue to play.

The courts have recently confirmed that the government's so-called Student Choice Initiative threatens academic freedom and autonomy, and I agree. Students in my riding have reached out to me and have asked me to ask the government to listen to them, to listen to the courts and to not appeal this ruling.

BROTECH PRECISION

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I would like to highlight one company called Brotech Precision, a company that's in my riding of Barrie–Innisfil. It was established in 1995. Brotech now serves the nuclear, aerospace, defence, medical, oil and gas, and automotive industries. It employs 60 people in my riding, and its products are globally exported.

Brotech has a critical role to play in the Bruce Power Life-Extension Program, Canada's largest infrastructure program, and contributes to Ontario's health care system as a crucial supplier of cobalt-60 capsules, an isotope which is used to sterilize over 40% of the world's single-use medical devices.

Brotech, through the Bruce Power Life-Extension Program, will contribute 1,028 assemblies per unit, for a total

of 6,168 over the life of the project, which will assure the production of clean, reliable, low-cost electricity and life-saving isotopes through 2064. This program will deliver significant economic benefits to Ontario by creating and sustaining over 22,000 jobs and injecting \$4 billion into Ontario's economy annually.

I am proud of the work that Brotech is doing and of their support for the Bruce Power nuclear plant, as it has enabled them to make sure that they expand operations and create new jobs in Barrie–Innisfil.

SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS DINNER

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: In my riding of St. Catharines, the fabric that ties together businesses and social justice is tied together by the very same string. We are a community that is at the front line for the struggles with mental health, affordability and addictions. So when Gord's Place restaurant in downtown St. Catharines closed its doors in June, it took a big chunk of our Christmas tradition with it. Over the last 12 years, Gord's Place kindly opened its doors for dinner—a free dinner on Christmas Day that many families count on each and every year. Except, something incredible happened—you could say, a Christmas miracle: In just three weeks, the community of St. Catharines rallied together to save this event.

This rebirth has been spearheaded by Wendi Duggan and Niagara United, a group that has fought for more mental health support and fought against a broken system and a government that too often forgets our region. It is the part of the Niagara community that always steps up to the plate and does its part.

The De Divitiis family have committed to doing the cooking, at 11 o'clock on Christmas Day, and the DSBN has provided the space at Harriet Tubman school.

We need one last push. Niagara United is only \$1,000 short of its GoFundMe goal. These volunteers and organizations are doing their part, so please join me today in donating and ensuring that we can continue the Christmas dinner tradition in St. Catharines—the dinner that will be served to anyone who would like to join. Please search “St. Catharines community Christmas dinner,” and let's help them reach their goal.

Thank you for such a great community that always seems to do more with less.

Merry Christmas.

FARM BOY

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Last week, on December 5, I had the honour to help with the official opening of a great business in Oakville North–Burlington. Farm Boy is a new grocery store that has just opened its 29th location at Dundas and Walkers Line in Burlington. It is truly an Ontario success story, with a great retail concept, providing the freshest of food products and excellent customer service. And it sources hundreds of products right here in Ontario. That's good for our Ontario farmers, good for consumers and good for the environment. The

new store will, as the president of Farm Boy has said, create between 130 and 150 local jobs.

Since taking office, our government has laid the economic foundation for the creation of more than 270,000 net new jobs in Ontario, and it is Ontario businesses like Farm Boy that are creating these new jobs.

I'm very proud that our government has sent a strong message that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs. Taxes for small businesses are down by 8.7%; WSIB premiums by 17%. We are cutting red tape and tackling unnecessary regulations.

Our government is committed to standing up for businesses like Farm Boy, to make sure that Ontario is a great place for them to invest and grow.

GEORGE VARI

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very honoured today to rise and give tribute to the Honourable George W. Vari. George was educated as a lawyer, economist and engineer. He came to Canada, and as a developer, he built projects around the world, most notably the 58-storey Tour Montparnasse in Paris, still the tallest building in Europe; six pavilions and the theatre for Expo 67 in Montreal; and the Hotel Cosmos in Moscow.

As well, George Vari created an outstanding record of philanthropic activity. "The world can only be saved by education" was his fundamental belief. Among countless charitable contributions, this passion for education and research led George and his darling wife, Helen, to become patrons of great institutions such as Vari Hall at York University, the George Vari Engineering and Computing Centre at Ryerson University, the Variscope scholarships at Victoria University and OISE at the University of Toronto, and the Vari laboratory at Princess Margaret hospital. And there are many more.

George had a strong belief in civic responsibility, and with this and his Canadian values, he was led to establish the George Vari Award for Good Citizenship at Ryerson University and the French-language bursary at the University of Waterloo—and I went to the University of Waterloo, and the French connection is through the fact that I'm parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Francophone Affairs, Caroline Mulroney.

In France, George and Helen Vari were pivotal in the restoration of the cathedral of Les Invalides in Paris. Following the 2001 hurricane that destroyed large sections of the historic forests in and around Paris, George donated 3,000 Canadian sugar maples to create the Canadian forest at the Château de Versailles and the Ontario forest in the Bois de Boulogne.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me a little extra time, because George Vari, as you can see, was a major contributor to our communities.

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In 1992, George was appointed a lifetime member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada. He received the Order of Canada, the Légion d'honneur from France and the Knighthood of St. Gregory from the Vatican. He was

awarded the commemorative medal celebrating Canada's 125th anniversary and was also a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal. He proudly accepted honorary doctorates from York and Ryerson universities.

His dear wife, Helen, is here with us today. She reminded me earlier that when they came from Hungary, they came with nothing, and Canada gave them everything.

I want to thank everybody who came down today. I introduced them during introduction of guests, but I want to thank them again.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And I wish to point out that a number of the members' statements this afternoon exceeded 90 seconds, on both sides of the House.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): 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 26, 2019, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (USE OF SECLUSION AND PHYSICAL RESTRAINTS), 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (RECOURS À L'ISOLEMENT ET À LA CONTENTION PHYSIQUE)

Mr. Coteau moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to the use of seclusion and physical restraints / *Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne le recours à l'isolement et à la contention physique.*

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Don Valley East care to explain his bill?

Mr. Michael Coteau: The safety of our children when they're in the classroom is incredibly important. Parents need to have confidence in the school system, that their kids will be receiving the appropriate care and that boards have parameters to follow.

This bill proposes straightforward measures to support students, teachers and parents, including mandatory written notice to parents or guardians related to any issue of restraint or seclusion and reporting to the Ministry of Education.

Better regulation in this area will enhance student safety, support teachers by providing clear direction and ensure that parents are properly informed.

I hope that all MPPs in this House will join me today in supporting this common sense change to the Education Act.

I would like to take just a moment to thank the two parents who worked with me to build this piece of legislation. I appreciate all of their help.

SMARTER AND STRONGER
JUSTICE ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 POUR UN SYSTÈME
JUDICIAIRE PLUS EFFICACE
ET PLUS SOLIDE

Mr. Downey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to enact the Legal Aid Services Act, 2019 and to make various amendments to other Acts dealing with the courts and other justice matters / Projet de loi 161, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2019 sur les services d'aide juridique et apportant diverses modifications à des lois traitant des tribunaux et d'autres questions relatives à la justice.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Attorney General care to explain his bill?

Hon. Doug Downey: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, to simplify a complex and outdated justice system. If passed, the bill would modernize and improve how legal aid services are delivered, how class actions are handled, how court processes are administered, and make life easier for Ontarians by paving the way to allow legal documents to be verified online.

By making common sense reforms, updating old laws and simplifying complex court processes, Ontario can support the growth of safer communities.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY
AND LOBBYIST
TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ
ENVERS LE PUBLIC ET
LA TRANSPARENCE DES LOBBYISTES

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 162, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, la Loi de 1998 sur l'enregistrement des lobbyistes, la Loi de 1994 sur l'intégrité des députés et la Loi de 2006 sur la fonction publique de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston to explain his bill.

Mr. Randy Hillier: In the interests of brevity, I'll summarize the explanatory note.

The short title is the Public Accountability and Lobbyist Transparency Act, 2019, which brings greater accountability to government and the public service and makes lobbyists' interactions with decision-makers transparent.

Also, under the current system, neither MPPs nor the public can bring a complaint against the actions of a member of the public service. It is a closed system where only public servants can register complaints against other public servants for violations of the Public Service of Ontario Act and only MPPs can register complaints against other MPPs for violations of the Members' Integrity Act.

This bill also defines a process for violations of wrongdoing under the Legislative Assembly Act, which at present are undefined, and allows for the commissioner to investigate complaints found to have merit and to provide the House with an opinion.

The bill also requires more detailed and timely reporting of lobbyists' and the principals of lobbyist firms' meetings with ministers, and also compels ministers to file reports of their meetings with the registrar.

The legislation would tighten up the required reporting mechanisms and increase penalties for those found to be non-compliant, while maintaining protection for whistle-blowers.

PETITIONS

DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Josée, Mike, Vanessa et David Morris, ainsi que Pauline et Laurier Chartrand, pour les pétitions.

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

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

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

« Alors que le ministère des Transports et le ministère de la Santé ont confirmé que le système informatique de

l'Ontario ne permet pas l'enregistrement des lettres avec des accents »;

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « qu'elle s'assure que les accents de la langue française » ainsi que la cédille et les trémas « soient inclus sur tous les documents et cartes émis par le gouvernement de l'Ontario avant le 31 décembre 2020. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et je vais demander à Emily de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

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FOOD SAFETY

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

“Whereas people who are on a farm without consent may not be aware that they can actually spread diseases and contaminants which can cause stress and harm to the animals;

“Whereas many farmers across Ontario are worried about trespassers putting their animals and the farmers' families at risk. For many farmers their home and their work is the same place and everyone has a right to feel safe in their own home;

“Whereas despite the right of people to participate in legal protests, it does not include the right to trespass on private property, to make farmers feel unsafe in their homes or to risk introducing disease or contaminants to our animals or food supply;

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to protect farmers, their animals, livestock transporters, and the integrity of Ontario's food supply, while also ensuring that farmers feel safe in their homes and at the workplace by maintaining animal health and safety by immediately passing Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers.”

I fully endorse this petition and will sign it and give it to page Laura.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I have a petition here.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a

legislated minimum care standard to provide an average of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it with page Alexandra to bring to the table.

REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Mr. Roman Baber: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas given the changes to the real estate industry, technology and regulatory practices over the last two decades, it is essential that the rules for real estate brokerages and professionals reflect contemporary business practices;

“Whereas consumer protection, increased professionalism, efficient and effective regulation, strong business environment and reducing red tape and regulatory burden on businesses are key to the well-being of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas for years Ontario realtors have advocated for higher professional standards, stronger consumer protections and better enforcement of the rules governing real estate practices;

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to increase consumer confidence, enhance standards for real estate professionals and brokerages and provide additional flexibility to keep pace with a modern marketplace by immediately passing Bill 145, An Act to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, so that:

“(1) The act is renamed the Trust in Real Estate Services Act,” 2019;

“(2) Abolishes the appeals committee and provides for appeals from decisions of the discipline committee to instead be handled by the Licence Appeal Tribunal;

“(3) Create a new exemption in respect of personal real estate corporations and prescribe members of such corporations, however this exemption be subject to certain conditions;

“(4) The discipline committee's jurisdiction is broadened beyond the code of ethics under the act to include determining whether a registrant has contravened any provisions of the act itself or other regulations under the act. The discipline committee is also given authority to make orders applying conditions to, suspending or revoking registration.”

I support this petition, I've affixed my name to it, and I'll hand it over to page Isabella.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled “Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, states that ‘every room where food is prepared, processed, packaged, served, transported, manufactured, handled, sold, offered for sale or displayed shall be kept free from live birds or animals’; and

“Whereas low-risk food premises serving only beverages and/or only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods have for many years in this province allowed customers to be accompanied by their pet dogs for their convenience and social benefit; and

“Whereas the decision whether or not to allow dogs on site should be driven by the business needs of such premises, so long as sanitary and safe conditions are upheld;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create an exception to Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, for low-risk food premises serving only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods, for the benefit of all Ontario pet owners and the businesses that serve them.”

I approve of this petition, will sign it and give it to Augustine.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Jessica Bell: This petition is called “Stop Cuts to Psychotherapy. Preserve Quality Mental Health Care.

“Whereas intensive psychotherapy has for decades been a standard clinical treatment for Ontarians suffering from complex mental conditions and trauma that is not responsive to less-intensive treatments;

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) recommends that the Appropriateness Working Group limit outpatient psychotherapy delivered by a physician to 24 hours per year to ostensibly save \$13.2 million, with a final decision required by January 31, 2020...;

“Whereas the threat of a flat funding cap has created tremendous fear in psychotherapy patients who cannot afford to purchase the treatment they require; and the loss of funding for intensive therapy will harm vulnerable citizens who deserve and need quality mental health care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately remove the proposal to cut psychotherapy funding from the Appropriateness Working Group negotiations.”

I support this petition, I’ll be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Leela.

REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jane McKenna: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas given the changes to the real estate industry, technology and regulatory practices over the last two decades, it is essential that the rules for real estate brokerages and professionals reflect contemporary business practices;

“Whereas consumer protection, increased professionalism, efficient and effective regulations, strong business environment and reducing red tape and regulatory burden on businesses are key to the well-being of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas for years Ontario realtors have advocated for higher professional standards, stronger consumer protections and better enforcement of the rules governing real estate practices;

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to increase consumer confidence, enhance standards for real estate professionals and brokerages and provide additional flexibility to keep pace with a modern marketplace by immediately passing Bill 145, An Act to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, so that:

“(1) The act is renamed the Trust in Real Estate Services Act, 2002;

“(2) Abolishes the appeals committee and provide for appeals from decisions of the discipline committee to instead be handled by the Licence Appeal Tribunal;

“(3) Create a new exemption in respect of personal real estate corporations and prescribe members of such corporations, however this exemption be subject to prescribed conditions;

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“(4) The discipline committee’s jurisdiction is broadened beyond the code of ethics under the act to include determining whether a registrant has contravened any provisions of the act itself or other regulations under the act. The discipline committee is also given authority to make orders applying conditions to, suspending or revoking a registration.”

Speaker, I sign this petition and I send it to the table with Mathias.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's a very important petition. It's called "Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government remains focused on reaching agreements with education labour unions to provide parents with predictability, certainty, and peace of mind over the coming year; and

"Whereas the government has demonstrated that it has been a constructive force at the bargaining table by reaching a voluntary agreement with the Canadian Union of Public Employees; and

"Whereas the government remains available 24/7 to negotiate deals in good faith with education labour partners that support the needs of students and keep them in a positive learning environment throughout the year; and

"Whereas labour partners have engaged in job action under each government for the past 30 years; and

"Whereas labour partners continue to escalate ... strike action despite the government continuing to make reasonable and expanded offers to education labour partners; and

"Whereas strike action caused by unions could mean school closures, disruption and uncertainty to students and parents;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government to continue bargaining in good faith with its labour partners to reach deals that keep kids in class, where they belong."

I will sign this petition and hand it to page Luba.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier M. Émile Prud'homme de Val Therese dans mon comté pour la pétition qui s'intitule « Temps pour les soins.

« Alors que des soins de qualité pour les 78 000 résidents des maisons de SLD est une priorité pour les familles de l'Ontario; et

« Alors que le gouvernement provincial ne fournit pas un financement adéquat pour assurer un niveau de soins et de personnels dans les foyers de SLD afin de répondre à l'augmentation de l'acuité des résidents et du nombre croissant de résidents » avec « des comportements complexes; et

« Alors que plusieurs enquêtes du coroner de l'Ontario sur les décès dans les maisons de SLD ont recommandé une augmentation des soins pour les résidents » et résidentes « et des niveaux du personnel. Les études des normes minimales de soins recommandent 4,1 heures de soins directs par jour. »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de « modifier la Loi sur les foyers de SLD (2007) pour un minimum de quatre heures par résident par jour, ajusté pour le niveau d'acuité et la répartition des cas. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer, et je demande à Emily de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

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

"Whereas Ontario has more than 380,000 regulations across all legislation governing aspects of life in Ontario;

"Whereas the excessive regulatory environment in the province of Ontario has contributed to create a negative competitive environment for both business and personal growth in the province of Ontario for the 15 years prior to the election of the current Doug Ford-led government;

"Whereas many pieces of legislation and their corresponding regulations were introduced in the province of Ontario prior to the introduction of the Internet, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union;

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

"Begin the process of modernizing the regulatory environment in Ontario by immediately passing Bill 132, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking various Regulations, so that:

"(1) The Local Planning Appeal Support Centre is dissolved and the accompanying Local Planning Appeal Support Centre Act is repealed;

"(2) Amend the Livestock and Livestock Products Act to repeal provisions relating to the Livestock Medicines Advisory Committee;

"(3) Amend the Environmental Protection Act respecting administrative penalties;

“(4) The requirement in the Ontario Drug Benefit Act that the executive officer prepare an annual report is repealed, retroactive to April 1, 2016;

“(5) The Livestock Medicines Act is amended to repeal provisions relating to the Livestock Medicines Advisory Committee;

“(6) The Farm Products Grades and Sales Act is repealed and makes a consequential amendment to the Farm Products Payments Act.”

I completely support this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Ally.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The time for petitions is over.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLAN TO BUILD ONTARIO TOGETHER ACT, 2019

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

Mr. Phillips moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Rod Phillips: It's my pleasure to stand today in the House for the third reading of Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. As you know, Madam Speaker, I stood in this House on November 6 to present our plan to build Ontario together, a balanced and prudent plan. It's a plan to help the people of Ontario by making life more affordable, preparing people for jobs, creating a more competitive business environment, connecting people to places, building healthier and safer communities, and making government smarter.

Over 16 months ago, the people of this province were struggling. They were squeezed by high gas prices, more taxes and higher costs of living. They were working harder, paying more and getting less. In response, our government, under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, unveiled a bold new vision for the province, and the people of Ontario bought in. We promised to build a future with them where they would not only work to make ends meet, but where their government helped enable a better quality of life and a higher standard of living for all of its citizens.

The plan is a continuation of our efforts over the past 16 months to build a future for Ontarians where they could get ahead and where they could prosper. It's a plan to create a business environment that attracts investment and encourages entrepreneurs and risk-takers to grow their businesses and create high-paying, good-quality jobs.

Ontario is a province of tremendous opportunity. As you know, our fall economic statement included an update to the fiscal plan outlined in the 2019 Ontario budget. In

November, I was proud to announce that our government is on track to beat our deficit target for 2019-20 by \$1.3 billion, reducing the projected deficit to \$9 billion from the \$10.3-billion outlook presented in the 2019 budget. That's with an additional \$1.3-billion investment in our critical public services.

Our government remains committed to helping the people of Ontario by creating a more competitive business environment. We're creating the conditions needed to attract investment, encourage entrepreneurs and risk-takers to grow their businesses and create high-paying, good-quality jobs. To achieve this, we're reducing taxes and eliminating outdated and duplicative regulations, while making sure important health, safety and environmental protections are maintained and enhanced.

This includes creating a more competitive business environment for small businesses in the province. The importance of small businesses to our economy cannot be overstated. Small businesses makes up almost 98% of all businesses in our province and over one third of all private sector jobs. To help small businesses succeed, we're proposing in Bill 138 to reduce the corporate tax rate for small businesses by 8.7%. This measure, if passed, would provide tax relief of up to \$1,500 annually to over 275,000 businesses that benefit from the small business corporate income tax rate, from family-owned shops to innovative start-ups.

This measure will benefit small businesses across sectors and industries, like the family-owned business Salon 247 in Brampton, which I visited with the member from Brampton West and the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction a few weeks ago. This was just a typical example of the kind of entrepreneurs that we have in Ontario. The husband of the lady who owned the salon was also an entrepreneur; he owned a body shop. So we're helping families as we help businesses create jobs and create opportunity.

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Overall, Ontario's small businesses would save \$2.3 billion in 2020 through the actions this government is taking, such as cancelling the cap-and-trade carbon tax, supporting WSIB premium reductions and delivering Ontario corporate income tax relief, among other actions.

Madam Speaker, we know that there are more things that can be done to improve Ontario's business climate. That's why we're consulting with industry and business leaders to better identify the needs of small businesses and to inform our Small Business Success Strategy.

We're also proposing to form the Premier's Advisory Council on Competitiveness. This group will consult with business leaders and private sector workers, and leverage lessons from other jurisdictions to improve Ontario's competitiveness.

Our plan has seen great success, with over 250,000 new jobs created since we took office. We look forward to continuing to create a more competitive business environment to further empower Ontario's risk-takers and entrepreneurs to succeed.

Madam Speaker, as outlined in the fall economic statement, our government also has a plan to make life

more affordable for families and individuals in the province. We heard loud and clear that people are tired of paying more and getting less. That is why we're working to put more money back in people's pockets. To do that, we're reducing taxes, tackling the rising costs of housing and energy, lowering fees and improving services to allow parents to spend more time with their children, young people to save more for their future, and for everyone to stretch their household budgets further. Putting more money into people's pockets will help families and individuals live the lives they've earned and deserve.

Our plan is to make life easier in all parts of the province, including our north. We recognize that the region of northern Ontario has unique challenges and opportunities. Our government understands that living in northern Ontario can bring with it a higher cost of living, in part due to greater reliance on air travel and air freight. We want to help both businesses and families succeed in our north. We want to enable a better quality of life and a higher standard of living. We believe the best way to help people do this is to reduce taxes.

That is why our government's plan is proposing to help reduce the cost of living in the region by cutting the aviation fuel tax rate. Amendments to the Gasoline Tax Act, as proposed in Bill 138, would reduce the aviation fuel tax rate in the north to 2.7 cents per litre from 6.7 cents per litre. This would begin on January 1, 2020, and would return the aviation fuel tax rate in the north to what it was in 2014. It would apply to aviation fuel purchases in the districts of Algoma, Cochrane, Kenora, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Parry Sound, Rainy River, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Timiskaming, helping to bring down the cost of groceries and other basic necessities for northerners, which could save a family in the north about \$230 per year. It will also help provide more affordable air travel for those visiting loved ones or pursuing new job opportunities, saving frequent air travellers up to \$135 a year.

