

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 148

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N^o 148

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Thursday
27 February 2020

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Jeudi
27 février 2020

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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



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

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 February 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 février 2020

The House met at 1015.

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

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 74(c), the member for Nickel Belt has filed with the Clerk a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 175, An Act to amend and repeal various Acts respecting home care and community services. The order for second reading of Bill 175 may therefore not be called today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: There has been a lot of interest about the Ford government's plan to privatize Employment Ontario, ODSP and OW services through pilot programs in Hamilton, Niagara and Peel.

Ontarians are angry that their tax dollars are going to be used to pay foreign companies Fedcap and WCG to administer these programs, particularly because these companies are motivated by their own profit margins instead of achieving the best results for vulnerable people. These companies only get paid when a job match is made.

The Income Security Advocacy Centre points out: "These changes could create the wrong incentives for service providers to focus on maximizing their own revenues at the expense of helping recipients."

With this model, companies are incentivized to push people, such as those with disabilities, towards any job, regardless of whether it's appropriate for them. We've seen evidence of this in Australia and the UK, where similar privatization schemes have been a disaster.

Smokey Thomas, the president of OPSEU, has said, "All this does is create wealth for a foreign interest. It creates no benefit for people who get social assistance in Ontario. They will simply enter another kind of poverty—the working poor—or they will end up homeless or worse."

I'm very concerned about the precedent this sets for the rest of the province. We need to help people find work, but it must be stable, safe, meaningful work, appropriately suited to individuals and their needs. This ill-conceived privatization plan will not get us there.

ZERO DISCRIMINATION DAY

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: On March 1, like every year, the world will observe Zero Discrimination Day, recognized by UNAIDS.

Zero Discrimination Day is observed to acknowledge and respect the rights of everyone to live a full and productive life, and live it with dignity. This day is observed to promote equality before the law and in practice of the law throughout all of the member countries of the United Nations.

Zero Discrimination Day highlights how people can become informed about and promote inclusion, compassion, peace and, above all, a movement for change.

This initiative, started by UNAIDS in the year 2014, is helping to create a global movement of solidarity to end all forms of discrimination based, for example, on income, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

1020

On Zero Discrimination Day this year, the UN is challenging the discrimination faced by women and girls in all their diversity in order to raise awareness and mobilize action to promote equality and empowerment for women and girls. These rights violations disproportionately harm women and girls.

Ultimately, gender inequality affects everyone's health and well-being. Even in the 21st century, laws that uphold women's basic rights and protect them against harm and unequal treatment are far from the norm. Together, we need to affirm the oneness of the human community and unveil ways to live together in peace.

WEST PARK HEALTHCARE CENTRE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I am so happy to rise today to talk about West Park Healthcare Centre. Last week, I had the opportunity to join the West Park community at their Big Dig, as they celebrated breaking ground on their new hospital. This project will not only mean better health care in our community, but it will also mean economic and job opportunities in my riding. A new, bigger centre will mean better, faster access to specialized care folks need. Once opened, this facility will be a job engine for our community for decades. It will attract more nurses, doctors, technicians, support and facilities staff.

My constituents know this project will lead to new and sustained growth for years to come. Residents of York South–Weston will be able to take particular pride in the new facility, because they will have built it. Thanks to a community benefit agreement, this project will be hiring folks from our community. These jobs will support our

friends and neighbours as they raise their families and spend at local businesses. This is good news for everyone.

Thank you to everyone involved in advocating for this project. Congratulations on your success. You should all be proud of your leadership, and I hope you know how much this means to everyone here in York South–Weston.

COVID-19

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I rise today to address the House on the global health crisis regarding the coronavirus.

According to the latest WHO report, there are 80,239 confirmed cases of coronavirus. The disease has killed more than 2,500 people. While the vast majority of cases are contained to China, the disease has spread to dozens of countries in Southeast Asia, Europe, the Americas and the Middle East. As of today, 12 cases of coronavirus—five in Ontario and seven in British Columbia—have been confirmed.

Mr. Speaker, I have met with many businesses and organizations since the outbreak to hear their concerns. Two weeks ago, I visited Pacific Mall in my Markham–Thornhill riding. Management told me they installed additional hand sanitizers and hired extra staff to continuously clean washrooms, escalators and stairway handrails. This is but one example of how local businesses are responding to community concerns about the spread of coronavirus.

Mr. Speaker, many people are hesitant visiting restaurants or community celebrations. We need to change this perception and put the right perspective into place regarding the coronavirus. I want to thank the front-line health care workers who are doing everything in their power to protect Canadians.

ALZHEIMER SOCIETY

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, I recently met with Carol Walters from the Alzheimer’s Society of London and Middlesex to learn about the fantastic work they do in our community. Their programs offer cost savings to our province.

Over 240,000 Ontarians live with dementia today, and it will double within the next 20 years. Currently, 60% of people with dementia live at home and lead active lives. The Alzheimer Society offers respite programs to caregivers who make huge sacrifices—their jobs, their hobbies, their social lives—and save Canada’s health care system an estimated \$25 billion.

First link care navigation puts individuals trained in dementia care in direct contact with families. Care navigators support families at every stage of the dementia journey.

FLCNs are operating at capacity. This program needs \$1.55 million more for front-line staff to support 5,000 more people living with dementia and their caregivers. This investment keeps Ontarians in their homes and alleviates the burden on our health care system.

Ontario needs a dedicated funding stream for dementia-specific services. Ontario must also fully implement recommendation 21 of the Public Inquiry into the Safety and Security of Residents in the Long-Term Care Homes Sys-

tem, and, further, dedicate \$4 million to provide the Alzheimer Society’s U-First! training in long-term-care facilities across the province.

I urge this government to do the right thing and support the Alzheimer Society in the upcoming budget, and to support folks living with dementia as well as their caregivers.

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Mr. Randy Hillier: I am pleased that the government is finally giving the public an opportunity to provide feedback and express their concerns about Ontario’s conservation authorities.

As many in this House will know—including the current minister—I have had significant dealings with the conservation authorities in my riding, both before being elected and since. Seldom have they been very enjoyable or productive. I would argue that conservation authorities have done more harm than good in rural Ontario. I cannot count the number of times I have intervened and advocated for my constituents over unjust demands, incompetence, misapplication of regulations, or actions that were ultra vires. What little good they do is often overshadowed by the harm they cause. They are the single greatest cause for diminished development in much of rural Ontario.

I encourage everyone to participate in the public consultation process to make your ideas and concerns known. With today’s story, don’t be surprised if Liberal leadership candidate Steven Del Duca also calls in. The cut-off for feedback is March 13, so time is of the essence. You can learn more on my website, randyhilliermpp.com/cafeedback.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: On February 22, we acknowledged Human Trafficking Awareness Day here in Ontario and across all Canada.

Human trafficking is a problem that occurs in our communities—in our largest cities like Mississauga, and in our smallest towns and rural areas. Sex trafficking makes up to 90% of human trafficking cases, and 93% of trafficking victims are born here in Canada. Ontario alone accounts for roughly two thirds of all human trafficking cases that were reported to the police. Traffickers predominantly go after young women. Although it can happen to almost anyone, almost three quarters of people who are trafficked are under the age of 25, and the average age of recruitment is as young as 13 years old. Those being exploited for sex are often young girls who become a victim to manipulation and exploitation by criminals who see their vulnerability and innocence as something to take advantage of. These criminals are selling our young women to make lucrative profits because, as Minister MacLeod said, you can sell cocaine only once, but you can sell a young woman many times, day after day.

I was honoured to host several anti-human trafficking round tables across Ontario with my colleague PA Karahalios. We have heard from front-line workers, police enforcement, survivors, and representatives from Indigenous and

francophone communities. It was both shocking and saddening.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the leadership of our Premier, Doug Ford, our Solicitor General, and our minister responsible for women and children's issues as we develop an anti-human-trafficking strategy here in Ontario. Also, our partners, such as Truckers Against Trafficking and sexual assault centres, because—

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

I'm going to ask the members to quiet down so that we can hear the member who has the floor.

SIKH GENOCIDE AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Gurratan Singh: In November 1984, state-organized and -armed mobs killed thousands of Sikhs in the streets of Delhi and destroyed Sikh businesses and gurdwaras. This violence and other human rights abuses that Sikhs have faced have left a deep trauma and pain within us, but it did something even worse: The violence against the Sikh community set a precedent which has been used against other minority groups in India, and that's exactly what happened. We have seen violence against Dalits, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and other minority groups within India.

In 2002, Muslims were killed in Gujarat. In 2019, we saw Kashmir put under lockdown, with a ban on Internet which continues until today. That same year, we saw the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, which discriminates against Muslims. The very same week that I put forward my bill to recognize Sikh Genocide Awareness Week, we saw Muslims being killed in the streets of Delhi, their businesses set on fire and their masjids attacked.

1030

That is why it is so important that we recognize Sikh Genocide Awareness Week. Because India was not held accountable for the Sikh genocide, it has emboldened India to continue to spread human rights abuses. That's why I'm asking all members in this House to come together to support this bill, not just for the Sikh community to heal but for us to fight for a better and more just world and future for us all.