Making life more affordable for people across Ontario is not about grand gestures, but rather practical and meaningful actions that make life easier for everyone. That is why our government brought in Ontario's low-income tax credit. It's one of the most progressive tax breaks in a generation, benefiting 1.1 million Ontarians by providing up to \$850 in relief a year.

In addition, we're providing 300,000 Ontario families an average of \$1,250 a year in tax relief and letting parents choose the best child care options for their family through Ontario's child care tax credit, and this is on top of the \$1-billion commitment we've made to create 30,000 new child care spaces.

Our government is also making life easier for families by letting kids ride on the GO trains and buses for free.

We're cutting post-secondary tuition rates by 10% this year and freezing tuition rates next year to keep more money in the pockets of Ontario students and their families.

We're helping 100,000 low-income seniors in this province by providing them with access to publicly funded dental care.

Once again, Madam Speaker, in total, our package to make life more affordable is putting \$3 billion back in people's pockets next year.

I'm grateful for the opportunity today to speak about the government's plan to build Ontario together. As we move forward, we'll continue to balance the priorities the people of Ontario expect of us. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the members on both sides who contributed to the discussion so far and at committee, and the work of the public service in preparing this bill.

We, as a government, want to make sure that we put more money back into people's pockets. We will continue to invest in critical services and we will return our books to balance. We are respecting taxpayers' dollars and delivering on our government's commitment to make life more affordable, creating a stronger fiscal foundation, providing provincial services and greater opportunities that will benefit us all today and for generations to come in the future.

That is why I will ask all members of this House to support this bill.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: It's my pleasure to stand today in the House for third reading of Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act, 2019.

I stood in this House on November 6 alongside the Minister of Finance to speak to this bill, and I listened to the feedback we received on the bill from members of the public at the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. I'm pleased once again to spend a few moments today discussing the government's plan to build Ontario together.

It's a plan for the people of Ontario to make life more affordable, prepare people for jobs, create a more competitive business environment, connect people to places, build healthier and safer communities, and make government smarter. The plan is a continuation of this government's tireless efforts over the last 16 months to build a future for Ontarians where everyone has the opportunity to get ahead and to prosper.

Madam Speaker, we are already seeing the results of our efforts, but we know there is a lot more to be done. More Ontarians are working harder than ever before, and more Ontarians in general are working. On Friday, Statistics Canada released their November jobs report. We saw yet again that our government continues to deliver on its commitment to create and protect more good jobs. Since June 2018, 271,600 net new jobs have been created in Ontario, with the vast majority of these jobs in above-average-wage industries. Since June 2018, the unemployment rate has declined to 5.3%, near its historic low.

Our GDP continues to rise, averaging 0.5% growth over the last four quarters. This economic growth is expected to continue in the 2019 to 2022 period. Our conservative forecasts project Ontario's real GDP to grow by 1.4% in 2019, 1.5% in 2020, 1.5% in 2021 and 1.9% in 2022. And as was outlined in the 2019 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, this government is now projecting to

beat our deficit target for 2019-20 by \$1.3 billion, reducing the projected deficit to \$9 billion from the \$10.3-billion outlook presented in the 2019 budget. That is an additional \$1.3-billion investment in critical services like small and medium-sized hospitals, public health units, child care, and programs to help our most vulnerable.

Today I would like to remind this House of a few items in Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act, 2019, and explain how these proposed amendments will help our constituents.

One of the ways we are helping is by creating a more competitive business environment. We often hear from members of the opposition about how they would like to spend the hard-earned tax dollars of Ontario families. Every day, the members opposite suggest the government should be spending and spending more, but we often don't hear suggestions from the opposition on how the government might pay to keep even the public services Ontarians rely on today afloat, save for reaching deeper and deeper into the pockets of working-class families, or borrowing more and more money on the credit cards of future generations.

On the government side, we know that there is an essential link between a growing economy and our ability to invest in public services and supports for our most vulnerable. If our small businesses succeed, not only do we create jobs in our communities and boost economic output and prosperity across the province, but, critically, we increase revenue to the province to invest in public services. Members on all sides of the House agree that these services are worth protecting and worth investing in.

We saw exactly that this year. The government was able to beat its deficit target by \$1.3 billion and invest an additional \$1.3 billion in programs and services because our economy was stronger. The government brought in more revenue, not through raising taxes on families, but by setting our businesses up to succeed and to prosper.

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We are creating a business environment that attracts investment and encourages entrepreneurs and risk-takers to grow their businesses and create high-paying, good-quality jobs. We are creating the conditions for success and prosperity, not by increasing taxes, as the opposition proposes, but by reducing taxes and eliminating outdated and duplicative regulations, all the while making sure that important health, safety and environmental protections are maintained or enhanced.

This plan includes creating a more competitive business environment for small businesses in the province. There are currently more than 470,000 small businesses in Ontario—almost 98% of all businesses in our province, making up a third of all private sector jobs. Their importance to our economy cannot be overstated. When our small businesses thrive, we all prosper.

We are proposing in Bill 138 to reduce the corporate income tax rate for small businesses to 3.2%, from 3.5%. This reduction would apply to eligible income starting on January 1, 2020. This move will fulfill our government's commitment to cut the Ontario small business tax rate by

8.7%. This measure, if passed, would provide tax relief of up to \$1,500 annually to over 275,000 businesses that benefit from the small business corporate income tax rate—from family-owned shops to innovative start-ups.

Speaker, I think it's important to recognize how much of a difference this tax relief makes. In my community of Willowdale, I often hear from small business owners who are struggling. Their cost of doing business has exploded over the last decade and a half. These are hard-working people who, when sales are down or their roof starts to leak, go home without a paycheque so that they can pay their employees. These are not multi-millionaires. In question period today, we heard members of the opposition suggest that this tax cut would favour multi-millionaires or large corporations, and that's simply not the case. Behind every business in Willowdale is a hard-working family. This is who we're trying to help: the job creators, the small business owners, the new Canadians, the people who understand the value of a dollar and who often put their employees before themselves.

Overall, Ontario's small businesses would save \$2.3 billion in 2020 through actions the government is taking, such as cancelling the cap-and-trade carbon tax, keeping the minimum wage at \$14 an hour, supporting Workplace Safety and Insurance Board premium reductions, and delivering Ontario corporate income tax relief.

We are also proposing other amendments in Bill 138 to attract new investment and create a more competitive business environment for businesses of all sizes in Ontario.

We are proposing to make amendments to the Co-operative Corporations Act to modernize this legislation, find efficiencies and cut red tape for the co-op sector. Let me quickly run through our proposed amendments of this act.

We are proposing to remove barriers to co-ops' growth and expansion by eliminating the 50% rule, which would allow most co-ops to conduct more than 50% of their business with non-members. Co-ops would be allowed to specify their own limit on non-member business in their articles or bylaws; otherwise, a default 50% requirement would apply if no threshold is set in the articles or bylaws. The existing 50% rule would be maintained for non-profit housing co-ops and would be increased for worker co-ops, as these stakeholders have indicated that the minimum threshold serves an important role in ensuring services are available for their members.

In order to help reduce the regulatory burden, the proposed amendments would also broaden the circumstances under which co-ops may be exempted from audit requirements. Co-ops would be exempt if all members and shareholders consent in writing or if the members and shareholders authorize a special resolution approving the exemption.

We believe that these proposed amendments would support the government's commitment made in the 2019 budget to undertake a legislative review of the act and propose changes to modernize the legislation, find efficiencies and cut red tape for the co-op sector.

Bill 138 also proposes to make several amendments to the Securities Act. These amendments would reduce the

regulatory burden on market participants and the Ontario Securities Commission and are in keeping with our government's commitment to cut red tape and support a healthy financial services sector. The proposed amendments would streamline Ontario's financial services legislation and regulations and would support this government's capital markets plan as announced in the 2019 budget.

Madam Speaker, we are taking further steps to reduce the regulatory burden on Ontario businesses.

Bill 138 includes an amendment to repeal the Toronto Stock Exchange Act, which would reduce the regulatory burden on the Toronto Stock Exchange, or TSX. This proposed amendment is consistent with our government's commitment to cut red tape and support a healthy financial services sector. The proposed repeal of the act would remove restrictive, burdensome or redundant requirements that only apply to the TSX and not its competitors. I say "redundant" because the act has been superseded by the regulatory requirements in the Ontario Business Corporations Act, the Securities Act, the OSC rules governing marketplace operation, and the terms and conditions of the OSC's recognition order for the TSX. The repeal of this act would support this government's capital markets plan to reduce regulatory burden and remove duplicative and unnecessary regulation.

Bill 138 also includes amendments to the Financial Professionals Title Protection Act, 2019. These proposed amendments would provide the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario, or FSRA, with rule-making authority in relation to exemptions and transitional matters. The purpose of these proposed amendments is to streamline and create efficiencies in the administration of the title protection framework, thereby streamlining the creation of the framework.

The Lieutenant Governor in Council, or LGIC, currently has regulation-making authority respecting transitional matters. These matters include the treatment under the act of credentials and other qualifications possessed by individuals before the act's prohibitions related to the use of the "financial adviser" and "financial planner" titles come into force. The LGIC also has the authority to exempt individuals from the prohibitions against using the "financial planner" or "financial adviser" titles once the act is in force. The proposed amendments would provide FSRA with rule-making authority related to transitional matters and exemptions. But it's worth noting, Madam Speaker, that the government would retain the ability to override any FSRA rule with an LGIC regulation.

These amendments are part of our government's efforts to deliver regulatory services more effectively, reduce regulatory burden, foster a strong and competitive financial services sector, and ensure high standards of business conduct while also protecting the rights and interests of consumers, investors and pension plan beneficiaries. These are not multi-million dollar corporations the financial services sector is representing. It is the hard-working people of this province, who deserve to have their money protected when they retire.

Speaker, as always, I'm honoured to stand in the House and grateful for the opportunity again today to speak about just a few of the amendments proposed in Bill 138 and how they will help businesses and families across Ontario.

These amendments are part of our balanced and prudent plan to put more money into the pockets of families and individuals in every corner of this province, putting more money into people's pockets to help families and individuals live the lives they deserve. We are respecting taxpayer dollars and delivering on the government's commitment to make life more affordable, creating a stronger fiscal foundation, better provincial services and greater opportunities that will benefit all of us not just today but, perhaps more importantly, for generations to come—building Ontario together.

Madam Speaker, this is why I ask all members of this House to support Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act, 2019.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak on Bill 138, our government's Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. As a parent of five, the top three lessons I taught my five children were: always be respectful, be thankful for what you have, and honesty is the best policy.

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In the way of life skills, perhaps the most important skill we can teach is how to manage money. Budgeting, as we've all come to learn in our journey to adulthood, is the most basic tool of money management. Yet despite all that has changed since many of us were kids, today, 79% of parents report working to teach their children the same lessons they learned growing up, like learning to live within your means; essentially, spending less than or at least equal to, the money you bring in each month or year.

The idea of living within your means is not a partisan thing. It's a reality for all of us. Regardless of our income, human nature has always wanted more. That's why we're tempted by credit cards, loans and even emergency funds that allow us to buy more things than our income normally allows.

It's no different for government. Every individual and family in Ontario has to balance their books, and so too should the government. Yet successive governments have gotten in the habit of mortgaging our kids' and grandkids' future to keep the lights on today. That's exactly what the previous government did. During their 15 years in office, they drastically increased spending and doubled Ontario's debt. Thanks to the Liberals, Ontario now has twice the debt of California and more debt than Greece.

On your monthly credit card bill, if you spend more than you can afford to pay back, the result is interest—crippling interest that over time eats away at more and more of your disposable income. It's no different for the government. For 2019-20, the finance minister estimated that Ontario will pay nearly \$12.9 billion in interest payments; that's \$12.9 billion. That's 20% of the health care budget, almost half the education budget and over \$1

billion more than the province spends on post-secondary education and job training.

Our plan to balance the budget by 2023-24 is balanced and prudent and it allows us to invest now in vital public services, build for the future and get our fiscal house in order, Madam Speaker. As a result of our progress in reducing the deficit, our government is investing an additional—and I say “additional”—\$1.3 billion in critical public services like health care and education.

Madam Speaker, in just over two weeks it will be Christmas Day, and if you've turned on the television, radio, or opened your mailbox lately, you'll know that the season is in full swing.

There are many versions of the Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol* streaming on online services. You know the one, where the three ghosts haunt Ebenezer on Christmas Eve. This got me thinking of the ghosts of fall economic statements past. It was on November 26 that the finance minister said, “We worked with ... our major transfer partners—hospitals, schools, municipalities, colleges and universities ... to help them adjust to a 1% increase in funding—a big shift after years of increases averaging over 8% a year.” He went on to say, “We are capping their base funding for the next two years at the current year's level. This will continue to reduce the spending trend lines in these sectors, in line with our overall strategy for managing government spending.”

These were the words of Ontario's NDP finance minister, Floyd Laughren, back in 1992. Ironic, isn't it, that today's New Democrats oppose any government attempt to control spending, yet during their only term in government, the NDP actually cut health care funding through various measures?

Our Ontario PC Party campaigned in the 2018 election on making life more affordable, Madam Speaker, a theme that played front and centre in the recent federal campaign. Our government is helping 100,000 low-income seniors by providing them with access to publicly funded dental care. My office has already helped dozens of seniors complete their applications.

We're supporting children with autism by investing an additional \$278 million in the province's autism programs, bringing funding up to \$600 million annually, the most funding per capita anywhere in Canada. Madam Speaker, I've had reports from parents in my riding who have been stuck on the wait-list for three years, parents who just last week received their childhood budget cheques as a result of our government doubling autism funding.

We cut tuition fees by 10% this year for post-secondary students, and we're freezing tuition fees next year to keep more money in their pockets. Which brings me to the second ghost: This time, it's the ghost of budgets past. It was May 19, that, on education, the finance minister said, “My colleague the Minister of Colleges and Universities will announce the tuition fee increase for the ... academic year....” On the Ontario student loans program, OSAP, he said that since “the program will now involve more loans than grants, its future cost will be much more manageable and this will give us the ability to help more students.”

These are the words of Ontario NDP finance minister Floyd Laughren back in 1993.

Ironic, isn't it, that today the New Democrats oppose any government attempt to control spending, yet during their only term in government, the NDP raised college and university tuition rates several times, evolved the OSAP program to give more loans than grants and, of course, made life more unaffordable by raising taxes on the middle class.

While the NDP raised taxes and tuition rates, and cut funding to health care and education, I'm proud, Madam Speaker, that our government has cut tuition rates by 10% in the 2019-20 academic year and froze tuition fees for the 2020-21 school year. We're putting more money back in people's pockets while protecting the services Ontario values most.

Preparing people for jobs: Speaking of education, over the next five years one in five jobs will be in the skilled trades, and our government has a plan to ensure today's students have the skills needed to find good jobs in today's competitive global economy. Our plan includes reviewing our focus on science, technology, engineering and math, as well as the skilled trades, to help prepare students for successful careers; modernizing our skilled trades and apprenticeship system, including winding down the Ontario College of Trades; and reducing the regulatory burden to help create more opportunities for apprentices and employers.

As parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Labour, let me tell you, the momentum is building. The changes we're making to apprenticeship systems are making a huge difference. This is all good news for people in my riding of Burlington and across Ontario.

To keep communities safe, our government is working with our police to give them the tools and resources they need to put violent criminals behind bars, including investing \$3.9 billion over 10 years in justice infrastructure, including a new courthouse in Halton region.

We've also worked with the Ombudsman to propose three amendments to support child protection in Ontario that would:

- (1) allow service providers to disclose personal information to the Ombudsman to support investigation;
- (2) reduce the administrative burden for peace officers in child protection cases; and
- (3) support prosecution of child care operators in unlicensed residential settings.

We're also rolling out Ontario's first-ever climate change impact assessment, to seek the best science and information to better understand where the province is vulnerable and which regions and economic sectors are most likely to be impacted.

Madam Speaker, we need to do more to reduce waste and divert it from landfills, and public education is a key component. One of the ways our government is doing this is by recognizing an official day of action on litter. The first day of action will be May 12, 2020. In my riding of Burlington, I've implemented a free drop-off at my community office for rechargeable batteries, single-use

batteries and cellphones. So far, we have collected over 150 pounds of batteries and nearly 3,000 litres of household and aerosol paints.

Our government is also committed to delivering simpler, faster and better services. We're committed to building and renewing schools across Ontario to start addressing the school repair backlog that grew dramatically under the previous Liberal government. Here in Burlington we've already received approval to tender a \$15-million addition to Nelson High School and a \$1-million retrofit to Frontenac Public School. Having toured Nelson school recently—this addition will provide new specialty classrooms, a new library, and support students with better learning spaces.

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We're improving highways, including expanding an 18-kilometre stretch of Highway 401 from Mississauga to Milton, and we're moving forward on building a twin structure for the Garden City Skyway on the QEW in St. Catharines.

We're also modernizing GO Transit by moving forward with the GO rail expansion program to provide two-way, all-day service every 15 minutes on the network's core segments. This is good news for the people of Burlington and everyone served by the Lakeshore West line, which includes me.

Finally, I want to talk about how our government's plan to build Ontario together means changing the culture of government. Inefficient and outdated processes mean the government cannot easily respond to the needs of people in a timely and cost-effective way. That's why we're looking to find ways to spend more efficiently while ensuring value for every taxpayer dollar.

To help protect the services we all value, our government passed Bill 124, the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act. Bill 124 will help ensure that increases to public sector compensation reflect the fiscal situation of the province, and protect the sustainability of public services.

Since we're talking about wages, it's important to correct the record to clarify the false claims by the NDP that our government has given—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm going to ask the member from Burlington to withdraw.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I withdraw.

The 14% increase was actually a series of raises going back to 2016 and put in motion by the former Wynne government.

Thankfully, Bill 124 limits salary increases to 1% for all employees.

That brings me to my final ghost, of economic statements past.

It was November 26, and in response to the finance minister's economic update, the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet said, "The government will also seek a wage freeze when bargaining with the public service professional associations."

Eight months later, the finance minister said, "The schools sector has 180,000 teaching and non-teaching

employees.... In the framework covering teaching and professional staff, the parties found savings by agreeing" to reduce "by 4.7%, or about 6,000 fewer teachers to be hired ... a major and permanent cost efficiency."

It was 1992, and those were the words of the NDP finance minister who ushered in the social contract.

Ironic, isn't it, that today New Democrats oppose any government attempt to control spending, yet during their only term in government, the NDP ripped up collective agreements, implemented a wage freeze, cut 6,000 teachers, and forced nurses, educators and other public servants to take 12 unpaid days off every year for three years. If we look back to the only time the New Democrats had the privilege of governing this province, there were 125,000 full-time jobs lost, 1.2 million people were on social assistance, we had the highest personal taxes in North America, and they doubled the debt—something they have in common with the Liberals.

Since 2018, we've seen 271,600 net new jobs created in Ontario, and our unemployment rate is near historic lows.

While I understand that the official opposition likes to oppose the government on all things, they really should take a look at their record.

To use their own words back in 1993, the NDP government "cut program spending for two consecutive years, something that no Ontario government has achieved for more than 50 years."

Our government's Plan to Build Ontario Together Act is all about making life more affordable, preparing people for jobs, creating a more competitive business environment, building healthier and safer communities, and making government smarter. We're working to balance the budget while providing needed investments now in critical public services like health care and education.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, for letting me speak.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That was an interesting speech.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: That was an interesting speech. I think that we should probably start—I know you said that you teach your children some things, but I think the member from Burlington might want to teach her kids some of the other historical features of governments—like, under Premier Harris, when we had 20 or 30 hospitals close; 7,000 to 10,000 nurses were fired; when we had Walkerton, when seven people died when they reduced red tape. We forgot all about that. That was conveniently omitted from that "history lesson," but thank you to the MPP for Burlington.

I also would like to add to her comments that in fact, this is not a government that is reducing the deficit. We heard from the FAO this morning that this deficit has increased under this government. It has already gone up.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, no. Tell me it's not so.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. We're going the wrong way. The FAO said that it has already gone up to \$7.4

billion—which was not the \$15 billion that the Premier talked about; it was actually \$7.4 billion. Now it's going to increase to \$8.5 billion in 2019-20 during boom times. During all these prosperous times that we're having, the deficit under this government is climbing. There's a piece of information for the history records of the MPP from Burlington that she might want to teach her kids.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Just some facts.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Just some facts. They kind of matter.

Despite what the Minister of Finance has said and despite what the MPP from Willowdale has said—and, I would have to say, the MPP from Burlington—this bill does nothing to reverse the cuts that are devastating people in the province of Ontario. You are still underfunding hospitals. The bill has nothing to address hallway health care. People continue to wait in halls and wait for care, and that's getting worse, not better, under this government.

You still plan to fire 10,000 teachers. That hasn't changed.

Under your watch, we keep hearing some talk about long-term care and trying to make sure that these burgeoning wait-lists of people waiting for long-term care—the logic here just baffles. You can have all the announcements you want about long-term care—in fact, what they are are Liberal reannouncements of beds from this government—but you've only built 21 beds in this province, when we have tens of thousands of people waiting for long-term-care beds.

I would just like to re-emphasize that there's nothing in this bill to reassure the people of Ontario that this government understands the priorities of the people of Ontario. In effect, we had the FAO's report this morning.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What did it say?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It issued a stark warning to the people of Ontario. What it's saying is that if you look at the government—you can listen to their words, but if you actually look at their numbers, the cuts that this government is making will leave a massive \$5-billion funding gap between the programs and services that people need and what will actually be available to them—\$5 billion. I will quote from the FAO, who says, “This presents a risk that government's fiscal plan will not provide sufficient resources to meet future ongoing demand for key public services, specifically in the areas of health and education.”

I really respect the work of the FAO. Some \$5 billion in cuts: I think we can all figure out that that's going to impact people's services in the province of Ontario. So again, there's nothing in this bill to reassure people.

It's a piece of legislation that is an omnibus bill. If you look up “omnibus bill” in the dictionary, Bill 138 would be here. Why do people hate omnibus bills?

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly, the caucus and the bill itself.

Why do people hate these bills? Why do they think they're so undemocratic and beneath a government that says that they're for the people?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Because they are.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Because they are. This is a bill that was time-allocated, as are many of their bills, and there are

significant things in this bill, which are not up front—you have to read through this bill and these schedules—that will make big changes for the people of Ontario. But what did this government do? They time-allocated it and they gave five and a half hours at committee for people to weigh in on this.

This is another piece of legislation that the people of the province of Ontario would be shocked at if they actually peeled away the onion to see what this government is proposing to do. What they say and what they do are not the same thing.

It gives me endless joy to riff on the names of these bills. This bill is called the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act, but I would propose that you should call this the “plan to build big government together act,” because the government that says that they don't like big government has done nothing but propose huge bureaucracies and huge super-agencies. If you don't believe me, read your own bill.

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If you look at, for example, schedule 37 in your own bill, that's the Supply Chain Management Act. This is a schedule buried in an omnibus bill that proposes to create a super-agency for anyone that wants to do business with the government of Ontario. Any boards, agencies or commissions have to go through this super-agency. We're talking about \$29 billion, at least, of government spending put in a bill that's six pages long. So we have six pages on a schedule that impacts \$29 billion, and at least two of those pages are taken up by the government protecting themselves from many of the outcomes that this schedule will certainly result in. Not only does this government love super-agencies, but clearly they love lawyers, because they're prepared to spend money defending themselves because they know that when they create these omnibus bills without any detail, they're going to make mistakes and we're going to go back to court.

To be perfectly clear, this is not a finance bill. The minister can say that this is about finances. The member from Burlington can talk about anything but the bill. Everything that she discussed was not in the bill. It was on Bill 124 and it was on her riding, but she didn't reference Bill 138. I think it's fairly important to understand that this is not a finance bill. In fact, really, it's a health care bill in disguise.

There are so many schedules in here that pertain to health care. We already had Bill 74, which upended our health care system in Ontario. Why they're burying schedules that are continuing to upend our health care system in what is purported to be a finance bill is a question for the people of Ontario. I think, again—as we have seen is the style, if you will, of this government—they just seem to be grabbing more power for themselves.

This bill, really, is just enabling legislation. There's so much in this bill that gives the government power, gives the minister power—particularly when it comes to the finance minister—gives them unlimited, unrestricted power to make decisions at a later date. We're passing legislation with no details—because, as we know, the

devil is in the details. At a later date, through regulation, we'll be able to figure out what the government is really up to. I find that just awful. The people of Ontario already have a limited ability to weigh in when they have five hours of committee. How are they going to be able to weigh in and make suggestions for regulations that they're not even going to be consulted on?

This is an omnibus bill that is creating big super-agencies. It's about big government. And it's being done under the noses of the people of Ontario.

But, Madam Speaker, first, litter day. Let's just get that out of the way. In the bill, we have schedule 32. The preamble on litter day says, "Reducing litter is a priority in Ontario." We need to pick up our garbage, right? But the schedule, which is actually five sentences, says, "All Ontarians are encouraged to pick up litter that they encounter in public places, including waterways." We have Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, community groups that already do this work; the government is encouraging them to wade into water to pick up litter. I would suggest, for example, that in the city of Hamilton, where we've had 24 billion litres of undetected, unannounced-by-the-ministry sewage in our water, encouraging people to wade into the water to pick up garbage is irresponsible and does little to deal with our climate.

This bill doesn't reverse the \$50 million in cuts that we've already had from the MOE, and adds another \$27 million in cuts to the Ministry of the Environment. This is on top of a government that has clearly already waged war on the environment. They cut cap-and-trade, which we know is going to cost us about \$3 billion in lost revenue. We've seen them ripping chargers out of the ground and cancelling renewable energy projects that are going to cost us \$231 billion. They spent \$4 million on partisan ads—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was \$231 million.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Did I say \$231 billion?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Billion.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Billion, million. With this government, who knows?

So \$4 million on partisan ads—and who knows how much they spent on the stickers that didn't stick. And they're going to take the carbon tax to court. You're allocating \$30 million for the lawyers against. So the lawyers are doing very well under this government.

Why didn't you support our bill to ban single-use plastics? Don't know. Why did you vote down our opposition day motion to declare climate change, if that's such a concern of yours? Don't know.

You have no credible climate change plan. Everyone is saying that we have limited time. Young people every day are getting up and saying to the people in power, "You have a responsibility to address this seriously." Instead, you fired the Environmental Commissioner. We had the Auditor General's report—it was a damning report on your action on climate. She said basically that your plan is not based on sound science—what about that, science; there's a thing—and it will not achieve the targets that you are setting out. It's just a complete failure on the part of this government to address everyone's concerns about climate change, like it's tone-deaf.

And the title—litter day—I just have to say adds to the embarrassment on the part of this government. People are trying not to mock you, but you make it so easy by talking about litter day when we have, really, a significant climate crisis in the province—in the country, not just the province, and all around the world.

I think it's really important to say that this government talks a lot about red tape, they talk about wanting to reduce red tape, but they don't listen to some of their stakeholders. For example, schedule 30 in this bill that changes the Planning Act is something that municipalities, including AMO, have said they're opposed to. They said this is a schedule that will not only increase red tape; it will in fact force them to do one of two things: raise property taxes for residents or cut services.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Download.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. This download that you've already done of your costs to the municipalities is already impacting them. Now you're going to make it easier for developers not to pay to support development. We know that the goal is that growth is supposed to pay for growth. It doesn't happen. It's getting worse under this government.

I think people need to be reminded about what municipalities do. They look after our ambulance, our fire and our police services. They collect our garbage. They're responsible for public health, libraries, long-term care. This is a level of government that does a lot for everyday residents, and this is a government that chose not to listen to the concerns of AMO.

I would like to read from AMO's statement, where they say: "If passed, municipal community benefit charge calculations would become appealable through the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal.... This represents an additional administrative step for municipalities"—also known as red tape.

"AMO remains concerned that development charge and community benefit charge revenue will be inadequate to support growth without additional support from existing property taxpayers"—increasing property taxes. As AMO has noted, in Bill 108, "the methodology for calculating the community benefit charge is of vital importance to the successful financing of local growth-related infrastructure."

They're also saying that not only is that going to cost taxpayers more money and not only are they going to have to cut services, but they're not going to be able to move forward with the infrastructure that they need.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There's only one taxpayer.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There's only one taxpayer. While this government may crow about purported savings that are going into one taxpayer's pocket, they're just flying out the other if you're paying residential taxes, whether you're a renter or a—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're just making the municipality the bad guy.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly, you just download to the municipality.

I can't tell you the number of submissions we had on this particular topic. They were from every municipality

across Ontario, big and small. AMO represents 444 municipalities across the province. That's a lot of people living in cities and communities whose representatives are speaking out to this government, saying what you're doing in this bill is going to make things difficult for them. This is a government that has not moved any amendments to change this and, again, seems to be tone-deaf on this issue.

I'll just read really quickly from the Municipal Finance Officers' Association. These are the people across the province who look after the finances for municipalities. They say, "We are concerned ... by the proposal in schedule 31 to make CBC bylaws appealable to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal.... We believe that the ability to appeal CBC bylaws creates significant risk for municipal revenues"—significant risk for municipal revenues. "Payment delays and decreases in amounts payable will likely reduce funds available for community benefits and force municipalities to choose between parks and other facilities, despite the province's intentions."

They proposed amendments to help the government out, but I don't think they've moved those amendments.

The proposed amendment the government has in this "also represents an administrative burden for municipalities. It undermines revenue predictability and municipal autonomy, and ultimately could negatively impact the supply of housing."

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So while we have a housing crisis, we now have an association that represents 444 municipalities saying, "What you're putting in this bill will make it difficult for us to provide housing for the people across Ontario." Yet again, it's something that the government did not seem that interested in addressing.

Madam Speaker, what we have here is really a catch-all bill with things that are making significant changes to the people of Ontario. Yet again, people who are concerned, people who pay attention, have put in here things that they think should be included in the bill, and the government does not appear to be listening. They don't appear to be listening now or at committee. That's not unusual. We have—

Hon. Bill Walker: I'm listening.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I appreciate that. There we go. I'm assuming that means you agree with me.

Hon. Bill Walker: No, no, I'm just listening. That's a whole different word.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'll just read some highlights, shall I? The region of Peel said, "The region remains concerned that without further consultation, future development charge and CBC revenue will not be adequate for municipalities to recover the costs of the infrastructure required to support growth in Peel." Peel is a pretty big region. It includes Mississauga, it includes Milton, it includes Brampton, and they're concerned about these changes, but this is not a government that seems to have wanted to listen to them.

I find it interesting that we have large communities, and then we have some small communities like the township of Wilmot—they have some very similar concerns, and

they say, "Staff are of the view that individual municipal councils should determine whether alternative payment arrangements for certain types of development are appropriate based on local circumstances.... In addition, freezing the development charge at an earlier date would reduce the amount of DCs collected by municipalities to fund new infrastructure, resulting in delayed construction of infrastructure or additional growth-related debt for capital works that must be in place prior to development occurring."

The stack is huge. Municipalities across the province have said the changes that are in this bill are going to negatively impact them. We already had Bill 108. You're amending a bill that you just put forward. My point is that what this illustrates is that, in fact, you didn't get it right the first time. So now here we are. You're amending a bill that you just put forward, and you're not even listening to the people who are going to be impacted: municipalities across the province.

How much time?

Miss Monique Taylor: You still have 10 minutes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay. I still have 10 minutes. I could read all of those, then.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, we enjoy it.

Interjection: Eleven.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Eleven.

So to summarize that, people—

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I put on a clinic at committee, I would have to say.

Hon. Paul Calandra: You did really good.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you; I appreciate the support and encouragement.

To summarize the concerns of municipalities across the province: These are levels of government that work most directly with the people of the province. We talked about the services they provide. They provide vital services, things we see every single day. When they collectively and individually say, "Don't do this, because you're going to force us to raise taxes. You're going to make things worse for us," you'd think that this is a government that might want to listen.

I think one of the things that we heard at committee from one of the presenters was, in fact, that the way that this is being structured, the way that you're allowing this to be appealable to the LPAT, is not giving the municipalities enough time to put bylaws in place. If there's an instance where the bylaws are not in place and any entity can appeal these charges to the LPAT, you've created a condition where there is absolutely no coverage, where in fact developers are not required under the old rules or the new rules to pay for development. You've created a vacuum. There's a hole. It's a window of opportunity that hopefully developers don't rush in to fill. But if that is the case, we're going to have development applications that go in under legislation that has no requirement for them to pay any development charges, and it adds, again, a burden on the part of municipalities to either cover those costs or, if they have the opportunity, to again appeal those to the

LPAT. And what do you have to do when you go to an LPAT as a municipality? You hire consultants and you hire lawyers—so we're back to the government for the lawyers.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thought it was for the people.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's for the people who need lawyers.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, okay.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The government for the people who need lawyers.

They literally used the words "red tape" in some of their submissions, so for a government that is talking about reducing red tape, this is some significant red tape that you're proposing. I would also suggest that you toured Bill 132—I forget what the title of that bill was, but it was your red tape reduction bill—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Smarter business—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Smarter something. Smarter government or something like that. You toured that, and it was a bit of a dog-and-pony show, if I may add. But you took a bill that makes significant changes—\$29 billion in spending, changes to our health care—and rammed it through the House, time-allocated, with very little time at committee. My suggestion would have been that given some of these significant concerns from the municipalities, you would have considered touring this bill.

We say it over and over again: You're the government. You have a majority. You're going to get your legislation passed. Why not pass good legislation, getting it right the first time? Why do you have to keep having your own amendments and redos on bills that have just been passed? I'd like to also say that committee ended on Monday at 5 p.m. after five and a half hours. Amendments were due at noon, so that's about 18 hours later, 12 of which of those hours were sleep time, in the middle of the night.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: When legislative counsel is not working.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Legislative counsel is not working—but despite that, the government managed to put 24 amendments forward, all to their own legislation, so they didn't get it right the first time.

And so I really believe that if there's anything this government could take a lesson in, don't ram through—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Sloppy.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —sloppy, lazy, not-ready-for-prime-time legislation that you don't let the people of Ontario weigh in on. Listen to people. They're experts. They want to make legislation better. Let them help you. Actually, help us help you. We're here to serve the people of Ontario, all of us, and the way you are acting as legislators is doing a disservice to all of us in the province and costing millions of extra dollars and time on behalf of the taxpayers to try to get it right.

If there's anything in this bill that is particularly disturbing and chilling, I would have to say that that is schedule 30. This is a schedule that is, again, enabling legislation that gives the minister and cabinet broad, sweeping, unlimited powers to use, disseminate, collect and share our personal health information.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's dangerous.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's shocking.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Nothing could go wrong there.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: No, exactly—never has.

I would ask all the members on the government side: If your constituents knew that this is what's in a bill that you're supporting, that you're supporting a bill that gives the minister unchecked power to use your personal health information—if your constituents knew that they took their child to see a doctor for whatever reason, for a consultation, and that their privacy is not protected, that in fact this bill will allow that information to be shared, unlimited, I don't think that's something your constituents would be happy to hear.

All across the world, people understand these huge breaches, these privacy breaches. There are all kinds of examples where privacy has been breached, and people are working instead to provide greater protections for people's data, but in fact this is a government that is moving in the opposite direction. They're moving to make it easier for people to share and use your health data.

I think that it's really significant that the concerns about this schedule were raised by the Information and Privacy Commissioner. In my time, I'd like to just highlight some of the comments that the IPC said. They have talked about commercialization of data, and that's what this government is talking about. They want to use our data, our health data, to commercialize our data.

Miss Monique Taylor: Scary.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's really scary.

The IPC has a note of caution about commercialization: "The commercialization of personal data by government is an increasing concern to the public...."

"This issue is exacerbated when the discussion turns to personal health information. In the course of seeking health care, Ontarians provide this information to their health care providers. Even if de-identified, the government or health care provider does not 'own' this data. Ultimately, it remains the information of the patient. The sale of health information by the government, without complete transparency and public consultation and support, is unacceptable."

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I think that's the fundamental point here. The government seems to be of the mistaken belief that they own this data. This is the data of individuals and this is the data of the patients. We own this data and we, as individuals, would like to access our own data. We didn't ask this government to give broad, sweeping powers to allow you to access our data.

"As a result," it goes on to say, "the IPC is concerned that the breadth of the proposed regulation-making powers in schedule 30 could potentially authorize regulations permitting the commercialization or monetization of Ontarians' health information.... any move towards the commercialization of Ontarians' health information, without proper public discussion and support would be opposed by this office."

The IPC goes on to say that this health information "should not be viewed by the government as a source of revenue."

My question is: Where would the privacy commissioner ever get the idea that this government is planning to sell our health data as a revenue source?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Everything is for sale.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Everything is for sale. But I would just say that if you read from the government's own Creating Economic Benefits discussion paper, the language in here is telling and concerning. It says here, "The prevalence of data has already given rise to hundreds of new enterprises, while helping established businesses to create new markets, drive innovation...." We're talking about markets now. Our data is used to create new markets.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Maybe I'll be a market.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I know. It also says that, "Ontario—like many markets across the globe ... where data and other non-physical assets, such as intellectual property, are emerging as key drivers of competitiveness and growth."

There's a section in here that says, "Businesses that can access large amounts of data and leverage it effectively can scale quickly to occupy dominant market positions. This results in a handful of companies being able to offer a wide variety of products and services...."

Again, our health care data is going to be shared with we-don't-know-who, but we have a government paper that says that they are looking at sharing it with people who will market and use it to create a revenue source to drive the economy. It just goes on and on, and it's really chilling.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Orwellian.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's Orwellian, yes. It says here that the government's aim is to "increase the amount of data available to businesses, empower businesses to better leverage ... data, and ensure a fair and equitable playing field for small and medium-sized enterprises...."

Mr. Will Bouma: Hear, hear.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The member from Brantford-Brant seems to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow. That is telling.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I find it very interesting that the member from Brantford-Brant is applauding something that most people would be horrified to hear: that the government plans to sell our personal health information as a revenue source. They plan to sell it perhaps to marketers or insurers. We don't know who's going to get access to this data, and that's something that the member from Brantford-Brant thinks is something we should be applauding. I would say that most people would find this disturbing and chilling.

Again, in the government's own document, they say, "Ontario's government holds vast amounts of data that can help businesses develop new products and services...." We are talking about our health care data. Again, what we're talking about here is enabling legislation. This is enabling legislation that gives the minister and cabinet the power to determine who gets to use our information and who gets to share our information. That is nothing that anybody in the province would think was transparent, democratic or fair.

They have had no public consultations on this. They rammed it in an omnibus bill, and they have made it clear,

in fact, that our personal health information is up for grabs, that there's no limitation on who can share this. I asked in a technical briefing, "Are there any limitations on Ontario health teams to share this data?" "No." We have another super bureaucracy, a super health agency that now can use our health information—to do what? It's possible that they can use it to deny insurance claims. It's possible they can use it to market products that we don't need. There are no limitations on what they can do.

I would say that this is a government that, instead of trying to sell our data, should get busy ending hallway health care, not selling off our personal data.

The only thing I would add in this bill—I mean, there's so much in here that is so disturbing. But the bright light in this bill are two clauses that we support, and those are to recognize our cultural heritage. We have clauses here that are creating a new Egyptian Heritage Month, and a new Hellenic Heritage Month in March. We support that.

But in a whole bill that does some disturbing things to the province of Ontario, it makes it very difficult to support this legislation.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm proud to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act.

Let's just state, Madam Speaker, that if you look at this bill, it is really about togetherness throughout the province. There isn't a single person this bill does not address, whether it's child care, whether it's health care, whether it's the environment, whether it's jobs, whether it's affordability, connecting people, the future. There is really the north, the south and the east of Ontario. There's really something for everyone, because this government is just about that, about building Ontario together, and about the moral imperative that is ensuring that our Ontario, together, has a future.

Part of that future is ensuring that we do pay down our debt, so that the next generation is not shackled under the debt that we incur today and that, rather, they have the ability and the liberties to continue on in their generation. It really is a call of duty for everyone in this House to make that a priority.

Part of that priority, if we are able to reduce our deficit like we have in this particular bill—we've gone from a projected \$15-billion deficit to a \$9-billion deficit. That means many things, Madam Speaker. For instance, did you know that 17 days of interest payments is the budget that we have for the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks? So it is a moral imperative to pay down the debt, because that means that is less money spent on interest and more for priorities.

In addition, 48 days of interest payments is Canada's budget for the Ministry of the Environment at the federal level. That's how many days of interest payments we'd be spending. Therefore, I'd say it is definitely a moral imperative to pay down our debt.

For instance, we already spend \$1.5 million every hour—\$36 million every day—on the debt alone. So

instead of spending money on things like the interest on our debt, we can spend it towards better services, better health care, better education, better child care, better things to improve things like our environment.

In this bill, you can see that the government is making all kinds of things a priority, including the environment. For instance, Ontario is finally ensuring that we modernize a 50-year-old environmental assessment process. It means that everywhere in Ontario is very different, so if we modernize the environmental assessment process, it is going to mean good things for our whole province, rather than holding things up.

Of course, we talk about our impact assessment across the province as well, because you can't have a one-size-fits-all solution for the whole province.

In addition, what you'll see here, which makes me very proud, is my private member's bill, which is an Ontario day of action across the province to combat litter. It's going to make sure that we establish, annually, the second Tuesday in May to make sure that we do combat litter. The first day for this year is May 12, 2020. I hope that all members in this Legislature who did support my private member's bill—you can see, like this bill, building Ontario together, that we believe, in our government, that the environment isn't a partisan issue. It is up to all of us to play a role. Certainly, we invite members of the opposition to join us on this day to combat litter. It's one of the steps that we can take in order to educate many of our young people.

If you looked at my announcement when I first announced a private member's bill, I had the Earth Rangers there. Earth Rangers is an environmental group and conservation group for children, to instill the important information about the environment and give them the positive confidence to do something and take action for their province and for their country. After all, Madam Speaker, as the Earth Rangers say, "The next generation is a hopeful generation, and one who is ready to roll up their sleeves and do what it takes to make a better future their reality." That's what we're doing in this private member's bill: We are all rolling up our sleeves and all taking action, so I hope the opposition will take a better, positive approach to instill those important values in our next generation and take this opportunity to educate all students, whether it's in our schools or whether it's in our community groups. It's more than just a day; it is the foundation of building the next generation of our leaders so they are hopeful that they have a future.

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I know, for instance, that my colleague from the Green Party has suggested many ideas for things we can do to help our environment. Certainly those conversations happened with the Minister of the Environment and the member of the Green Party, but we have yet to hear any suggestions from the New Democratic Party. But we're still open to those suggestions if they have them. That's part of us working together, Madam Speaker.