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

Mr. Deepak Anand: Two years ago, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers received unanimous consent from all parties to make March 1 Professional Engineers Day in Ontario. Our government has great respect for the engineering profession and we will continue to support our local engineers. Some 85,000 professional engineers and nearly 250,000 engineering graduates in Ontario are the economic engine of our province. They help create jobs, foster new technologies and, in turn, build value for our economy.

Ontario is experiencing a fundamental technological and economic shift, creating a demand for a highly skilled workforce. As Premier Ford says, our economy is on fire. More than ever we need economic prosperity to increase the revenue of the Ontario government so that we can reduce

the deficit, pay off our debt and make further investments in the services that we need—and all that without borrowing from our children.

Mr. Speaker, engineers believe in social responsibility as a commitment to place public safety and interest ahead of all. For the future of our province, it is critical that we recognize the importance of our engineers for the prosperity and growth of our communities and the quality of life Ontarians deserve.

From a fellow engineer, I want to wish all engineers across the province a happy Professional Engineers Day. I would like to recognize the engineers sitting here. Engineer Jerome James, engineer Pappur Shankar, engineer—

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

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

Mr. Stan Cho: This Sunday, March 1, is Professional Engineers Day in Ontario. I would like to encourage the members of this House and all Ontarians to recognize and celebrate the incredible and invaluable work that professional engineers do in a variety of sectors across our economy and the important role they play in communities around our great province.

Professional engineers are often on the front lines of innovation and create paradigm-changing solutions that drive and improve the world around us. They are problem solvers, collaborators and outside-the-box thinkers.

In 2018, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers received formal recognition from the Ontario Legislature that every March 1 be declared Professional Engineers Day. Professional Engineers Day celebrates the vital role that professional engineers play in designing, creating and safeguarding our province. These men and women come from diverse backgrounds and often from countries all over the world. They work in both the private and public sectors, and they work in engineering fields as diverse as they are—from civil and chemical to electrical and bio-mechanical. They design our roads and bridges, write computer codes, power our cities, turn garbage into fuel, build communities, keep our drinking water safe and so much more.

Willowdale is home to both the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers and Professional Engineers Ontario. I've had the opportunity to learn first-hand about the incredible work engineers do on the job and the leadership they show in communities like mine, working to inspire students to go into STEM, supporting countless community organizations with their time, and embracing and encouraging diversity in our province.

This weekend, let's all get out there and celebrate Professional Engineers Day.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I would like to welcome a young leader and friend from Humber River–Black Creek, Mosab

Anwary, who is participating in the model Parliament here at Queen's Park. Mosab, I'm proud of you.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a number of visitors here today in both galleries, as well as the members' gallery, and rather than naming them all, I'm going to just name the organizations they're here to represent. Welcome Save Our Water, Wellington Water Watchers, Grandmothers Act to Save the Planet, Sisters of St. Joseph and Great Lakes Commons. We were in the media studio earlier today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome to the chamber the grandparents of our page captain today, Michael Ray: his grandparents Michael Ray and Leslie Ray. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Doly Begum: I would like to welcome Shari Jackman, from my riding of Scarborough Southwest, and Saara Kanji, a fourth-year politics and governance student from Ryerson doing a placement in my office. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to welcome Matthew and Laura Aston from Mount Forest in my riding of Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome the Canadian Federation of Students members, and from Nipissing University Student Union, Hannah Mackie, and a former student of mine from York University, Masoud Said.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to welcome the members from the Ontario Electrical League here today, and a kind welcome and introduction to a former employer, Gord Kemp, here with the OEL.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I too would like to welcome and introduce members from the Ontario Electrical League. We have Stephen Sell, Ron Bergeron, Shawn Blacklock, Sean Craig, Rob De Ciantis, Cameron Hann, Gord Kemp, Danny Kotsopoulos, Rick Leduc, Dale MacDonald, Doug McGinley, John McGowan, Barry Moss, Walter Pamic, Brian Peters, Kyle Robertson, Jason Thompson, Brian Westermann and Morgan Cowl. Welcome to Queen's Park, and thanks for all you do.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome Michau van Speyk back to the Legislature, from the Ontario Autism Coalition, and other families who are joining us soon in the chamber. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's absolutely my pleasure to welcome to this House representatives of OREA. It's a big day for OREA. Thank you so much to Karen Cox, Johnmark Roberts, Tehreem Kamal, Jason Lagerquist and Mike Stahls for making the trek to Queen's Park for this special moment.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to welcome Andrea Carmona from Mississauga-Malton, and engineer Jerome James and engineer Yousef Kimiagar. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I had a great discussion this morning with Ron Bergeron—from my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry—from the Ontario Electrical League.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'd like to introduce students from Burlington, for the Ontario model Parliament—one is Jocelyn Stel and the other is Samuel Hoogsteen—that are here today. They were here yesterday, but I apologize; I didn't get a chance to introduce them.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I know his name may have got lost with that list from the Minister of Labour, but I'd like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature, from the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington, Dale MacDonald.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: From Simcoe North, I would like to recognize Brandon Rhéal Amyot, who is here with the Canadian Federation of Students. Welcome to Queen's Park today, Brandon.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Since we have a little extra time, I too would like to extend a warm welcome to my constituents who are here from the riding of Wellington-Halton Hills. Great to have you here.