If you look toward what our moral imperative is, whether it's paying down the debt, creating a better

environment for the future, instilling good values in our children or improving our health care system, all this comes down to respecting taxpayer dollars and building a future where government must make sure they leave a legacy of hope for future generations that is built on progress—which has been broken to this day. We're trying to restore that hope that government has, that sacred bond that government has between the government and its people. Certainly, our government is a government for the people that is instilling those values.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The floor goes now to the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Before I start on Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act, I want to address something that was said by the member from Burlington, who continues, every time she stands up, to talk about Bob Rae. So I thought, in fairness, I would ask my daughter, who is 22 and taking a double master's in public health and administration, "Did you ever hear of Bob Rae?" She goes, "Who? I've never heard of Bob Rae." A whole generation doesn't know who he is. So then I thought, in fairness, I'd say, "Okay. Do you know Kathleen Wynne?" She goes, "Yes. She's the one who's cutting health care. I'm learning a lot in school about that." Then I thought, to be even fairer, I'd say to her, "Have you ever heard of somebody named Mike Harris?" This is really good. She goes, "That's the guy who sold the 407"—just saying. So my daughter does know—

Hon. Bill Walker: Who did she hear that from, Gatesy?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I don't know.

Thank you for allowing me to rise and speak to the bill today, Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Sorry, member.

We'll have order and we'll listen to the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's very kind of you.

Today, I'd like to talk about what's in this bill, but also what's missing from the bill. As you know, Madam Speaker, this bill is the fall economic statement, and it's closely tied with the budget. We were hoping that many of the vicious public service cuts that were in the budget would be reversed and that some things that needed the government's attention would get it. But you know what? Unfortunately, we didn't see that.

Let me start with the biggest issue with this bill—which actually isn't what it says; it's what it doesn't say. I usually talk about what's in a bill, but I want to talk about what's missing from the fall economic spending, and that is dollars for health care. Nowhere in Bill 138 do we find a reversal to the health care cuts brought in by the Conservative government. Nowhere—nowhere—do we find an end to hallway medicine. This has a major impact right across the province of Ontario.

As you know—and some may not know—we're facing a health care crisis in Niagara. We've got wait times that

are unreasonable, and getting worse. What does the government do when we're facing a health care crisis in Niagara? Well, that's when we hear news reporting that Niagara Health may close down Douglas Memorial, and that more services are moving out of Fort Erie.

When it comes to removing those services, I say this to the Minister of Health and to Premier Ford: The answer is no. After what the Liberals did to Fort Erie, this government should not even think twice about removing services from the town. We will absolutely raise our voices against this. You will hear this from people from Fort Erie: the seniors who earned better care throughout their lifetime of working; young people flooding to Fort Erie and starting new families; the tourists who visit us; and those who have been there for their whole lives.

The services at Douglas Memorial should never have been reduced in the first place by the Liberals. The closure of that hospital is a complete shame, and the Liberal government should never think they will ever forget about it. But now the Conservatives want to do the same thing, and the answer is no. The people of Fort Erie need access to health care in their community. They've been underserved long enough, waiting for the opening of the new Niagara Falls hospital. They should and will be able to access those world-class services once they are available, but they still need services in their community. Douglas Memorial provides those services. I will absolutely not sit quiet if this government thinks it's ripping more services out of Fort Erie.

Madam Speaker, this fall economic statement is also missing proper funding for OHIP. Across this province, we have people suffering from diseases, and treatments that aren't being covered. Here in Ontario right now, health care is a right. We have the right to full health care, and we should have full coverage.

The fall economic statement could have provided relief, but it didn't. I have a good case for this, and I'd like my colleagues to listen. Maya Webster is an amazing seven-year-old who lives in my riding, in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Maya and myself have been spending nights out in the community, collecting signatures, asking the Premier to finally cover continuous glucose monitors for people with type 1 diabetes. For Maya, this device literally saved her life. She went from being a kid who spent nights in the hospital time and time again to a kid who can monitor her blood sugar safely and now gets to spend time playing and enjoying her childhood. She has driven through. Even though her mother's insurance covers this CGM, she's working with us in the community to make sure that everyone has that opportunity.

Here's the interesting part: This saves us money. It means less people in hospitals and less emergencies. It's an investment in people and health care that pays for itself. Above all, it's the right thing to do. The people of Niagara-on-the-Lake have been incredible in showing their support, and the Premier, I hope, will show that same support.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk about something else that's missing here and from the budget itself, and that's

affordable housing. I believe that's an issue that we have in all of our ridings right across the province of Ontario. There is no issue here more important than affordable housing. Why isn't this government acting? Now, listen to this. I know you guys are all busy on the other side, but listen to this: The wait-list for affordable units in Niagara is 14 years. I'll repeat that: The wait-list for affordable units in Niagara is 14 years. Who can wait 14 years for affordable living? How does a government look at those numbers and not feel shame—including the past Liberal government, by the way?

People in this country have the right to have a roof over their heads. This bill and the budget passed by the Premier don't deal with affordable housing in the slightest. This is the problem. Forget tax breaks to the corporations that are already making billions in profit; let's provide for the people in our communities who need it and who we were sent here to service. People across Ontario and Niagara need affordable housing. Let's focus on their priorities and get more housing for people.

Listen to this. This is hard to believe, quite frankly, after some of the comments from my colleagues over the last 30 minutes: There's nothing here to address the climate crisis that we're facing in our province, one of the biggest crises in our history—nothing. In our north—for the members from the north—we have wildfires that are burning longer, hotter, than ever before. We have temperatures rising, which could affect crops, the very food that we need: in my riding, in Niagara-on-the-Lake—and the surrounding area, by the way—crops like grapes that are such a vital part of the economy in Niagara.

And there isn't enough to fix the damage being done by flooding. In both Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, we've seen extensive damage done by flooding of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. In both cases, this flooding is destroying historic areas of the towns and causing hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not millions of dollars, in damage.

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As municipalities, there just isn't room there to raise that kind of capital without cutting services or increasing property taxes. That's where we must play a role. I'm hoping the minister will go to Fort Erie and speak with the staff and the elected officials. I'm encouraging you to go down there and see the incredible damage, and work on a plan to get dollars on the ground to fix and protect it in the future.

We've seen some examples of this happening. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, Madam Speaker, the CEO of Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro, Tim Curtis, is taking action. He's protecting transformers against rising lake levels. They're putting concrete pads below the transformers to make sure they don't get submerged. It sounds like a pretty good idea. That's the kind of forward thinking that is needed by the ministry.

It's unfortunate that at this point we can't undo the damage done by climate change. All we can do is stop it from getting worse for our kids and our grandkids and their kids and their grandkids. But when it comes to public projects like the shorelines, work must be done to repair

those areas, but also to brace against future damage. I hope the minister is listening and can get down there and work with the local community to fix it.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment to talk about mental health funding. It's clear that across the province, people need resources when it comes to mental health funding. They need a place to turn to at every hour when they're in their darkest places. They need preventive care, and families caring for their loved ones need support.

This is important, and I say this because I want my colleagues to listen to this. Ten days from now will mark one year since this government unanimously supported my motion to provide emergency mental health funding for Niagara. This funding was designed to support front-line workers to offer round-the-clock services to the people of Niagara. Every member in this House—the Green Party, the Liberals, the NDP, the PCs—got behind the initiative and voted for it. Yet a year later—a year later—where's the money? Because I'll tell you what's going on in Niagara: People are still dying. They need that. You supported it. You should make sure it comes to Niagara.

This is interesting, Madam Speaker. The PC government has found money to give to PC ministers a pay raise. They found money to create an anti-carbon-pricing sticker, which is interesting. It doesn't stick. I haven't figured that one out yet, but it doesn't stick. You need to get those stickers—stickies or whatever they're called—that the kids use. Yet they can't find money for mental health. Nowhere in this economic statement is the funding that was promised to Niagara, where we have PC and NDP members actually committed to it.

This is sad, by the way. We're losing young people. Young people are taking their lives. We're losing our neighbours, our friends, our family members. To the Premier, I say this: Members of every party found common ground on this issue. Why are you stopping the funding?

Madam Speaker, I want to touch base on the new Niagara Falls hospital. This summer—and this was amazing to me—we got a report from CBC that said the average wait time to get a room in the Niagara Falls hospital in June of this year was over 37 hours. The report was so breathtaking that people didn't believe me. I posted a link to it on my Facebook page and people actually didn't believe how long it was. So in my meeting with Niagara Health, I asked them if that was accurate, and their response was, yes, probably. That's what they said. This is real, and it's happening in our community.

Madam Speaker, across Niagara, the Liberals and now the Conservatives have cut health care services. The bottom line is, we need a hospital built faster than ever before. We've got seniors without care. We have those who can't afford transportation and are stranded without access to care. We've got families with young children who need medical services. We cannot wait any longer for the new Niagara Falls hospital. There's money being spent all over this budget that can be saved.

Let's focus those dollars on building a new Niagara Falls hospital as fast as possible. We have great tradespeople down in Niagara willing to work on this project.

We have teams in place ready to go. There is no need to wait to get it built till 2027, 2028 or 2029. Let's get the shovels in the ground and start this build so people know that better health care is coming to Niagara. There are dollars all over this economic statement that could go to that without raising another dollar. Let's do it. Let's give Niagara the health care it deserves.

Madam Speaker, there is another important infrastructure project I would like to briefly comment on, something I hope the dollars mentioned in this bill can go towards: the entertainment centre being constructed in the tourist district of Niagara Falls. We've actually seen good work being done there on this project, but last week, we heard that this project is being delayed. I hope the minister understands how important this project is for Niagara Falls and for our tourist district, and for all those who are going to be employed. We cannot afford a delay on this major project, so I'm asking the minister to commit to getting some senior staff to Niagara Falls. Get to the bottom of the delay and get it fixed immediately. We're close to having it finished, but we need to get over this delay and get it built.

Madam Speaker, let's talk about teachers. Let's talk about our children's future. I'm a proud father and husband to an educator—educators, because my daughters are in education as well. I know that above all, teachers care about one thing: the kids. They want them to succeed not only in the classroom, but teachers help raise our kids each and every day. They help them overcome troubles and concerns. They answer their questions. Sometimes, they're closer to their teacher than they are to their parents. They mould them into the adults we want them to be. And what do you do with people who play such a role in our lives? You should support them. You should thank them.

Instead, what did your government do? They plan to fire 10,000 teachers. Nowhere, absolutely nowhere, in Bill 138 does this bill reverse the devastating cuts to our education that will follow the firing of 10,000 teachers. That will mean fewer adults in school and more kids in our classrooms.

We've seen it already: New schools are already bursting at the seams and being forced to use portables. Inside those classrooms, you have 30 to 35 kids, some, we've heard, without desks and some without books. How on earth do we expect our kids to succeed when that's the situation they're handed?

What did the minister who announced these changes say? At the time, it was a she—she said that it would teach the kids to be resilient. That's shameful.

This government can find \$234 million to throw away as they cancel green energy contracts, but they can't find money for teachers who are teaching our kids and our grandkids. How can they care so little about the future of the province of Ontario?

Madam Speaker, I just briefly want to touch on one schedule of this act, and that's the act that changes rules around privacy with our medical records. While it may be necessary to access records, I believe this bill gives too much power to too many people to access our medical

records. Our medical records are between us, our doctors and our families. At no point should those be handed out—and certainly, at no point should they ever be handed out for a profit.

1520

The Globe and Mail has written about these changes. They said that without precautions, our data could be taken by third parties, like insurers or marketers, who would somehow use that data. I think across the world we're seeing a backlash against this, against major corporations buying our data—our personal information—and using it for a profit.

As much as people get annoyed with it, it becomes a serious privacy issue when we're talking about our own personal health. Sometimes when it comes to health, we face tough decisions. We don't always like the decisions. The last thing we need is some company hounding us after we just learned bad news about ourselves or a loved one. I dare this government to go into the streets and ask people if they think this government should let companies buy our medical records and sell them. I would be willing to bet they couldn't find one person supporting that.

I'm hoping they fix this at committee.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to speak on third reading of Bill 138, an omnibus bill with 40 schedules that is supposed to implement the fall economic statement. While it may do that, it also contains schedules—and the public should know this—that affect everything from alcohol and gaming to the Municipal Act, from local planning to cormorant hunts, from short-line railways to financial planners.

I ask the government: Do they really think these kinds of omnibus bills are good for democracy? Because they make it hard for the public to comment. They make it hard for the public to engage. They make it hard for the public to know what's actually in the bill.

If the government is so confident about all 40 schedules that are in this bill, then they should allow the public the time and the opportunity to comment on them. They should pull them out as individual bills so they can proudly talk about these bills, rather than burying them in this huge omnibus bill.

The government needs to be held accountable on the fall economic statement. Let's talk about what came out just this morning from the Financial Accountability Officer, issuing a report analyzing the fall economic statement and the government's medium- and long-term budget outlook. Speaker, the outlook is not good. Not only is there a \$5-billion hole in the government's fiscal outlook, but there is a 10% spending cut in the government's fiscal plan over the next five years.

Ontario already has the lowest per capita funding of any government in Canada—the lowest per capita spending on essential public services like health, education and social services of any government in Canada. The government plans to cut, according to the Financial Accountability Officer, an additional \$1,070 per person to public services

over the next five years. Think about this: a little over a \$1,000-per-person cut to public services, in a province that already has the lowest per capita spending of any government in the country.

According to the Financial Accountability Officer, “This is the key risk for the government's fiscal plan—that planned spending may not provide sufficient resources to meet future demand for key public services, particularly in the areas of health and education.”

As we think about the cuts that the government has already brought in in last spring's budget, the cuts they're bringing in in this year's fall economic statement and the cuts to come over the next five years, what's that going to do to people on a long-term-care wait-list? Some 40,000 people are waiting to access long-term-care beds and we're talking about additional cuts to essential services.

What's that going to do hallway health care? The government says they want to address hallway health care, but they're not going to invest in addressing the issues around hallway health care? What does that say to the 1,000 people per day that are in a bed in a hallway right now? What does that say to the people who are trying to access emergency services? What does it say to people who need access to mental health and addictions services, if we're going to have an additional \$1,000-per-person cut over the next five years? What does it say to the 12,000 young people who are on a wait-list right now to access mental health services?

I know I've told this story before, but it's worth repeating, Speaker: Last year, when I was canvassing, I ran into a young man. I asked him how his day went, and he said, “I'm doing okay today, but it would have been better if the suicide outreach person who was supposed to call me eight months ago had actually called me, so that I could access the services I need. That would make me feel a lot better today.”

What is it going to say to the students who are experiencing cuts to their classrooms? Just with a slight change from 22 to 22.5 average class sizes, we see programs being cut, we see classes being cut, we see students not accessing the courses they need. So what's another \$1,000 per person over the next five years going to do?

I would argue that this “cut first, think later” approach to governing is not working. It has had the government on their heels over the last few months, and I would say it's going to continue to put them on their heels. You can change your tone all you want here in the Legislature, but until you change the policy direction that this government is going in, you're going to continue to have pushback from the people of Ontario.

I want to let you know another quote in today's FAO report: “In total, the government's policy changes and wage restraint could amount to \$6.6 billion of potential cost savings if successfully implemented. This suggests that the demand for public services will exceed the government's planned program spending by approximately \$4.8 billion by 2021-22, after accounting for the government's cost-saving measures.” That's another essentially \$5 billion in unidentified cuts in the fall economic statement.

Speaker, let's dig into a few of the things that are explicitly cut in the fall economic statement—year over year, \$130 million from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I don't know what this government has against farmers. I love farmers. I love Ontario food and farmers. I want to support Ontario food and farmers. I don't want to cut the ministry by \$130 million.

We're facing an affordable housing crisis, Speaker, and there's a \$368-million cut to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

In this province right now, it takes the average person 32 years to save for a down payment to purchase a home.

In places like Guelph, Kitchener, Waterloo, Toronto, Kingston, the city of Thunder Bay and cities all across Ontario, 0% of the available rent is affordable for somebody on a minimum wage income. There are 140,000 people on a wait-list to access social housing, and yet they cut the ministry's budget.

The biggest cut, year over year, in the fall economic statement is \$671 million to OSAP, to young people trying to afford to go to college or university.

Employers tell us—and I think the Premier even says this a lot—that we need more skilled people to fill the jobs in the province. Well, how are we going to get more skilled people to fill those jobs if we actually cut OSAP, which gives them the money so they can afford to go to college or university?

I'd like to just call attention to a few of the schedules. I know some of my colleagues have mentioned this, but it's worth repeating a few of the schedules in this bill.

The first is schedule 30. It has been flagged by privacy experts as concerning. It's opening the door to the ability of cabinet or even Ontario Health to make regulations regarding our personal health data. Think about that for a second: The privacy commissioner has raised concerns that our health data is at risk. It might even be for sale. Think of how many people are concerned about, I don't know, Facebook or Google or a lot of these big corporations having access to our data and selling it. But imagine—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Fitbit.

1530

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, Fitbit. There's a lot of them out there. But imagine having our government accessing our private health data and potentially putting it up for sale, Speaker. I don't think the people of Ontario support that.

I also want to raise the concerns that people have raised about schedule 7 and the Ontario Securities Commission—the changes that they're saying are not transparent, open or democratic; that they're leaving important decisions to processes that require less public consultation and less ability for public scrutiny; or schedule 31, which could allow people and organizations to appeal the community benefit charges through LPAT.

This government is already making it hard for municipalities by passing Bill 108, and the minister has said, "Oh, we want growth to pay for growth." Well, everything the government is doing is saying that they don't want growth

to pay for growth. Do you know what that means to existing homeowners at a time when we have a housing affordability crisis? It means that your property taxes are going to go up—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Or your services are going to be cut.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: —or your services are going to be cut, or a little bit of both. So I don't know how the government can say that they believe that growth should pay for growth, between the changes they brought forward in the spring, in Bill 108, and now the changes they're proposing here in this legislation.

Speaker, in my remaining time I want to talk about the thing that disappoints me the most in this bill. What disappoints me the most is, there is nothing in this bill that talks about the urgency of the climate crisis we face or the opportunities that exist in the clean and caring economy.

The member opposite—I believe from Barrie—Innisfil—said, "Hey, we talked to the Green leader." I've given you my 50-point climate plan, but you haven't adopted anything in it. It has been there. I've given it to the previous minister and the current minister. Just take even a few of the ideas there if you're serious about addressing the climate crisis.

The member said that this is a hopeful generation that's going to go out and pick up litter and things like that. Well, I can tell you, they've already been doing that on Earth Day and a whole bunch of other days.

But if you really are listening to this generation, then I encourage the government to come here at Queen's Park on a Friday afternoon—or maybe Market Square in downtown Guelph, or I'm sure there are #FridaysForFuture rallies in communities across the province—and listen to what young people are saying, because they're frightened about their future. They're frightened about the climate crisis. They're frightened about the fact that the Auditor General, last week, gave this government a smackdown on a climate plan that's not going to work.

If you thought it actually was going to work, you would have thought that the government would have at least allocated the \$400 million for their carbon trust fund in the fall economic statement, but they didn't even talk about that. It's a mini-budget bill; you would have thought there would have been a bit of money for at least what little bit they have in their plan. I guarantee you: Every expert has said that that carbon trust program isn't going to work. But you would have thought that they would at least put money into something that they said they wanted to fund—nothing in the fall economic statement.

Here's the bottom line, Speaker: The biggest economic opportunity before us is investing in the \$26-trillion clean economy. Some \$325 billion a year will be invested in renewable energy globally every single year over the next five years, according to Bloomberg. Not only is there nothing in the fall economic statement about that; they're actually wasting \$231 million in ripping up renewable energy contracts. So how are we going to attract that global investment to Ontario when we have a government ripping up existing contracts, let alone working with new investors?

We know that over the next five years, \$255 billion is going to be invested in low-emission-vehicle and zero-emission-vehicle technology—nothing in the fall economic statement about it.

When the Financial Accountability Officer says that there are concerns about economic growth in Ontario, the government has a great opportunity to embrace the clean and caring economy and address climate change at the same time, and they're failing to do it, and I believe people deserve better. Workers deserve a job in the clean and caring economy as we make a just transition to the future. Our children and grandchildren deserve a prosperous future and a livable planet. The bottom line is, Speaker, Bill 138 fails on all accounts. I will be voting against it, and I encourage the members opposite to vote against it with me.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. This bill—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm going to ask the Associate Minister of Energy and the member from Guelph to come to order, please. I can't hear the current member who's speaking, and I need to be able to hear.

Hon. Bill Walker: My apologies, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Back to the member.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: This bill is the third chapter of major financial legislation introduced by our government since it took office almost a year and a half ago.

Let's remember what it was like in Ontario 18 months ago. People were collapsing under the burden of out-of-control gas prices, high taxes and the rising cost of living. Life in Ontario was becoming more and more unaffordable for families, and 300,000 good manufacturing jobs had fled Ontario. Red tape was drowning our small businesses, and we had the highest subnational debt in the world. Think of it: a higher debt than every province in Canada and every state in America.

This had to change, and the people of Ontario turned to our government—for the people—for relief and for help. They wanted a government that would put money back in their pockets while protecting the services and programs they valued most. So what did our government do? We cut the wasteful carbon tax, saving families \$275 a year, and lowered gas prices.

We put in place the low-income tax credit for hard-working families, which, as the finance minister said, is one of the most progressive tax breaks in a generation, benefiting 1.1 million Ontarians by providing them relief of up to \$850 a year. Yes, progressive. I know that the opposition doesn't like to hear about Progressive Conservatives being progressive, but this tax credit will give money back to those who need it most. What I do not think is progressive is asking hard-working Ontarians to pay more and more of their money to the government.

So what other progressive things have we done? How about the tax credit for child care? Some 300,000 Ontario families will get an average of \$1,250 per year in tax relief. This is in addition to our government's \$1-billion commitment to create 30,000 new child care spaces. Our government knows how important it is to make life more affordable for families, so we've changed the rules to allow kids to ride GO trains and buses for free.

Our government is taking a balanced approach to our finances. This prudent, sustainable approach tackles the deficit while reducing taxes to make life more affordable for people and protecting critical public services that people value and respect.

When our government took office, we inherited a daunting \$15-billion deficit. Our government's careful and sustainable planning allowed us to reduce this total to \$10.3 billion by the time of this year's spring budget and by a further \$1.3 billion in the fall economic statement—\$15 billion to \$9 billion.

In our fall economic statement, we are investing more in health and education this year: \$1.9 billion more on health and \$1.2 billion on education this year. Combined, it's more than \$3 billion to protect what matters most.

But let's look underneath the increases to see what this funding means for front-line services and for people. I've pointed out in the House before about the more than \$20 million our government authorized for a new elementary school in my community of north Oakville, a school that the Liberals dithered and dithered about approving.

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As well, we've invested \$90 million a year for dental care to benefit 100,000 low-income seniors. We're also investing millions more in hospices and palliative care and for long-term-care beds for our seniors. As the parliamentary assistant to the minister, I've had the honour to announce new beds in Toronto, Midland, Grimsby and other places across Ontario—homes that protect their quality of life, their health care and their dignity. What could be more important than our seniors?

Entrepreneurs and investors want to know that Ontario is a secure place to put their money and build their businesses. That's why the Minister of Finance is proposing to reduce the small business corporate tax rate to 3.2% from 3.5% starting January 1, 2020. It would provide tax relief of up to \$1,500 annually to 275,000 small family-owned businesses and others that benefit from the small business corporate tax rate.

We will ensure that businesses have a pool of highly educated and skilled employees, and we will continue to build good infrastructure that businesses need to transport goods and that their employees need to get to work. Just in my community we have seen our transit grow, with 17 new weekday train trips on GO Lakeshore West, with six trips during rush hour, in 2018, and increased services toward Hamilton and Niagara this year.

Is our balanced economic plan working? Yes, it is. Since June 2018 when we were elected, employment in Ontario is up by a staggering 271,000 jobs. The majority of these are full-time private sector jobs. It's clear that our

economic plan makes life easier and more affordable for people, reduces taxes, invests in health care and education, and builds modern transit and roads. So let's keep it going.

I'd like to finish my remarks on a part of the bill that is dear to my heart. It's schedule 16, the Hellenic Heritage Month Act. This bill, as my Bill 77, was first debated and passed unanimously in this House—

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

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 26, 2019, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Phillips has moved third reading of Bill 138, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 20-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I respectfully request that the vote on third reading of government Bill 138, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes, 2019, be deferred until deferred votes on Tuesday, December 10, 2019."

Received from the chief government whip.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Orders of the day.

BETTER FOR PEOPLE,
SMARTER FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 POUR MIEUX SERVIR
LA POPULATION ET FACILITER
LES AFFAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 5, 2019, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's a pleasure today to rise and contribute to the debate on Bill 132, the so-called Better for People, Smarter for Business Act.

I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight parts of this bill that I feel are highly problematic: how it reduces the ability of the province to punish those who repeatedly violate environmental rules and regulations, and how some of the changes around the Aggregate Resources Act are going to be terrible for communities.

This is another one of the government's red tape bills that could, frankly, be better described as a lobby bill. It's

a collection of changes in favour of interest groups that, and I don't quite know how to—they're very persistent, effective. Maybe they have very deep pockets. What it is not is a systematic attempt to deal with regulatory burdens experienced by businesses in Ontario. Now, there is a caveat to that. There are some aspects of the bill that do systematically rewrite legislation, and I draw attention to schedule 8 and its changes to the Co-operative Corporations Act. But outside of that, this is a reflection of the interests of lobby groups who very effectively have convinced the government to introduce these changes. There's nothing linking any of these, other than the so-called reduction in red tape. When you start to dig down into the various parts of that, you begin to understand the one thing that does link it, which is the influence of these groups.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association actually expands on this in their submission to the act about the underlying intent of the bill, and I'm going to read from their submission now: "When introducing Bill 132, the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction stated that the legislation is intended to improve 'upon our open-for-jobs policy of making Ontario more competitive.' Similarly, during second reading debate, the associate minister claimed that 'cutting red tape for businesses' is the goal of Bill 132.

"However, CELA's"—that's the Canadian Environmental Law Association—"analysis of Bill 132 suggests that several schedules are aimed more at revising, weakening or eliminating key environmental safeguards, rather than improving competitiveness...."

Now, this is a bit of an interesting bill, Speaker. It was the first bill that this Legislature has actually travelled, and I was lucky enough to travel with this bill. We went to London and Peterborough, which was at least two places in Ontario better than what we've seen before, and then we came back to Toronto for a day of hearings. But they were very educational. I think I am beginning to understand why travelling bills is not a favourite thing of this government to do, because the people who wanted to speak to this, people who are, frankly, experts in their field and who understand the implications of this legislation, condemned it. There were a few in favour of a couple of schedules, but overall, testimony after testimony was trying to get the government to listen to the dangers that lie within this piece of legislation, if it's enacted.

Bill 132 proposes changes to 14 different environmental laws; however, even though we travelled it, there were only 30 days for a public comment period that had been provided under the Environmental Bill of Rights for all those incredibly significant legislative changes. This fast-track approach is both unacceptable and, frankly, unwarranted. It is inappropriate to bury these proposed changes within a piece of omnibus legislation that's 100 pages long and contains 17 different schedules.

Speaker, I would like to spend a little bit of the time here focusing on one of the truly problematic schedules in this bill, which is schedule 9. What it does is significantly change the regulatory framework in relation to the fines

that can be administered to companies that dump or spill toxic substances into our air, land and water. Now, previously, if you were one of these companies that had a spill, you could be fined on a day-by-day basis. That's really important because what this has done, it has taken that and moved it to a per-offence, so you can only be fined once. That means, on day 2, if you keep spilling, your fine doesn't go up. On day 3, if you continue to spill, your fine doesn't go up. In fact, Speaker, once you have actually been fined once, there's no incentive to stop the spill. There really isn't an incentive to stop the spill after day 1, and that is extraordinarily outrageous.

I just want to make a point about what these fines were intended for. They had incredibly serious monetary consequences. It used to be that up to \$6 million could be levied against the company, and that has now been reduced to \$200,000 per offence. But it was up to \$100,000 a day, to my previous point. It was for the worst-case offenders. It was for the companies that egregiously decided to spill and continue spilling, so there was a mechanism in place to punish those.

I will be the first one to say that the vast majority of businesses in Ontario will never even have to deal with those fines. The vast majority of businesses do not intentionally spill toxic substances into the environment, but some do, through negligence, through trying to increase production beyond what the manufacturing facility or whatever it is can reasonably do. These worst-case offenders exist. We've seen them all over the planet, and they lead to some of the most famous chemical spills and environmental pollution that we have ever seen. Think back to tanker spills on tankers that failed to have adequate navigation equipment, so they didn't actually know where they were supposed to sail.

1550

In Canada, the spills act was brought in because of the spill in the St. Clair River, where 250,000 litres of chemicals were spilled into the St. Clair River, which affected water tables all over, in Canada and in the US. Those are worst-case offenders, and the fines were in place for those people, not everyone else. That's really important to understand. We're not talking about small businesses or little companies; we are talking about companies that seek to gain profit from intentionally dumping, or even accidentally dumping, toxic chemicals into our environment.

If you go outside of Ontario, you can think of the Pine Bend refinery, where internal regulators consistently ignored evidence that they were over-spilling their tailings ponds—it's an oil refinery in Pine Bend. They allowed them to overflow again and again and again, over long periods of time, and it completely contaminated the surrounding area. Now, this is in the States, and they were hit with the single largest fine a state has ever handed out, \$6.9 million, and another \$3.5 million fine from the EPA, which is the largest fine the EPA has ever handed out.

What is relevant to this debate is that that is one of those worst-case offenders. This piece of legislation in Ontario is to protect against those companies, the ones that knowingly continue to violate regulations, not the ones who did

it once by accident and paid the fine. We didn't have to give six million dollars' worth of fines to a company for a violation; there were parameters that you had to work with this. So a small fine for a small company that understood that it was a mistake they made and moved quickly to clean up the mess they had created and to prevent the spill from continuing—the fine was reduced so that it was appropriate for the spill. But we've lost the ability to have an appropriate fine for these worst-case offenders. We have lost that ability in this legislation.

The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks likes to talk about how this bill expanded the number of entities that could be fined. I think we went from 140 to 150,000 entities that could potentially be fined, and that was somehow a justification for lowering the total amount of the fines. That's a fallacy, Speaker. That's a logical fallacy—it's an informal fallacy—because one does not lead from the other. Yes, they both have to do with environmental legislation, but the total quantity of the money that could be fined doesn't have to do with the number of entities that could be fined. Expanding it to more entities—sure, that's fine. I would question how that's a red tape reduction for all those new entities that can somehow actually be fined now; I don't see a connection between that. But it doesn't actually lead that, because you expanded the number of companies, you should actually reduce the total amount of the fine. I don't see those as being correlated in any significant way.

I want to move on and talk a little bit about what's called the reverse onus burden. These fines are called AMPs. In cases where an AMP is issued, schedule 9 of Bill 132 will make it easier for polluters to appeal the penalty by removing the reverse onus that exists in the current AMP regime. At present time, this onus currently places the burden on polluters to prove on appeal that the alleged facts did not occur. Unfortunately, schedule 9 proposes to remove that onus. This is a major step backwards and should not be enacted.

I want to read a little bit from Environmental Defence's submission to the standing committee during this: "The reverse onus clause was introduced as part of the spills bill in 2005"—I already spoke about this—"in response to incidents such as the Imperial Oil spill of 250,000 litres of highly volatile chemicals into the St. Clair River, which shut down local water supply."

The reverse onus must be preserved, because now a company can just say, "Yeah, we didn't do that," even if there is entirely—previously, they would have to prove that they did not do it; now it's going to be on the ministry to prove they actually did do that. Again, if we want to talk about regulatory frameworks and an underfunded and overworked ministry, I don't actually understand how one leads to the other. You take away that reverse onus clause and companies are going to be off the hook.

Again, we are talking about worst case offenders—250,000 litres of highly volatile chemicals. I repeat myself, but that's because those spills are bad and those are the ones that we are talking about.

I also want to talk a little bit—this was brought up multiple times by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. She talked a lot about the monetary benefit clause that they've added in. This is what the government is leaning on in trying to defend the changes to the total amount of the fine that can be issued, and the clause is this: "The total amount of the administrative penalty referred to in subsection (7) may be increased by an amount equal to the amount of the monetary benefit acquired by or that accrued to the person as a result of the contravention."

This is the monetary benefit clause, and basically, what they're trying to say this will do is allow the government to seize any profits that a company might gain from the spill. So if they just say, "Well, we're capped at \$200,000. We know that we're going to earn \$3 million or \$4 million more if we just dump these tailing ponds into the environment, so we're just going to go ahead with the violation," this does give a mechanism for the government to get any profits back.

But there are a few problems with it. One of them is the word "may." The ministry "may" go after that company for any monetary benefits. It does not say "shall." Now, it's suddenly up to the minister and ministry to decide if they're actually going to go after the company, which, to me, doesn't mean the company is necessarily off the hook, but it doesn't mean necessarily that they're on the hook either.

What I will draw attention to is that even though we've gotten rid of the reverse onus clause, which puts more pressure on the Ministry of the Environment to prove something did happen, and we've given the ministry the ability to potentially go after companies that did the spill, there are no more resources for enforcement. We've given the ministry all these new jobs to do, asked them to do more, and we haven't given them any money to actually do any of that work. What is going to happen, Speaker? In my mind, what is going to happen is you're going to see an overworked Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks that does not have the resources to go after companies if they contravene these regulations, and the incentive to not spill into the environment is being almost entirely removed. It's being almost entirely removed.

I just want to point out something here. Prosecution under the Environmental Protection Act, which is what would be resorted to if a company violates it—so if a company has a huge spill, they're given the maximum fine of \$200,000 now per offence—not even daily, but \$200,000. The parliamentary assistant again brought up the fact that now, it could actually be referred to the courts, that the courts could go after these people for violating it. That's a good thing. But I would say that the courts already have the ability under the Environmental Protection Act to go after those companies. It didn't need to be expanded. So it's not an introduction of new powers for the courts; it's just a rewording of other legislation that could have been used in its place. I don't actually understand why that was included in it—or I think I do; it's probably to give them a talking point about how this is actually better, when, overall, it is dramatically worse.

1600

The court is already empowered to impose not only a fine but an additional penalty that strips away any profits that were made in the commission of the offence. This already exists in law. I don't understand why we're repeating it again, unless it is that you need a talking point to say why. "Now the courts can go after them. Now the courts are going to take care of it. If a company violates it, they're going to be punished. The courts are going to do that."

But how, in a red tape bill, is putting more emphasis on the court system, which is, again, like the Ministry of the Environment, overworked and dramatically behind—the government just introduced a new bill aimed at streamlining much of the judicial system, to try and get rid of some of that backlog. I don't even dare comment on that yet, because I don't understand the implications of what was introduced. It was just introduced today. But they're claiming that putting a heavier burden on the judicial system in relation to environment laws is somehow reducing red tape and making it easier for businesses to operate in Ontario? I don't understand how one leads to the other. I just don't get it, Speaker.

Those companies, by the way, have a huge amount of resources that they can dedicate to a court battle. A government imposing a fine, and having a reverse onus on the company where they have to prove they didn't do it—that worked. If a company spilled, they were fined. If they didn't want to pay the fine, they had to prove that they didn't do the spill. That's pretty straightforward. It doesn't require huge amounts of regulation to enforce that. It's easy for the public to understand. What it doesn't do is require a legal battle—a legal battle where the companies have almost infinite resources to fight it for as long as possible in court.

I want to draw attention, on that, to a ruling that the Supreme Court just did a couple of days ago, because this speaks to my problems with this part of the bill.

The Supreme Court has finally said—it went all the way to the Supreme Court—that companies must pay for the Grassy Narrows mill site maintenance. The two companies had been trying for years to say that they should not have to deal with the consequences of the spill, because they weren't the company that created the initial mercury spill or the mercury site in Grassy Narrows.

And it was a site. It's not so much a spill; it's that the containment site is leaking. It was intentionally put there. It wasn't that it was an accident. The company created a mercury containment site in Grassy Narrows. It buried a bunch of mercury in the ground. Now that's seeping in, and it has caused generational damage to a community, Speaker—generational damage to a community. This started in the 1960s.

I want to read a couple of things. The first companies who bought the land that the mill was on, where the mercury was being stored, tried to sever the mercury site from the rest of the property they bought. That was their first step. The companies knew that it was going to be a nightmare to contain or deal with the mercury contamination that was happening from the site. They knew they

didn't want any part of the site, so they severed it. That was in August 2000. So this story starts in August 2000.

Bowater, the company who owned the site, filed for bankruptcy in 2009. The waste disposal site was abandoned in April 2011, with court approval, during these bankruptcy proceedings.

However, the Ontario government, at the time, issued an order obligating Weyerhaeuser and Bowater to repair the disposal site erosion, do water testing, file annual reports and prevent any leaks, and give the provincial environment ministry \$273,000 as financial assurance with respect to the site.

The companies didn't really like that, and they appealed the ministry's decision in court. In 2016—we started in 2000, and we went to 2011 and now we're in 2016—an Ontario judge ruled in favour of the companies, saying that they could sever it and that they weren't actually responsible for the spill in Grassy Narrows.

That's 16 years. That's someone being born and going to the age of 16 eating food and drinking water that is contaminated with mercury, while companies that own the site that contains the mercury that is spilling over into the environment try to argue about how they should not be responsible for dealing with that spill.

But now, finally, in 2019, it has gone all the way to the Supreme Court. It took them three years to make their decision from the Ontario Superior Court. Three more years in the court system and, "In its decision, the Supreme Court said the 1985 indemnity does not apply to the province's 2011 order, meaning Resolute and Weyerhaeuser are liable for the costs of"—at least—"maintaining the disposal site."

This is not compensation for generations of people who have mercury poisoning. This is only to make two companies responsible for maintaining a site that they owned, and they dragged that battle out for nearly two decades in the court system.

And so, now we have a piece of legislation that is going to try to make it so that it's the court's job, the prosecutors' job, to go after companies for spilling toxic chemicals into the environment. Previously, it was, "Here's a big fine; you have to pay it unless you prove you didn't spill." That is so incredibly straightforward. Now, companies, if it unfolds in the same way as in the example that I just used, are going to end up with 20 years' worth of continuing operation as they drag that decision through a court system that is completely overwhelmed and appeal every decision that goes against them. They have the resources to do that. They're still going to come out ahead because they have those resources, Speaker. They have the resources to do this forever.

It doesn't actually deal with the costs of cleaning it up. Like I said, this was just site maintenance. This isn't the cost of actually cleaning up Grassy Narrows; this is just maintaining it so it doesn't spill any more mercury into the environment.

The problem with the benefit charges that the government can potentially now put against the company—and I'll bring you back to the "may" versus "shall." If a government tries to go after the company that violated it and

spilled and they want to confiscate any of the monetary benefits, there's not actually a good way to figure out what those monetary benefits were, Speaker. It would take years of research and experts in a field to try to even begin to figure out if there was a monetary benefit, let alone what that monetary benefit could be. During that time, we only have \$200,000 that we can take from that company to help deal with costs of actually cleaning up the spill.

How is that good for the taxpayer? Who is going to be responsible for paying for the cleanup of that spill, Speaker? It's not going to be the company; they're capped at \$200,000, and I don't think I've ever heard of an environmental cleanup that cost \$200,000—ever. So where is that money going to come from? Well, it's going to come from taxpayers' pockets. We are going to benefit the worst offenders at the expense of the Ontario taxpayer, Speaker. That is the sum total of what this schedule does.

These spills have disastrous economic outcomes for communities that are affected by them. What you can look at, for instance, is the algae blooms in Lake Erie, which are the result of ongoing, continuous spills of nitrogen-based fertilizers into Lake Erie that are having a disastrous outcome for economic activity in that area.

There was a recent report that the federal government actually just did that estimates that the algae blooms in Lake Erie are costing the Lake Erie economy \$272 million over a 30-year period. This is lost revenue from people who would go fishing, from beaches that would be open that can't be open, from companies that operate on the water or around the water. These are dollars. This is the result of spills into the environment that are not being dealt with.

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Lake Erie is a really interesting example of a different way you could do this. I think it was Ohio, Speaker—they have actually just recognized that Lake Erie has the same rights as a person. They gave rights to the lake, which would allow class actions on behalf of the lake against companies who are spilling into the environment. The chemicals mostly flow down from the potato farms in Ohio. By doing that, you're allowing dramatic action to prevent people from continuing to spill. We are pursuing the opposite in Ontario. Since when does Ontario follow, in environmental legislation, the Great Lakes states? It's happening more and more, and that is an absolute shame.

I'd like to move on from schedule 9 to talk a little bit about another area that I think has severe problems, and that's the EWRB program. This program was initiated to do environmental benchmarking for buildings across Ontario. Companies were required to benchmark the amount of water they used, the amount of electricity they used, and come up with plans to reduce that. They weren't even actually required to come up with the plans; they were just required to provide the data to the government. It started with the biggest buildings in Ontario and then phased in for smaller ones. Currently, companies with office space over 100,000 square feet are required to report. This year, that was supposed to be moved to companies with facilities that have 50,000 square feet.

Now, this has actually been removed. This new set of companies, which we've never actually collected data on, suddenly doesn't have to do any benchmarking, doesn't have to understand how much electricity they use, how much water they use. This is a really big problem, and it's incredibly short-sighted.

I want to draw attention to a study by the EPA again that demonstrates that just by benchmarking your building alone—this is with no enforcement of anything; this is simply the benchmarking—“with no deep retrofits, you can achieve energy savings of 2.4% a year, for a cumulative total of 7%. This would yield an annual savings of \$600 to \$1,750 on a \$25,000 electricity and gas bill, and that is far greater than the estimated savings of \$300 per building suggested by the proposed amendment.” So they're aiming to save the company \$300 instead of thousands of dollars, by lifting the requirement of the company to do this benchmarking. “In Toronto, energy reductions under the Race to Reduce initiative resulted in savings of \$13.7 million over four years, an average savings of \$5 per square foot in office space.” They didn't even have to put any money in; they just started to understand where and when they were using power and water. That's exceptional. That's not retrofits. That's not some government-funded program. This is exactly the sort of thing that this government should actually be behind.

“Benchmarking is the first step to further improve energy efficiency in buildings. A study by the Canada Green Building Council highlights that building owners that green their buildings see an average increase of 4% to their property asset value.” So their properties are worth more if they just start doing this benchmarking. “They see qualitative benefits such as improved tenant engagement, tenant retention, and positive recognition that leads to financial value. Benchmarking energy and water data through portfolio manager tools aligns with the government's made-in-Ontario plan.”

Again, we have this contradiction—what is this actually about? They're trying to save companies \$300 instead of thousands and thousands of dollars if they even reduce their energy use by 2.4% a year. That's not a lot, 2.4% a year; that's really achievable.

I can't believe I'm actually doing this, but I'm going to quote the government's made-in-Ontario environment sham. The document states, “Building resilience is about having the right information, tools and resources to adapt and respond to our changing climate. We will access the best science and information to better understand where the province is vulnerable and know which regions and economic sectors are most likely to be impacted.”

Let me repeat part of that: “having the right information ... access the best science and information to better understand” how things are working. A benchmarking program was about gathering data from companies to better understand how you could pursue energy efficiency in a cost-effective manner that required no government funding. This is exactly the sort of program this government should be continuing and expanding, Speaker.

The result of this change is just that there's going to be less data available. We're going to know less. And we're

going to have to catch up later, because this data is going to be necessary if we want to have any hope of meeting our obligations on climate. This data is going to be necessary, and we're losing the ability to collect it. That is a terrible thing to do—for basically no monetary gain.

I want to move on a little bit. We're going to now talk about schedule 16, which is the other big schedule in this bill that affects environmental legislation. This has incredibly massive implications for municipalities and communities across Ontario, specifically to do with their water. Schedule 16 changes the Aggregate Resources Act in such a manner that will almost assuredly have adverse outcomes on water quality in Ontario.