CHIEF JACOB STRANG AND CHIEF EDMUND HUNTER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I am informed that the member for Kiiwetinoong wishes to raise a point of order.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch.

[Remarks in Oji-Cree]

Speaker, on a point of order: I seek unanimous consent for a moment of silence to honour the lives and the work of two important leaders from the Far North who passed away last month. Today, we honour Chief Jacob Strang of Poplar Hill First Nation and Chief Edmund Hunter of Weenusk First Nation for their leadership in their communities and across the Far North. On behalf of the colleagues here in the House, I extend my condolences to their families and to the people of Poplar Hill and Peawanuck. Kitchi meegwetch.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Mamakwa is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for a moment of silence to honour the lives and work of two important leaders from the Far North who passed away last month. Agreed? Agreed.

I would ask the members to rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

1040

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. The response of our public health staff in the face of the novel coronavirus has been outstanding, and we need to keep it that way. Earlier this month I asked the government to restore funding for public health units to 2019 levels, and once the coronavirus threat has passed, conduct a review to determine what provincial funding

and resources public health units will need to keep Ontarians safe in the future, just as we did post-SARS.

Will the government do that, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On behalf of the government, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the leader of the official opposition for the question. I, too, applaud the incredible work that's being done by our qualified health professionals and by our public health officials as well. They are doing incredible work to do everything that we can to contain this virus and they are working in circumstances that are difficult, yet they are responding to it. In every hospital that I have been to and in my discussions with public health officials, they are working together.

We have a system that has been developed since SARS. We learned a lot of lessons during the course of SARS. We developed protocols and procedures. The system is working, all of the partners are working within it, and the risk to Ontarians remains low. The health and well-being of Ontarians is our utmost priority at all times.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Our public health units are doing outstanding work. We need to support their efforts today and draw lessons to ensure we are prepared for the future.

Why is the government moving ahead, then, with funding cuts to public health units at this time, and holding discussions about forced mergers of public health units while those very public health units are rightly focused on dealing with a serious public health issue?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, we have been dealing with those issues. As you know, we did not make any changes for last year. Any changes for this year coming forward are going to be mitigated. No public health unit is going to incur expenses more than 10% than they did have last year. Our health units have indicated that they are able to deal with that.

We also have asked Mr. Jim Pine, who has significant interest in municipal affairs and understands some of the concerns that have been expressed to us with respect to municipalities and public health offices, to look into this. Mr. Pine is conducting a series of consultations across the province of Ontario with all public health units.

We have received his initial recommendations. We are waiting for his final recommendations, both on his regional meetings as well as the specific meetings that he is having. We understand that the public health units are satisfied with this response and are working well with Mr. Pine.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, we know that amalgamation talks with public health units have already been cancelled because public health officials are dealing with the novel coronavirus.

All of these units are asking the government to stop the cuts. I believe that's the right thing to do. Will the government cancel the cuts, put a pause on their merger plans and allow time for public health units to focus on the important work they have to do, and when the threat has passed, learn

from their experience in fighting this virus, just as we learned from SARS?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the leader of the official opposition that the policies and protocols that were put in place post-SARS, that are now being dealt with as part of our response to the coronavirus, will indicate that all units and all health professionals should be devoting their time to dealing with preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

We understand that there may be a slight delay in some of the discussions that Mr. Pine is having. We want our public health units to be doing their work in their individual areas, but that doesn't mean things are coming to a stop. They will be started again as soon as the immediate priority has passed.

I think that is what the official opposition would expect our health professionals to do, and they are doing exactly that. We understand that, from the Ministry of Health.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier as well. Yesterday, I tried to ask the Premier about his claims that parents supported his war on educators and classroom cuts, even when it emerged that he was sitting on a government study showing that the government's education consultations showed the exact opposite. I didn't get an answer, Speaker.