The big change, which I'm going to expand on and talk about, is that it's going to allow aggregate companies to get licences to extract aggregate from below the water table, and it's eliminating the ability for a municipality to say no to that. It's eliminating the ability of a municipality to say no to a company that wants to extract aggregate from below the water table.

Why does this matter? Well, if you're extracting aggregate from below the water table, do you know what happens? The water flows into the quarry, so in order to keep doing it, they have to pump the water out of the quarry to keep digging. I have quarries in my community that were below the water table, and now they're used as swimming holes. One is used as a driving range. You hammer floating balls out into the middle of this quarry. I think it's quite clear how this can potentially have disastrous effects on water quality in a community.

I'm going to quote the presentation made by Richard Lindgren, who is the lawyer for the Canadian Environmental Law Association. He came to testify before us. He said, “I understand that the committee was in London yesterday”—he testified in Peterborough—“and no doubt heard from concerned folks and/or municipal representatives in that area of the province, because that area of the province is almost wholly dependent on groundwater for drinking water supply purposes. That's why the municipalities should be able to use their extensive Planning Act powers to safeguard the quality and quantity of groundwater for the purposes of drinking-water supply. Unfortunately, schedule 16 of Bill 132 purports to take that power away. The word ‘inoperative’ is the word that's used in the legislation. If the municipality has the audacity to enact or enforce a law that is designed to protect groundwater from the impacts of below-water-table extraction, this bill would make that inoperative or basically be of no force or effect.”

“I think that's a backwards step. It's also contrary to what we're asking municipalities to do under the Planning Act. In fact, the provincial policy statement issued under the Planning Act expressly directs municipalities to use their planning powers to protect groundwater for the benefit of all inhabitants. This particular provision seems to be at odds with that overarching provincial interest.”

I'd like to read from another submission that was made to the committee by someone else talking about this issue of aggregates. She says, “We need to get to the meat and

potatoes of this issue.” I love this, by the way. “Like the Nestlé situation, billions of litres of water are pumped out of below-water-table quarries to keep the floor dry to continue excavating. I am sure you know, but just in case, there is a big hole in the ground—in our case currently 40 acres, and they’re asking for 60 more acres.” This is in reference to a specific quarry. “Blasting takes place that alters water courses, particularly worrisome for the Kingston-Quinte area, where we sit on fractured limestone.” The fractured limestone part is particularly important because, when you blast—how the water travels through fractured limestone rock allows contamination to travel extraordinarily long ways. If you contaminate over here, it’s not contained. It’s not like it seeps; there are actual fractures through the rock, and that water and that contamination can continue travelling.

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This is a huge issue in our area when we want to have dumps, somewhere to put the garbage, because if it begins leaking and actually leaks into the fractured limestone, the consequences of that go an extraordinarily long way. One of the biggest community and municipal battles in Ontario history was over that contamination and the expansion of a dump outside of Kingston, near Greater Napanee.

I’m going to go on. As I said earlier, blasting takes place that alters water courses, which is particularly worrisome in the Kingston-Quinte area. Water goes into the hole from snow and rain, as well as from the aquifer, as it is drained from the sides as the water course is interrupted. All that water is pumped out to keep the quarry floor dry, to allow for excavation.

What does this mean? This means that water is flowing in from both the water table and outside the water table. If there are contaminants above the quarry or around the quarry—these are often in rural areas; if there are farmland contaminants, if there are chemical contaminants from manufacturing that’s taking place—it’s very easy for that water to actually flow into the quarry. And because it operates underneath the water table, there’s nothing keeping those two water sources separate, so any contaminants that leak into the quarry can then actually leak into the water table and the aquifer and go into people’s wells. This is why this is such a huge deal. It really, really needs to be paid attention to that this is potentially terrible for municipalities that rely on water tables for their drinking water, be it well water or municipalities that rely on pulling from the aquifer.

Interestingly, AMO came to the committee to give a presentation. I’m going to read from them: “If this bill is not amended to assure municipal governments that there will be no below-water-table extraction without municipal agreement, or provide indemnification, municipal governments will have no alternative but to appeal applications to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) to demonstrate due diligence at a minimum.” So this is just to demonstrate due diligence on behalf of the municipality for allowing an aggregate operation to take place in that municipality.

This is my favourite part, Speaker: “This will greatly increase red tape and administrative burden for the LPAT

and municipal governments—not to mention delay decisions for aggregate businesses which would risk new investment in the industry.” So by making it so that the municipality can’t actually weigh in on the decision to expand aggregate operations, they are giving municipalities—the only recourse that they can use is the LPAT system.

Now, interestingly, this bill put the final nail in the coffin for the LPAT centres, which would actually help citizens navigate those incredibly complex systems and allow citizens to lead appeals in the LPAT without having to fork out—by the way, the average cost for an LPAT appeal is around \$100,000, so if you’re a citizen and you would like to actually appeal an aggregate expansion in your community that you think might affect your groundwater, you have to come up with \$100,000 just to go through that appeal. These companies understand the system far better than citizens do, so even if you come up with the \$100,000, there’s absolutely no guarantee that that’s going to be money well spent.

Municipal governments are the closest link to the members of their community. When you have a problem in your community like an aggregate pit expanding or being created behind your house, within feet of where your children play, your first recourse was to call your councillor or your mayor to say, “Why is this happening?” That was where you could have input. That is gone. Other than filing a \$100,000 appeal to a tribunal that takes years to hear these, that recourse is now gone with this legislation, Speaker.

Again, you’re trying to reduce red tape by putting even more burden on a system that doesn’t particularly function very well. This is the third example I’ve found in this bill where the practical outcomes of the bill are that: to put an undue burden on an institution that is overworked and cannot adequately provide the services that they’re currently expected to provide. That is what actually underlines the entirety of this bill.

I want to finish by talking about one more piece that I think is particularly important. The last person we heard from in committee was testimony from the Chiefs of Ontario. I want to read a few of the sections of what they said, because it was so, so important. They wanted to talk about it because of the effect that it has on acts that affect Indigenous people and First Nations in Ontario. So I’m going to read here:

“Bill 132 Better for People, Smarter for Business Act (herein referred to as “the bill”) discusses 80 actions, across 36 ministries that aim to attract business to Ontario and encourage economic growth. While these priorities are in line with the priorities of many First Nations in Ontario, the bill was tabled and developed without the inclusion of First Nations.

“Of particular concern are the legislation’s moves to change nine acts that directly affect First Nations in Ontario. These acts are:

- “—Aggregate Resources Act;
- “—Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994;
- “—Environmental Protection Act;
- “—Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997;

“—Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act;
 “—the Mining Act;
 “—Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act;
 “—Ontario Water Resources Act;
 “—Public Lands Act.”

We have, Speaker, a duty to consult Indigenous peoples and First Nations in the development of legislation that affects those First Nations. The point was raised by the member from Peterborough–Kawartha in committee that it didn’t really have an effect on anything that affected the First Nations, so why did they have to consult? Because the outcome didn’t affect them. That’s not the point of the duty to consult. The point of the duty to consult is to ask them before you begin the process of legislative change. If we’re actually serious about dealing with the enormous problems and the crisis facing Indigenous people, we have to take that duty seriously. We have to start from the right place. We don’t go to them and say, “Hey, we’ve written this piece of legislation. What do you think of it?” We go to them and say, “We’re think about changing this act. How can we change this act so that it helps Indigenous people in Ontario more?”

Thank you, Speaker. I’m going to finish with that thought. Indigenous communities deserve that consultation. They deserve it from day one.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: As I’ve been listening to things today, I’ve been thinking about someone that I really enjoy a lot of his works—I’ve mentioned him a few times in this House—and that’s Marcus Tullius Cicero. More than 2,000 years ago, he wrote a series of books called *De Legibus, On the Laws*. He waxes poetically in them about why we should be developing laws, what we should be doing and how we should be putting those together. He talks in those volumes about making sure that government does what’s right for the people.

I’ve said in this House a few times that the government’s responsibility is to legislate and regulate to the point of integrity, but not to the point of interference. That’s been one of our resounding themes throughout: that we’re doing things for integrity, but not for interference.

We find ourselves in a position—after the previous government for 15 years, Ontario is in a position where we have more regulations than anywhere else in Canada. British Columbia is the second-most-regulated province at 167,000, almost half of what we have in Ontario, and nobody is saying that British Columbia is very unsafe. Nobody is saying that British Columbia is a horrible place to live because they’re under-regulated.

Bill 132 is an approach to make things better for the people of Ontario, to make that environment where businesses can thrive, where individuals can thrive.

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I know that the now-delay party has constantly been coming up with ideas to hold us back and to make sure that Ontario doesn’t have development. Perhaps, actually, they’re the no-development party.

But when you look at what we’re trying to do, what we’re trying to do is streamline a lot of things and remove a lot of the inefficiencies.

Let’s take a look at municipalities, for example: Municipalities have more than 400 different reports that they have to send back to the provincial government for various things, and there’s a lot of duplication within them. This past August, we identified 94 municipal reports that are essentially duplication, so we’re going to be removing those, and 27 reports that are far too complex. More information is being asked for, and more work is being asked for, than what the value of that report actually is.

If I listen to my friends in opposition, they will tell us that we should never make any of those changes, that it’s good to have that much regulation in there. But I don’t think so. I think that what we should be doing is finding ways to establish less regulation, to make sure that the province is still protected and all of the good things that we need are looked after, but not in a way that prevents actual growth.

I’m going to touch on one thing in particular from Bill 132, because I think it demonstrates the difference between how our opposition is approaching things and how we’re trying to approach things.

They talked about how horrible some of the changes are going to be to the Mining Act. We’re not changing anything with respect to consultation; that whole process remains. We’re not changing any of the requirements of what needs to be submitted.

What we’re changing—and this is the part where I don’t understand why there is such opposition from the NDP on this. Here’s what we’re changing. Currently, the way the system is set up, when an application is submitted, it can sit on a bureaucrat’s desk for an indeterminate amount of time—three months, six months, 12 months. There is no actual requirement for us to respond back. It simply sits there. This is a change, I’ve been told repeatedly by the member from Kingston and the Islands, that we’re doing wrong. Here’s the change. Let me describe it to you. This is the radical concept that is wrong: We will respond within 45 days. It’s not to say that it’s going to be approved, but we will acknowledge that we have received that report and we have reviewed that report. We will give you a response back in 45 days. The sky is falling because we’re going to respond in 45 days.

One of the other changes that we’re making is, we are repealing the Northern Services Boards Act of 1990. At a first-blush glance, you’re probably saying, “My goodness, you’re repealing an act. That must be bad, because you’re repealing an act and you’re not replacing it with anything else.” This is something that has been on the books for Ontario now for almost 30 years. Can anyone in here tell me how many boards were ever created under that act? None. Not a single board was ever created under that act, yet that act remains on the books as something that Ontario should be doing. It was created 29 years ago and has never been used. I don’t think it’s an onerous task for us to take a look at it and say that legislation that was introduced 29 years ago, that has never been used, should be taken off. We should be looking at those things and removing them.

Another change that we're making, another radical thought on our part: the Mining Act, Ontario regulation 454/17, to convert from paper to digital. It was a one-time regulation that was put in. It was completed in April 2018. All paper copies have been digitized. We're removing that because it doesn't need to be there anymore. Yet that's considered something that we shouldn't do by some of the opposition.

Moving on in the bill: When we looked at things from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks—this was one that I thought was really, really interesting. There were a number of discussions on it when it came to committee, and that's the Ontario Water Resources Act. Water-power facilities currently have to apply for a permit to take water. A permit to take water: Let's pause for a moment and think about that. If I'm taking water and I need a permit for it, that would imply that water is going from one location to another and it's not being returned. That's what I would think. Most people I've spoken to about it believe that a permit to take water is to take water out somehow.

But with water-power generation, you have water in the river and it flows over the turbine into the river. No water is taken. What has happened is, it has fallen over the turbine to turn the turbine and it remains in the river. They're not ever taking water. The question then becomes, why do you have to apply to take water if you're never taking water? We're simplifying that process.

We're not taking away any of the regulations on how this works, because they're still being regulated under the water and river improvement act, the MNR is still going to be reviewing all of this and they still have to do a class environmental assessment. That process hasn't changed, but they no longer have to go through the process of asking if they can take water even though they're never taking water. To me, that seems like something that makes an awful lot of sense.

We're also modernizing this entire process while we're doing things. I talked about the Mining Act and how we were moving from paper copies to digital copies of everything. Again, the sky must be falling, because the NDP is not going to be supporting this.

Another thing that we're doing: We're allowing permits to be issued electronically—a completely foreign concept, that the government has decided that we need to move into the 21st century and move out of the 18th century, where everything had to be on paper. Perhaps we were using quill pens still to write all of this. We're moving to an electronic process and we're receiving negative pushback on it, feedback that, no, we shouldn't be doing that. We know that going to an electronic process is more environmentally friendly, and yet we're being told that we shouldn't be doing this.

Another change that we're making with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks: Again, this is something that I know is probably going to be very detrimental; I'm not sure how, but somehow it will be. When our commercial diesel trucks go through their process every year, they have to have two types of tests

done on them. One of them is an emissions test. The other one is safety, basically, for lack of a more technical term on it. We're moving the emissions test from the environment, conservation and parks ministry over to the Ministry of Transportation. There are still all the same requirements involved, and still the same oversight actually from MECP, but MTO is now going to administer it. They are going to administer it—think about this—at the same time as the safety test. So now the commercial operator doesn't have to make two separate appointments; they don't have to do it on two separate days. One appointment doing two tests: a very radical thought process. We're going to destroy the entire trucking industry, I think, by saying that you can do this with one appointment now instead of two. But if we listen to the rhetoric of what's being put forward to us, somehow we're doing something that is going to destroy. I think this actually makes an awful lot of sense.

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The Ministry of Finance is making a change—again, a radical thought process; how could we ever come up with this idea: Administrators of pension plans will be allowed to communicate electronically. There's that word again: electronically. They can communicate electronically with the plan members. My wife hates when we get mail now. "Why couldn't they have sent it to us by email for the same thing? Why do we have to have all of this paper? Why do I have to open all of these envelopes?" This is stuff coming from my wife. It could be sent to us by email and then we'd have the record of it as we need it. It's a very interesting idea. I know it's a radical thought process to modernize how we do things.

We're streamlining processes for converting single employer pension plans into jointly sponsored pension plans. This is something we got a lot of feedback on from universities and colleges. Imagine this concept. In my community of Peterborough-Kawartha, we have Trent University and Fleming College. Imagine if they could combine their pension plans and have one administrator running both pension plans. Management fees are part of the cost of pension plans. If we can reduce the management fee and keep the same return on it, you actually have more return going back to the pension plan members. Isn't that what we're trying to do? Aren't we trying to do things in this province so that the pension plan recipients receive the maximum value from it? A radical idea: We can reduce the management costs, thereby giving a greater return to the pension plan holders. They get more value from their money. But somewhere along the line, this is being described as bad for us.

Permits waiving the requirement for pension plan administrators to provide statements to former and retired members if they can't be located after a reasonable search has been done—again, a reasonable thought process behind this. Someone passes away, but that information isn't passed on, or someone has moved, changed locations, and they didn't send any more information in; that information did not come to the administrators. How much effort should the administrator take in trying to get that information? We're now saying that after a reasonable

effort, you don't have to continue sending to that address and having it kick back to you as returned mail. It's a reasonable approach to it. It's something that will save money and end up with a higher return for the pensioners. They are all really interesting ideas; I know, it seems like it's groundbreaking that we're doing something that is going to destroy the entire world if we do this.

Speaker, this is one that I absolutely think is fabulous because what we're doing at the Ministry of Health currently—once this bill passes, it will be changed. But currently, hairdressers and barbers have to collect all of the contact information of the people who are coming in to get their hair cut. Most people probably aren't aware of that. Your hairdresser or your barber has so much information on you so that they can reach out and contact you if there is some kind of a crisis. It was probably put in place 100-and-some-odd years ago, when there was a high likelihood of contamination from the tools they were using, when we didn't have practices in place using products to disinfect and there was a likelihood of passing illness on from one client to another client and it could snowball and create a health issue. But that's not the case anymore. We're in the 21st century. It's 2019; it's not 1836.

Making these kinds of changes are things that are good for Ontario. It's good for small businesses.

As we move onto other things, think about this one for a second. With some of the regulations, the way that they were implemented, if I have a grocery store and I've got a produce department, and I have a bunch of bananas for sale—I've got a sign that says "Bananas for sale," and here's how much they are per pound—if I have a deli or a counter where I'm selling prepared food, that same banana, which could be 15 feet away, now has to have a label on it telling me all of the nutritional information, because I'm in a grocery store and I'm buying a single banana where they might be selling me coffee as well. So now I have to have all of this other information. But if I'm selling it 20 feet away in the produce aisle, I don't have to have any of that information.

That, to me, seems like a miss. Why are we doing something like that in a location like a grocery store? Because the way the regulations were written for the Healthy Menu Choices Act, that's how it was. If I'm selling an apple, I have to put a label on the apple to tell me all of the nutritional information. It seems a little bit onerous to me. The cost of doing it outweighs any of the benefit of doing it, so why are we doing it? That's a miss that was in the system previously. We've addressed that, we have fixed that, and we're making it so that it makes more sense.

I go back again to my earlier statement about Cicero and his three volumes on the laws and waxing poetically about what we should be doing and how we should be doing it. Why should we be writing laws? This is one of those cases where, if you looked at it from a commonsense approach, it didn't make sense to do it.

There's a lot of things that we're changing in this legislation, but we're doing it in a way that reduces the regulatory burden, maintains the level of safety and security for everybody, and puts us in a position where it

just makes sense. We have 382,000 regulations in this province. You can't tell me that we've created an environment that is good for the people of Ontario, that's good for businesses in Ontario. It's not.

We've heard from different companies who have moved to different jurisdictions. One in particular said that when they moved to Ohio, it was like going into a candy store. It was so much easier, so much better for them to do business. These are companies that are leaving Ontario, and when they leave Ontario, the jobs are gone. They're not coming back. We have to have legislation, then, that does things to make it easier for the company to operate in Ontario, that makes it easier for the person to live in Ontario, that allows us to thrive, and that's what Bill 132 is doing. It's reducing that burden. It's creating a better environment for Ontario. It's creating a more open environment, so that not only businesses but individuals can thrive and succeed. It's doing precisely what it is designed to do: to reduce the burden, to make a better Ontario, to be better for business and better for people. That is completely what Bill 132 is doing. It reduces that burden on individuals, it reduces the burden on businesses, and it takes a commonsense approach to things.

If the federal government is already regulating something, why do we need to have that same level of regulation? Why should we have that same reporting in Ontario that we're already receiving from the federal government? We're forcing companies now to fill out two identical reports. We're sending it to Health Canada, Health Canada sends it to us, and the individual company also sends it to us. It's the same information. Why are we forcing companies to do that type of duplication? There is no benefit to it. Those are the types of things that we're removing from the legislation in Ontario, and we're doing it in an intelligent way.

I'm going to touch on one last thing, and that is the long combination vehicles. What we learned in committee on that is that a long combination vehicle—most people don't know what they are, so I'll briefly describe it. It's a transport truck with two trailers. A long combination vehicle is one transport and two trailers. It uses 30% less fuel, 30% fewer emissions than having two transports on the road. We should be embracing this. We should be asking more companies to be doing it.

1650

Currently, there are restrictions on when those trucks can be travelling in Ontario, and we're removing some of those restrictions. They'll be allowed to travel between 7:30 a.m. and 9 a.m., and between 4:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. Now, some of the pushback, I'm sure, is going to be, "Oh, my goodness. We've got these really, really long trucks on the road. It's going to make traffic worse." What you've done is you've taken two trucks and you've turned it into one. That will actually improve traffic. It will improve traffic flow. We will be able to get our product to market when market needs it and wants it, and reduce the number of transports on the road, reduce the emissions that they emit and make Ontario better.

These are all novel concepts that are in this bill, and yet, we're getting all of this negative pushback from the

opposition—for whatever reason, I don't know. Perhaps they've taken the word "opposition" to heart, and they just are opposing for the sake of opposing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Before we proceed with further debate, it gives me great pleasure—I'd like you to focus on the west members' gallery because we have a former member, Mr. Jeff Leal, who served in this Legislature in the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Parliaments as the member from Peterborough. Welcome.

Further debate?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: The issue we see with Bill 132 is that it demonstrates the problem, or the lack of priorities, by the Conservative government. Specifically, once again, we see this focus on alcohol. We see a focus on making alcohol more accessible and making it available at airports, 24 hours a day. We see now a focus on vaping and smoking, and making it more flexible in regard to how products can be available.

But when you talk to folks throughout our province, they'll tell you that the issues that we're facing are not around alcohol—in terms of access. A pressing issue in Ontario is not people needing to drink alcohol 24 hours a day at an airport. The issues that people are facing—is our crumbling health care system. We're facing issues with respect to education. We're facing issues with respect to affordable housing and the cost of living. These are the problems that we're facing, and it's important to understand that to really see how we can improve our province, we have to understand how we got to this position. How are we here?

To do that, we have to look at history. The reality is that we had a Liberal government that, for 15 years, worked to put us in a position where our health care is at risk. We had 15 years of a Liberal government that worked to put us in a position where auto insurance rates are still rising. We had 15 years of a Liberal government that put us in a position where we have hallway medicine across our province. The Conservative government have taken a bad situation, and they've taken it from bad to worse.

Bill 132 is not addressing these pressing issues that we're facing. What are the issues that we faced beforehand and what were the circumstances that brought us to where we are today? I think a great example of seeing how we got to this position is by looking at Brampton.

Brampton is a great example of seeing how the Liberal government left Brampton behind and created the circumstances that we're dealing with today, that are now being worsened by the current government. The Liberal government had 15 years, and they hurt our province and they hurt Brampton. We can look, specifically, at the fact that Brampton is one of the fastest-growing cities in our country. It's one of the largest cities. It's the ninth-largest city in our country. Despite that, for 15 years, the Liberal government decided not to invest in Brampton. They didn't invest in our university. They didn't invest in our health care. They didn't invest in the institutions and in the services that we need to make our city better and more livable.

If we look at health care specifically, Brampton Civic Hospital was underfunded the day it opened—the day it

opened, Brampton Civic Hospital was operating over capacity—and this funding since then has been epidemic. The Liberals chose to only build one hospital in a city of 600,000, now a city of over 600,000. This is problematic. This is resulting in people having a problem accessing what should be a right: fair and dignified health care. But that's a problem that people are facing now, because we have a health care system which is not being adequately funded. Brampton has the busiest ER in our country. These are the issues that people are facing.

These are the kinds of solutions that we need proposed by the Conservative government—not a focus instead on things like being able to drink in an airport 24 hours a day or creating further flexibility with respect to the kinds of tobacco products that are available.

University: Understanding the issue of education and the university issue in Brampton is really important, because it demonstrates what the priorities are for Bramptonians. We knew it was a growing city five years ago. We know it's a growing city today. We knew it was a growing city 15 years ago, but despite that, the Liberal government didn't invest in Brampton, and they didn't put together plans to make a university. At the eleventh hour, they brought in a plan for a university, right before an election, but ultimately, they had 15 years. The university is something that Brampton deserved, not at the eleventh hour—we needed it 10 years ago; we needed it 15 years ago.

We need governments that will look at Brampton and invest in them today, but for tomorrow. We have to have vision for where we want to build the community and how it needs to go forward. Once again, we're not seeing those priorities put forward by the Conservative government, especially in Bill 132, where there's an opportunity to invest in communities, an opportunity to put forward changes that will actually help Bramptonians and Ontarians.

Let's look at auto insurance. Auto insurance is an issue that's a really big pain point in Brampton. Auto insurance is something that people are struggling with. They're still paying rates of auto insurance in Brampton that are sometimes higher than the household mortgage. This is wrong, this is unjust and this is not something that people should be faced with. But instead of addressing this issue, the Liberal government proposed a 15% reduction in auto insurance, which was ultimately a promise that they broke. They were not able to provide that 15% reduction. Instead, we saw the price of auto insurance skyrocket, and it has been skyrocketing since then. This is an issue that people are still dealing with.

Every one of these issues, from health care to affordability to education to university—every single one of these issues—has gone from bad to worse under the Conservative government. Instead of proposing changes, instead of addressing these issues, we're seeing instead a really big focus—a consistent pattern of this government since being elected is focusing on alcohol and focusing on things of that nature. After a year and a half, we have seen people continue to struggle, as they struggle to get health

care and access health care in hallways. We've seen people struggling to access the care they need in overcrowded, underfunded hospitals. We see communities like Brampton being refused the investment of a university. We see auto insurance rates skyrocketing. Literally every single issue has gotten worse. When we look at it, we see a lack of priority, a lack of investment in Brampton and a lack of investment overall in institutions that will make our communities better.

With respect to health care, let's look at the situation. Since getting elected, the Conservative government has voted against investment in Brampton's health care situation. The Conservatives have voted down investing in Brampton's health care. They voted down building an additional hospital in our city, a hospital that we desperately need, that people are struggling for. They voted down investment to convert Peel Memorial from a health centre to a hospital and fully funding Brampton Civic so we can finally end this hallway medicine. We've seen really horrendous, devastating cuts to our health care—hundreds of millions of dollars being cut to our health care.

Auto insurance is a really big issue in Brampton; it has been, and it continues to be one. Instead of proposing real change in auto insurance, we see, month after month, premiums increasing for individuals. Bramptonians still pay some of the highest car insurance rates in our country, and it's wrong. It's unjust. People are struggling. That is the kind of leadership we need for Bramptonians. We need a government that will address issues like affordability, like auto insurance, but we're not seeing that. We're seeing the opposite. We're seeing our rates increase and unaffordability and inequity increase across our province.

1700

I want to talk about education and how education is a really crucial issue in Brampton, and how cuts to education are really concerning to families. Parents don't want to see their class sizes increase—they don't. Parents don't want to see their kids having to do mandatory e-learning courses. They want to have their children taught in classrooms. That is the kind of education that parents and students want.

Over the past year, we've seen the impact of these cuts to education. Students have told me of the lack of availability of classes, how they're seeing a lack of after-school programs and they're seeing a lack of things across the board, and it's disheartening. It's actually impacting their ability to access university, to get the prerequisites they need, and they're struggling because of that. These kinds of cuts are hurtful. They have real actual impact on students, on families, on futures. That's why it's something that we should be fighting. We don't need these cuts in our communities.

Also, it's really important that we understand the kinds of communities that are being hurt by these devastating cuts, and I want to talk a little bit about the different communities in Brampton who are being hurt by these cuts to education, who are being hurt by these cuts across the board and by this lack of leadership.

I want to talk specifically about the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. The Ahmadiyya Muslim community is a

really dynamic community in Brampton. They are active across the board in every aspect of our city. They hold really amazing events on Canada Day. They held a really beautiful event where they honoured Muslim soldiers on Remembrance Day, in collaboration with Indigenous communities. It was really a moving event.

Right now, they've started a really beautiful initiative. Ahmadiyya Muslim youth have actually started a shelter bus in Ontario, where they have a bus that they've retrofitted. It's now a mobile shelter that they're driving to different at-risk and at-needs communities to provide care to those who can't access the help they need. They're providing care to people who are homeless. They're providing care to people in need.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim community is a dynamic aspect of Brampton, of Ontario, of Canada. They're always doing fundraisers for hospitals, fundraisers for different community initiatives, food drives. They're truly a great example of Canada and how beautiful and diverse the segments of Canada are. It's actually a community that has faced and continues to face persecution and human rights abuses, and despite that, in the face of the obstacles and injustices they're facing, they fled to Canada to become a dynamic and active component of Brampton, of Ontario, of Canada. The Ahmadiyya Muslim community is also a dynamic part of Brampton and Ontario, and when we talk about these cuts, it hurts them as well.

When we talk about Brampton, we see we have a vibrant Tamil community, a community that has and continues to face injustices and a genocide at the hands of the Sri Lankan government; a community that has fled this persecution, that has come to Canada to start a new life. Now they're thriving with small businesses. They're thriving with their ability to give back. They're thriving in Brampton.

The Brampton Tamil Seniors Association is one of the most active organizations. They're always fundraising for different initiatives, like the hospital. They're fundraising for different community needs. This vibrant, strong community now that is celebrating their language, that is celebrating their culture, is such a vital part of Brampton. I'm so proud to have them in our community, in Canada and in Ontario. They truly are a sign of what makes Canada beautiful. They're also being hurt by these cuts, by this lack of investment.

Across the board, we're seeing communities like these being hurt—and it's not just those two communities. There are so many more communities across the board in Brampton.

There's a dynamic Hindu community in my riding of Brampton East that has a really central mandir, the Gore Hindu Sabha Mandir, which is almost an epicentre to the Hindu community in Brampton.

We have a vibrant Gujarati community that every year holds these beautiful Garbas. Every year we see these beautiful Garbas where they bring together culture and clothing and music and dance to really celebrate their unique and beautiful culture.

Brampton will be filled with these initiatives and filled with these dances every year, as community members

from all walks of life come to partake. They are the kinds of communities that are being impacted by these cuts and by these hurtful decisions of the government.

So, Speaker, we have a lot of work to do. Bill 132 is not providing the kind of leadership that we need; it's instead further demonstrating a lack of priorities by this government. It's something that we really need to demonstrate—that communities need investment in education and investment in health care, and we don't need the direction that the government is taking with Bill 132. We need real change and real support for communities.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I am glad to rise today in support of the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, brought forward by the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

Madam Speaker, this government was elected on a promise that Ontario would be open for business, and after years of indifference from the previous government, we are fulfilling this mandate.

I was in Niagara Falls this past weekend. I was just passing by the US border, and I was so proud and so excited to see our “Welcome to Ontario. Open for Business” sign.

This bill essentially aims to eliminate three types of regulations: those that are duplicative, those that are outdated, and, finally, regulations that never served their purpose to begin with. The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019, is the third in a series of bills through Ontario's Open for Business Action Plan. The bill introduces new measures to alleviate the regulatory burden to help businesses, people, schools, families, hospitals and municipalities.

Our government is committed to bringing forward a series of red tape reduction packages over the coming years to eliminate costly requirements on Ontario businesses while improving Ontario's competitiveness. The act aims to modernize regulatory requirements that are outdated, ineffective or duplicative of federal regulations or municipal bylaws.

I now want to address an issue that I know concerns many people when they hear that the government is reducing regulatory burden on businesses. They're worried that cutting red tape could weaken the regulations that help maintain the quality of life we enjoy here in Ontario. We are not against regulation; we are against unnecessary regulations—those that are outdated, redundant or just simply do not make sense.

Ontario families expect and deserve clean air and clean water. They expect and deserve safe products and safe working conditions. Regulations are there to ensure that we maintain these standards. They're essential to protecting public health and safety and to protecting the environment. We have no interest in removing regulations that are working.

However, all too often, businesses are required to spend time and money complying with regulatory frameworks that simply do not make sense. The effort needed from the

business owner to navigate through duplicative or redundant regulations takes time away from doing their actual job. We are working towards making regulations effective, targeted and focused, while maintaining standards to keep people safe and healthy, and to protect the environment.

We understand the intense time pressures that business owners and managers live under. Most companies want to comply with regulations. They want to do their part. They just do not want to have to jump through so many hoops to do so. They would rather be filling out their order books than filling out government forms. That is why we are working to make it cheaper, easier and faster to comply with regulations so that businesses are encouraged to comply with them. And we are also using technology and online tools.

Ontario taxpayers cannot afford to keep redundant programs running. That is why removing duplicative regulations is a top priority. Redundant regulations create confusion and cause delays. We made a commitment to the people of Ontario that we will reduce unnecessary red tape by 25% by the year 2020, and this bill brings us one step closer to our ambitious goal.

Take, for example, the changes proposed for dry cleaners. Dry cleaning facilities follow strict federal and provincial regulations that have been effective at reducing environmental impacts. Our government is proposing to revoke unnecessary regulations under the Environmental Protection Act regarding mandatory training required for dry cleaning employees. The current provincial training requirements have become an unnecessary burden on business owners.

By focusing on continued federal inspections as well as provincial, environmental and safety compliance requirements, we are keeping Ontario open for business while ensuring that human health remains protected. By working with our partners in the federal government, we will enforce existing regulations while removing the redundant training that is so burdensome to businesses.

1710

Madame la Présidente, notre gouvernement prend des mesures pour améliorer et protéger l'air de l'Ontario et réduire les polluants responsables du smog, tout en économisant de l'argent des contribuables et en modernisant les services pour rendre la vie plus pratique pour les conducteurs et les entreprises.

Comme nous nous y sommes engagés dans un plan environnemental conçu en Ontario, nous lançons un nouveau programme amélioré d'essais d'émissions pour les véhicules utilitaires lourds diesel afin de cibler les plus gros pollueurs sur nos routes. Il est proposé de combiner le nouveau programme amélioré avec le programme existant de l'Ontario pour les stations d'inspection des véhicules automobiles commerciaux en 2021. La rationalisation des changements permettra aux contribuables d'économiser de l'argent et rendra la vie plus pratique aux entreprises, qui constateront une réduction des formalités administratives.

Une partie du programme remanié comprendra une application renforcée grâce à une augmentation des

inspections sur route. Ces inspections se concentreront sur les véhicules lourds et les véhicules modifiés très polluants pour s'assurer que les composants de contrôle des émissions sont installés et fonctionnent.

Notre gouvernement reconnaît les avantages de la consolidation des programmes pour éliminer les coûts. C'est pourquoi le transfert des émissions et des tests de sécurité au ministère des Transports permettra un programme plus contraignant et permettant de réaliser des économies grâce à la consolidation.

Madam Speaker, I want to highlight that in both of these proposals, reducing environmental impact is a key concern. This government knows that we must respond to the threat of climate change. That is why I was so pleased to hear that the Premier, along with his colleagues from Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, has signed an agreement to build modular nuclear reactors. These plants will create power for the next generation of Ontarians without contributing to carbon emissions. This government is committed to supporting the next generation by opening Ontario for business while championing the environment through innovation.

Our government is also working to end duplicative regulations in the pharmaceutical sector. We are taking steps to reduce duplication and align our processes for drug submissions with those of other provinces. Our government is removing the requirement for the drug notification form to be included in drug submissions. The information included on this form is currently duplicated in other parts of each drug submission. No other province requires a drug notification form. Better alignment with national processes reduces regulatory costs and makes the submission process more efficient. This change will make it simpler, faster and more cost-effective to do business here in Ontario, without compromising safeguards that protect the health and well-being of Ontarians.

Madam Speaker, Ontario is also making it easier for biosimilar pharmaceuticals to be brought to market. Currently, Ontario's submission requirements for biosimilar drugs duplicate the work of Health Canada and the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health. That is why we are going to reduce unnecessary and duplicative reviews for biosimilar drugs. Going forward, the ministry will rely on Health Canada's approval as proof that a biosimilar product is safe and effective. This change will simplify Ontario's submission requirements for biosimilar drugs and align them with Health Canada and CADTH. The end of duplicative reviews will allow biosimilars to be funded more quickly. These biosimilars are often more cost-effective than biologic drugs, while allowing Ontarians to get the treatment they need and ensuring that their health is protected. This government is promoting competition in the pharmaceutical industry, leaving us with more choices and more savings.

Through these and many other changes, the government is committed to removing redundant regulatory barriers, making life and business easier in Ontario by freeing people from the labyrinth of red tape and overlapping regulations.

Along with duplicative regulations, our government is also committed to ending ineffective regulations. When considering the amount of regulations enforced in Ontario, it is not a surprise that some regulations are ineffective. Ineffective regulations that are left on the books can cause confusion. By removing these regulations, the government will make it easier to live and work and do business in Ontario.

One example of ineffective regulation comes from the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act. It is an ineffective piece of legislation that has never been used by any of Ontario's ministries to date. Eliminating government approvals and consultations will clarify the role of government and the private sector in cluster planning. This will lead to savings in both time and money, compared to situations where industries had to create a cluster plan under the legislation.

We do not need the government to tell our job creators how to do their work for the people of Ontario. As our Premier has said many times, everybody wins when the government gets out of the way and allows businesses to do what they do best: create good jobs for the hard-working people of Ontario.

By repealing this ineffective legislation, we are continuing our ongoing commitment of responsibly reducing Ontario's regulatory burden, that has stifled the business community for years.

We know our plan to improve competitiveness and facilitate the right business conditions will bring an influx of investment, which is exactly what we want and need, and which will create good jobs right here in Ontario.

Our government's economic plan is already working. Actions taken by our government will save businesses over \$5 billion this year alone. And since taking office in June 2018, employment has increased in Ontario by 272,400 jobs.

Interjections.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Yes, that is something to clap for.

Madam Speaker, our government is committed to removing outdated regulations which serve as nothing but a barrier to Ontario's innovators and a drain to the public purse.

The Board of Negotiation under section 172 of the Environmental Protection Act provides one such example. The Board of Negotiation conducts investigations into alleged injury or damage to livestock, crops, trees or other vegetation, which may result in economic loss caused by a contaminate. Our government is committed to ensuring that polluters are held accountable. However, the Board of Negotiation is not effective. This is clear because the board has not been called upon to make an investigation for the last 20 years.

We support processes for the people of Ontario to seek compensation and legally bring settlements where injury has been established through the courts and civil action. We are proposing to eliminate an outdated method for resolving disputes over environmental impacts that result in economic loss. Revoking a board that has not been

convened in over 20 years reflects our strong commitment to streamlining government to be more efficient.

We support farmers and agricultural businesses. That is why we are committed to reducing existing duplication and overlap in investigative powers, by helping provide greater clarity for dispute resolution mechanisms.

Madam Speaker, unlike the previous government, we believe that programs and services should work more effectively, efficiently and intelligently for the people of Ontario. That is why we are rooting out outdated regulations, to ensure that government keeps out of people's way.

Ending the Board of Negotiation under the Environmental Protection Act, which has not been requested to conduct a negotiation process in over 20 years, is yet another example of our government's commitment to modernizing government and reducing duplication.

We are reducing red tape and building a more efficient Ontario by modernizing regulatory requirements.

Online drug claim processing significantly reduces the administrative burden on pharmacies and on the bureaucracy. Currently, if the patient does not pick up their prescription, that claim can be reversed electronically within seven days. Any claim reversal submitted after seven days must be processed manually, on paper. This causes an administrative burden for pharmacies, which may result in fewer claims reversed than other drug plan adjudicators, and overpayments by the ministry for claims that should have been reversed. That is why our government is making necessary investments in expanding the submission window for drug claims reversals from a week to 90 days.

This change demonstrates our commitment to implementing recommendations from the Auditor General of Ontario, and that we are willing to act on sector feedback.

Expanding the electronic submission window also aligns Ontario's requirements with those of the private sector and helps reduce overpayments. A growing acceptance of electronic reversals will also help bring Ontario's pharmacies into the 21st century.

1720

Madam Speaker, there is a need to create modern, digital reporting registries for waste programs. The current hazardous waste reporting service processes 450,000 paper documents per year, creating unnecessary burden and cost for stakeholders and the ministry.

The Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority is a non-crown, not-for-profit corporation that administers and enforces waste reduction and resource recovery legislation. The authority's responsibilities include the operation of a resource recovery digital registry service. Assigning resource productivity and recovery authority responsibility for other waste-related information services leverages the authority's existing digital registry and service delivery resources, reducing stakeholder costs. This proposal will facilitate future assignment of digital program reporting services for other waste-related programs to the authority.

Transferring waste information services to the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority is cost-

effective, as the authority will finance up-front costs and recover those and ongoing operating costs directly from the stakeholders. Costs will be lowered by leveraging existing registries as a result. This initiative makes it easier, faster and less costly to meet existing requirements.

We are also following through on the commitments in the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan to ensure that waste is properly stored, transported, recycled, recovered and disposed. Utilizing modern information technology will save time and money, ensuring that the ministry focuses on risk-based program compliance and enforcement activities so that polluters are held accountable for the waste that they create

Madam Speaker, we live in a global world. Where once most of our media came from locally printed books and magazines, now we look online to engage with and learn from the rest of the world. Repealing the Paperback and Periodical Distributors Act recognizes these changes and cleans up outdated requirements from the 1970s. This makes it easier to do business in Ontario and saves businesses and the people time and money.

Our government is committed to making Ontario open for business, open for jobs and open for opportunity. By repealing the Paperback and Periodical Distributors Act and the associated regulations, our government will reduce regulatory burdens for paperback and periodical distributors and encourage investment in Ontario's publishing industry. By getting the government out of the way, the paperback and periodicals industry will be able to focus on growing their business.

Ontarians do not consume news and literature in the same way they did when this legislation was introduced in 1971. Repealing this act recognizes these changes and cleans up outdated requirements from the 1970s. This makes it easier to do business in Ontario and saves businesses and Ontarians time and money.

Our government is working to remove unnecessary regulations to make sure that Ontario is open for business. As I said earlier, we are not against regulations in and of themselves; we are opposed to regulations that no longer make sense, either because they are outdated, because they have been made redundant or because the regulation was not effective in the first place.

The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act will make sure that, in Ontario, the government will not get in the way with unnecessary regulations. By making sure that regulations are current, non-redundant and effective, we will ensure that the people of Ontario can count on environmental health and safety, along with other regulations that make Ontario a safer, greener place to live while allowing businesses to do the job of business; that is, generating profits and creating jobs.

I hope that this is heard loud and clear: Ontario is open for business.

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

Mr. Jamie West: It's always a pleasure to speak in the Legislature. Today, we're going to talk about Bill 132. Bill 132 is another omnibus bill: nearly 100 pages, with 80

amendments to over a dozen pieces of legislation. This is a big omnibus bill. The majority of the changes made in this bill, as my colleagues from across the aisle have said, are small updates to legislation, repealing legislation that hasn't been used in years, or changes to minor rules.

Listening to the government, you might believe that this is simply a "dogs are able to go on patios" bill—and that's in there—but most people in Ontario probably don't really care one way or another. For example, my dog, Maggie, just celebrated her 12th birthday on the weekend.

Applause.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you.

She has never been to a patio with me, and she seems very happy.

Speaker, within this gigantic bill, the government has also slid in some very troubling changes. The Premier is continuing his war on the environment. He is continuing his favours to big polluters. This bill makes significant changes to the tools the province has to punish polluters and the tools municipalities and members of the public have to stand up against developments or the resource extraction projects that they feel put their communities' health and safety in danger.

Despite the massive number of changes, and there are many, this government didn't really consult with anyone on this bill, which is a theme we hear a lot here. Speaker, this follows a worrying trend that we keep seeing with the government. They bring forward legislation that will drastically change this province, often for the worst, and they provide no time for Ontarians and for experts to raise their concerns with the government. It's something I have heard recently nicknamed as ready-fire-aim legislation.

I want to speak about the consequences this bill could have on our environment. The environment is something that people in my riding of Sudbury are very concerned about, and I share their concern, because Sudbury has a long history with the environment. Within my lifetime, we've gone from a city so polluted by sulphur and so scarred by acid rain that literally all the rocks were black in Sudbury. Growing up in Sudbury, I thought that rocks naturally turned black if they were exposed to oxygen. I thought it was like rust for a pop can. I didn't know it had anything to do with acid rain.

For years, Sudbury was best known as the place that NASA tested astronauts for the moon landing because of how similar our rocks were to the surface of the moon. For years, Sudbury was best known as the home of the superstack, the world's largest smokestack. The theory back then for environmental change was the solution to pollution is dilution, and as long as there's land in your backyard, we could blow it out somewhere else.

You fast-forward through my lifetime and Sudbury is now best known for our decades-long re-greening program that has changed the face of our city. If you fast-forward through my lifetime, Sudbury is now best known for our pollution controls. I want to point out that these are government-mandated pollution controls. We didn't do these because the government said, "Figure it out on your own. Decide if you want to." The government specifically

said, "You cannot pollute as much as you are." We created a city where there is so little pollution escaping into the environment that Vale, the company that owns the superstack, is now discussing removing it.

Today, we're at a turning point. The decisions we make in this Legislature literally will determine what kind of planet we leave for our children and for future generations. That's not rhetoric. It literally will; signs show it. The decisions we make in this Legislature will determine if our children will live safe and healthy lives and if we'll have a safe and healthy environment for our kids and for our grandkids. Speaker, everything is on the line.

This government, though, is behaving like it doesn't believe in climate change, like it doesn't believe pollution is a problem. This government is behaving like it doesn't believe that there are experts or that they should listen to the experts. Sadly, the government is behaving like it doesn't believe in our children.

There are a number of concerning changes proposed in this legislation that will limit the ability of Ontarians to stand up for the environment. There are a number of concerning changes that will weaken the consequences for big polluters. The legislation makes it easier and makes it cheaper for those who spew pesticides where they shouldn't. With this legislation, it will be easier and cheaper to dump toxic chemicals into the air or water or landscape. For example, Bill 132 makes amendments to the Pesticides Act that remove the requirement for Ontario to review and sign off on the use of pesticides in the province. Earlier, the member from Kingston and the Islands was talking about the blue-green algae from pesticides in our province. Bill 132 eliminates the Ontario Pesticides Advisory Committee. It also eliminates the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre. It stacks the deck against people who want to appeal the developments that could hurt their communities. It also removes the ability of municipalities to make zoning requirements that prohibit an aggregate mine from establishing in a certain area.

Speaker, I am from Sudbury. I love mining. I know we can do it safely, but taking away important tools that municipalities have to protect the natural environment is not cutting red tape; it's harming the environment. That weakens municipalities' ability to decide how to best plan for their communities.

Strangely, Speaker, this bill also removes the requirement for employers to notify Ontario labour when they bring a new chemical into the workplace. Right now, before the bill gets rammed through, manufacturers, suppliers and distributors are required to let the Ministry of Labour know whenever a new toxic substance will be supplied to Ontario workplaces. This bill is going to remove that requirement.

It also takes away the power of the Ministry of Labour to order an assessment to determine whether or not the new toxic substance will endanger workers. Bill 132 also weakens fines that individuals and corporations will pay for violating a variety of acts: the Environmental Protection Act, the Nutrient Management Act, the Ontario Water

Resources Act and the Pesticides Act. This government, for some reason, believes the best way we can reduce pollution is when polluters pay less—when they pay less for spilling contaminants into our waterways, when they pay less for misusing pesticides, when they pay less for damaging our environment. They believe that the best way to reduce pollution is for polluters to pay less for illegal sewer discharges, or selling pesticides without a permit, or failing to have a certified operator operating a drinking water system. What could possibly go wrong with that? And when polluters pay less for violating terms or permits to take water, I know what you're thinking: That will teach them a real strong lesson. They'll never do it again.

1730

This government for some reason believes that the best way to reduce pollution is to remove the measures that make polluters pay per day and remove the measures that make polluters pay per contravention. What we're doing is, we're passing legislation that will remove the disincentives that encouraged polluters to clean up their mess as soon as possible. We're removing disincentives that encourage polluters to avoid making dangerous mistakes again.

Just to put it in perspective, if there were a company and it illegally discarded pollutants into a water source over a number of days, the company right now would be liable for a fine of \$100,000 every day that it pollutes. So let's say there's five days: It's \$100,000—

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's \$500,000.

Mr. Jamie West: It's \$500,000. Good. I know sometimes the government struggles with math, so I like to work it out together.

Under the new rules, the same company would face a one-time fine of \$200,000. That's an increase, according to the government, because it was \$100,000 per day. Now it's \$200,000 total, and \$200,000 is much larger. But it takes simple logic and a little bit of math to see it's not the case, because \$500,000 for five days is much greater than \$200,000 as a grand total. In fact, if I had a leak and it cost me more than \$200,000 to fix it, I might not fix it. I would just let it leak. It's basic economics—\$200,000 to fix it or \$200,000 for the fine?

When the fine is capped to only apply once for each violation of the act rather than each day, polluters will inevitably lose that sense of urgency to quickly clean up contaminants. If the max fine is \$200,000, why would it make any difference to polluters if they waited a few days or if they waited a few weeks or a few months? And while those days, weeks and perhaps months pass, the environment could be permanently damaged, putting the health of the natural ecosystem and the health of the people in our communities at risk.

These changes open more opportunities for pollution, not less. These changes threaten the health of Ontarians. I can't imagine a more obvious step backwards in the fight to protect our environment and to tackle climate change. We need to discourage people from polluting, and we need to incentivize taking every step possible to prevent the release of dangerous substances into our natural habitat.

This isn't a new idea; we've been doing this since the 1960s. In the 1960s, we figured out that indiscriminate use of pesticides and harmful pollution hurt our environments and it hurt our health. Since then, governments have passed legislation to protect the environment. Since then, communities have come together to advocate for greater environmental protections, protections that encourage individuals and encourage corporations to do as much as possible to limit the release of dangerous chemicals.

I mentioned earlier that my community of Sudbury has a long history of working to rehabilitate our environment and to re-green our community after massive pollution. It's something I'm very proud of, so I'm going to brag a little about the stuff that we've done. The story of Sudbury is a case study of what can be achieved when residents, climate activists, governments and industry all come together to make a greener, cleaner, healthier and more sustainable community. I've talked about this in the Legislature in the past and I'll do it again in the future, because it really is a success story to be copied around the world.

When I grew up in Sudbury it looked like a totally different place than today: very, very few trees—excellent for sliding, not so good for the environment. Most of the landscape was this black rock that I talked about earlier. There were random big grey stumps all over the place that you could pick up and throw around as a kid, which was fun for playing like you were the Hulk.

The amount of SO₂ in the air—I didn't know it as a kid, but it was actually twice the legal limit. There was an exception for the corporations; I guess that was cutting some red tape as well. But you would get this thick phlegm in your mouth from the SO₂ and you would spit. Everyone spat. I remember my grandmother just spitting while she was talking. Our natural environment was incredibly polluted.

But today, Speaker, Sudbury is a beautiful city. We have many trees. We have healthy lakes. We have parks, nature trails. Just this summer, I joined volunteers at Junction Creek. We spent all day releasing brook trout into Junction Creek. Just for context, when I was growing up, Junction Creek was this milky yellow, sometimes orange colour. It often had this chemical rainbow up on the surface, like if you've ever spilled gas into a puddle. Growing up, nothing lived in Junction Creek, nobody went into Junction Creek and nothing would even grow on the banks of Junction Creek. Fast forward, and the Junction Creek Stewardship Committee has reversed that and cleaned it up to the point where we're releasing brook trout.

Since then, Sudbury has gained an international reputation for environmental activism. A number of organizations and individuals based in our community are working to protect the environment and tackle climate change. Bragging again about Sudbury, Rainbow Routes is an organization that advances and promotes nature trails. Literally anywhere in Sudbury, you can walk about 50 feet and there's a trail that will bring you through the bush. reThink Green is an organization working on regional environmental initiatives that create more sustainable

communities. The Greater Sudbury Watershed Alliance works to improve the health of the watershed and inform the public of the importance of the waterways to the health and safety of our community.

And then Fridays for Future—I want to talk about Sophia Mathur. She founded Fridays for Future in Sudbury. She's been doing this for one year and three months now—just celebrated the one-year anniversary. That's leadership in someone who's 13 years old, who's also one of the group of youth who is suing the province for climate targets.

I could go on and on with the actions Sudbury has done, the concerns we have with environmental controls and how there are fewer and fewer deterrents to polluting, but I want to leave time for my colleagues. The government is ramming through this legislation and putting much at risk in the process, and so I'm encouraging the other MPPs to consider this. The parts of the bill that are necessary, and small, are fine to cancel, but the rest we should vote against.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I'm happy to rise today to speak to Bill 132, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act.

Last week, Statistics Canada announced that employment in Ontario increased by 15,400 in November. Since our government came into office, employment in Ontario has risen by 271,600, Madam Speaker. Our government is committed to making Ontario business friendly—I would say more friendly. Our goal is to reward the job creators, not to punish them. We want to attract the investment and harness the talent of highly educated folks in Ontario. That is what our government is doing, and the numbers are proving it.

In my riding of Markham–Thornhill, I have spoken to many business owners—hundreds of business owners—service providers and front-line workers over my career, in my former life as a councillor and as an MPP. From restaurant owners, hairdressers, small manufacturers and pharmacists to skilled trades workers and truck drivers, I have listened to their stories and the challenges they have faced doing business in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, today there are more than 470,000 small businesses across Ontario. These job creators are the lifeblood of our economy. They represent almost 98% of all business in the province and about one third of private sector employment—just over two million jobs—and play a significant role in the economy by providing goods and services to larger companies, consumers and government.

Madam Speaker, why are we doing this? Our government is committed to helping small businesses grow and succeed across all industries and communities in the province. We are doing this by lowering the cost of doing business and making sure that Ontario is a place where entrepreneurs can thrive. In order to sustain economic development and growth, we have to make government work better for people and for business. Outdated regulations and excessive compliance requirements cost businesses time and money. This is equally true when small

and medium-sized businesses must contend with high taxes and burdensome red tape.

Our regulatory vision is one which people are better served by local and provincial government, businesses are unshackled to do what they do best—create jobs—and municipalities are free to build and invest in their communities and deliver efficient, effective services to their residents.

Municipal governments have so many layers of rules and regulations. I could talk about hours and hours when I was a former councillor. Every time you start bringing report after report and document after document—even getting the zoning for small businesses, for a doctor's office or a dentist's office—it takes years to get the building permit to get things done. It was really a frustration. I saw it through my own eyes and I was crying inside. All the red tape and the bureaucracies that are built in in Ontario—it's not moving forward, and so many things are happening.

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There's still work to do, Madam Speaker. The regulatory burden that has made economic and investment growth in Ontario difficult can't be undone overnight. Under the previous Liberal government, Ontario's regulatory burden grew to become the worst in Canada. As a consequence, Ontario lost its competitive advantage, which cost the province opportunities for economic growth and shipped good-paying jobs for hard-working Ontarians out of the province to other jurisdictions where it is easier to do business, like the US. Scores of unnecessary regulations unfortunately unique to Ontario have contributed to the province losing its place as the economic engine of Canada.

Burdensome regulations have also had a negative impact on hard-working, everyday Ontarians, making their interactions with government and access to services unnecessarily difficult. Many regulatory requirements are simply inefficient, out of date or duplicate federal or municipal rules.

Madam Speaker, we can already see the businesses in Ontario are benefiting from our initiatives to reduce red tape. For example, by 2020, it is expected that businesses in Ontario will be able to save \$400 million annually. Since 2018, we have lowered the costs to doing business in this province by \$338 million.

In November 2018, we passed Bill 47, the Making Ontario Open for Business Act, which amended employment standards and labour relations to make it easier for employers to hire and easier for workers to find work.

In April 2019, we passed Bill 66, the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, which reduced red tape across 12 economic and government sectors and put this province on the path towards our target of saving companies \$400 million per year in their compliance costs, as well as reducing the number of regulatory requirements affecting businesses by at least 25%.

Madam Speaker, I really want to emphasize here that our government is not against regulation. We are not anti-regulation. If people are concerned that our government's

initiative to reduce the red tape implies we are making it easier for businesses to skirt health and workplace safety protections, that is not the case. We are just as committed to our economic vision as we are to regulations that protect our environment and our health and workplace safety. What this government is against is outdated and unnecessary regulations that burden growth in a highly competitive global market.

But I would also like to note, Madam Speaker, that streamlining government regulation and making government more efficient is not only about making Ontario's economy a better place to do business; it is also about the quality of government service. Whether it is a local government, a school board, a hospital or a university, we want to ensure that service providers across government are investing time and valuable resources where it counts the most. It shouldn't be wasted on unnecessary administration or bureaucratic overlap. It should be going to the front lines where it belongs: to our hospital beds, to our classrooms, to our municipal services.

Madam Speaker, in the countless conversations I have had with constituents and small business owners in my riding, this is the message I have heard: We want government to respect the taxpayers' money, to protect and enhance key government priorities such as health care and education, and to get government out of the way where it doesn't belong.

Bill 132 contains over 80 proposals to reduce red tape and update and streamline existing regulations. That is why I rise today to support this important piece of legislation. Bill 132 will make it easier for individuals, government institutions and businesses to comply with regulatory frameworks, and will further modernize our approach to enforcement. The amendments to the Algoma University Act, 2008, and Ontario College of Art and Design University Act, 2002, are a case in point.

The Algoma University Act, 2008, provides that the university may grant bachelor degrees only in certain programs. The act is amended to permit the university to confer bachelor degrees in any arts or science program. A further amendment is made to permit the university to confer degrees, award certificates and diplomas in any and all branches of learning.

The Ontario College of Art and Design University Act, 2002, provides that the only baccalaureate degrees the university may grant are bachelor of fine arts and bachelor of design degrees. The act is amended to permit the university to also confer a bachelor of arts degree and a Doctor of Philosophy degree. A further amendment is made to permit the university to confer degrees and awards certificates and diplomas in any and all branches of learning.

These changes will grant OCAD and Algoma University full degree-granting authority, saving both schools valuable time and money, and giving greater latitude to focus on student success and achievement.

Our government is committed to making it easier for universities and colleges to train students for high-demand careers. These amendments are in line with our government's objective to update the degree consent process for

colleges and universities, and to streamline the program funding eligibility approval process for post-secondary institutions.

The current approval process for new programs and degrees can take up to two years. These changes will help reduce the approval timeline to three to six months. It will help reduce unnecessary delays and regulatory burdens on our universities and colleges, allowing them to offer programs tailored to labour market demand more efficiently, and increasing program choices for students.

Another example: Bill 132 will see the 407 Express Toll Route—ETR—enforcement fee switch to a one-stop payment option. This will allow Highway 407 Express Toll Route customers to pay all outstanding fines at once to clear their licence plate denial. The changes would add a \$20 enforcement fee as part of the licence plate denial notice, making it easier for drivers to pay their outstanding balances.

Amending the Ontario Public Drug Programs reporting requirements under the Ontario Drug Benefit Act is another example. Current legislation requires that the executive officer of the Ontario Public Drug Programs prepare an annual report to the Minister of Health, which is no longer the preferred way for stakeholders to find the information they need. To address this, Bill 132 will eliminate the requirement for the annual report and focus efforts on providing transparent and current information through timely, accessible and efficient channels, such as the Ministry of Health website and monthly formulary updates.

Changes to pension plans are another example. Bill 132 will introduce greater regulatory flexibility for transferring assets from single-employer pension plans to new jointly sponsored pension plans. Pension plans are an important part of Ontarians' retirement future, and the government is making these changes to ensure their sustainability and affordability while reducing costs and burdens to administer them.

This proposed amendment to the Pension Benefits Act—it's called "PBA"—will empower the chief executive officer of FSRA, the Financial Services Regulatory Authority, with the discretion to vary or waive certain prescribed requirements for the conversion of single-employer pension plans to jointly sponsored pension plans. This change enables some conversions in Ontario to be completed more quickly and efficiently, allowing employers to move to a JSPP model.

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Bill 132 will also streamline the process for finding missing pension beneficiaries. Pension plan administrators are required to provide periodic statements to all pension plan beneficiaries. This is difficult and costly for plan administrators when former and retired members cannot be located. In cases where plans have missing beneficiaries, pension plan administrators have indicated that the costly search can sometimes be greater than the value of the pension benefit. This proposed amendment to the pension plan act would provide the chief executive officer of the Financial Services Regulatory Authority with the

discretion to waive the requirement for pension plan administrators to provide biennial statements to former and retired members if the CEO is satisfied that the administrator has made a reasonable effort to locate such members and has not been able to locate them, reducing the burden for pension plan administrators while ensuring reasonable efforts are made.

Moreover, Bill 132 will allow pension plan administrators to make electronic communication the default method for communicating with plan members. Electronic communication from plan administrators to pension plan members currently requires individuals to opt in to electronic communication, leading most administrators to rely on paper communications which are costly and inefficient. The 2019 budget announced that the government is considering legislative changes to the Pension Benefits Act to help facilitate further electronic communication between plan administrators and plan members. This proposed amendment would allow plan administrators to use electronic communication as a default method to communicate with their members, while ensuring that plan members have the opportunity to opt out of electronic communication at any time if they wish to do so.

These amendments are just a few of the action items proposed by Bill 132. However, I believe that the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act will help individual Ontarians, small and medium-sized businesses, as well as government institutions better serve their constituents and their customers. Madam Speaker, and to all members of this chamber, if we are to continue making Ontario a place that is friendly for business and investment, where government services are easy to navigate and comply with and where government overall is less expensive, then we must pass this bill.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to have just a couple of minutes' opportunity to get some thoughts on Bill 132, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019, which is interestingly named. I always point that out, because government after government names their bills to sort of present a story that, when you delve into the bill, you realize is not what actually is going to be happening in the province as a result of this. The government says ad nauseam that this bill will somehow make it easier to do business. They say that that is what they have heard from the broader community or from business. But I wanted to share—actually, Speaker, I was hoping to have a big, huge chunk of time to get on the record much of what we heard at committee, what didn't make it to this government and didn't, certainly, make it through the committee phase and into the changes in this third reading bill that we have in front of us, but I will condense it.

I have a couple of comments about the process. My colleagues have eloquently explained this to the government. I was in the House last week and listened to the member from Waterloo and the member from London West break it down and present to this government the things that they didn't seem interested in hearing at

committee. Group after group, community after community, came before the committee and said, "Hold the presses. There are problems here. There are dangerous risks and concerns. We want you to make changes. We want you to address this." And the government sort of seemed to have their fingers in their ears, like, "Na-na-na-na-na. It's a done deal. Don't worry about it. We can now say we've travelled it"—so they pat themselves on the back. That's unfortunate.

I will read something, though, from the regional municipality of Durham. Many of my colleagues across the way—the MPP for Pickering–Uxbridge, the MPP for Whitby, the MPP for Durham, the MPP for Ajax, the MPP for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—were also copied on this, so they're well aware. This was from the regional municipality of Durham, and this is in response to the Environmental Registry of Ontario posting on Bill 132.

They said, "As a general observation, a 30-day comment period is insufficient for a municipality to properly review a lengthy bill such as Bill 132, assess the effect on our operations, and provide a submission endorsed by regional council to the province. Consequently, the comments in attachment 1 represent regional staff's initial assessment of the impacts of the bill." I have a huge chunk of recommendations that I'm happy to share with the government if they'd like to make the time, but I won't have the time during debate today.

They also said, "We were disappointed to see that changes proposed to the Aggregate Resources Act, posted for 30 days of public review and input on October 4, 2019, were already incorporated into a bill introduced on October 28, before the public consultation on the Aggregate Resources Act had even concluded.

"We hope our comments, concerns and recommendations to strengthen the provisions in Bill 132 will still be taken into consideration."

Speaker, I hope so too. But as they pointed out, and as we've already heard, they posted for input, and while that door was still supposedly open for input, they already incorporated what they were going to into a bill before that public consultation had even concluded.

That is not consulting in good faith, I don't think. "Hey, we want to hear from you. But we've already introduced the bill, and we've already included what we might hear. We don't care. But we can tick that check box that says we consulted."

I'm getting email after email from constituents. This one says, "I am writing to ask you to vote no on Bill 132...."

"The bill purports to eliminate unnecessary red tape, but in reality it loosens essential environmental laws that keep our air, water, and public health safe from pollution.

"Bill 132 makes things easier for polluters, letting them off the hook for contaminating our environment. It also weakens the laws that keep industry in check and that limit the risks posed by pesticides and resource extraction."

They list five reasons why they want us to vote no on this bill. I'm running out of time, but that's one from a constituent.

Another one:

“To my MPP,

“I’m writing to you as a concerned constituent in your riding, about the Ontario government’s proposed changes to monetary penalties for polluters (schedule 9...).

“Despite the claim by the Minister of the Environment ... that proposed changes in schedule 9 will hold polluters accountable, they won’t. Eliminating daily fines and capping total fines will make it easier and cheaper for industry in Ontario to illegally dump sewage in our water, use toxic pesticides and pollute the air.” It goes on.

Speaker, I’m cognizant of time, but I will say that we have heard time and time again from these benches, and from the folks that came to committee, that there was not fair access to process, that this is the wrong direction and that there are dangerous pieces to this. The government is

not only not interested; they are unwilling to consider that, to factor that in, and to put forward a piece of legislation that would actually do right by the province and not do harm.

I say shame on this government. I am sorry to see that this seems to be how they do business in the province of Ontario, which seems to be to just wreck it and lay waste.

Speaker, I understand I’m out of time. I sure would like to get going, but I’ll sit down. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.
Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (IND)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Vacant	Orléans	
Vacant	Ottawa—Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Wayne Gates
Randy Hillier, Andrea Khanjin
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Peter Tabuns
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Kaleed Rasheed
Jeremy Roberts, Amarjot Sandhu
Sandy Shaw, Donna Skelly
Dave Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Daryl Kramp
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

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Marit Stiles, Vijay Thanigasalam
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Lorne Coe, Parm Gill
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Gurratan Singh, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
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Catherine Fife, John Fraser
Goldie Ghamari, France Gélinas
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Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
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