Again, why did the Premier claim that he had support from parents when he knew full well his own consultation showed the exact opposite?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I'm out there. I talk to parents. I don't go by some online poll. I talk to the parents. I'm hearing overwhelmingly, number one, they want these strikes to stop. They want their kids back in the classroom.

Our Minister of Education is doing an incredible job. We have offered and put on the table and committed to protecting full-day kindergarten, maintaining the smallest classroom sizes in Canada for the earliest years, investing more in math and special education, and making sure we keep the kids in the classroom.

What are we missing? It's all about compensation, with the heads of the unions. We support the teachers, the hard-working men and women who are out there teaching our kids. But the unions have just lost track. It's all about lining their pockets.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's too bad this Premier is a throwback, Speaker. It's a modern society that we have here. Unions are allowed to exist in Ontario and Canada, regardless if the Premier's ideology doesn't agree. That's the law.

But parents are in fact writing us about this problem each and every day. Alison in Oshawa wrote the Premier and the minister six times, and no one has replied to her. She says, "I feel as though my children ... and the elementary students in Ontario are being held hostage while Mr. Lecce

and Premier Ford set out to destroy the world-class education system we have here in Ontario.” That’s from Alison.

Alison asks that this government have meaningful discussions with teachers and settle these contract talks. Why won’t the Premier listen to Alison when she says that what he is doing is actually destroying the education system that we should all be proud of?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I had a stack that thick on my desk about the parents saying, “Make sure you focus on keeping the kids in the classroom.”

We’re investing \$1.2 billion more than any government in the history of Ontario. We’re investing \$3.1 billion more in special education funding, the highest levels this province has ever seen. We have announced a four-year, \$200-million math strategy. We’re taking cellphones out of the classrooms, getting the kids to focus on math.

In our world-class education system, we have the highest-paid teachers, but guess what? We have the lowest math scores in the entire country. We have an issue. Who is against merit-based hiring of the most qualified person?

I’ll tell you who’s against it. The unions are against it. It doesn’t allow the younger teachers to move up. It’s based on seniority. Who does that in the private sector or the public sector? It’s unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We do know that the Premier likes nepotism. We’ve seen him implement it across this government.

Kay is a parent in London. She’s a mom to two boys, and her oldest son has ADHD. She writes, “He would not be the student he is today without his teacher, his learning support teacher, and the care circle we created for him with his doctor and his teachers.”

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Kay says that her son needs consistency and routine, and he wants to be in school. She also says, “It is the job of the Ford government and the Premier to facilitate this solution.”

Why won’t the Premier listen to Kay in London and help get students like her son back in the classroom, where they will be able to thrive?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: This government is committed to getting a deal that keeps kids in class.

Mr. Speaker, if I can address a matter mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition earlier, in her defence of a regulation of this province created and conceived by the Liberal Party that permits 100% hiring in Ontario premised on seniority in the union—that is incompatible with the priorities of parents, who want merit, qualification and, yes, diversity, to triumph when it comes to hiring.

If you want to undermine education, then that is the plan. Our plan is to ensure that merit leads the way and to ensure monies flow in schools, not in compensation. That is our plan. It is what parents want. It is what this government will deliver.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Premier. This government has bungled nearly everything they have touched, including our kids’ education.

Joining the long list of failed schemes like glow-in-the-dark vanity plates and stickers that don’t stick is now the government’s so-called financial assistance plan for parents. We have heard from parents frustrated that they’re not receiving the funds they were promised. They’re getting rejection letters with no information for why they’re being rejected.

I suppose it’s not a shock that this government’s half-baked scheme to buy off parents for their failure to get a deal with teachers is a complete disaster.

Premier, why won’t you just reverse your cuts, get back to the bargaining table and make things right for our students?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: This government is absolutely committed to providing financial support for parents through the union-led escalation. That is the right thing to do. What the member opposite did not disclose is her opposition to that concept, to the principle of giving monies back into the pockets of working parents, who have done nothing wrong—nothing wrong at all—and yet, members in this House would rather they pay the price of union-led escalation.

The only ideological commitment is the New Democrat support for unions when they should be on the side of working parents in this province. That is why I am proud to report that over 750,000 applications have been received, supporting families in every region of the province—up to \$60 per day to help those parents while we remain absolutely focused on the real objective, which is getting a deal that keeps kids in class.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, no one believes them. This morning, media are reporting that even more parents are struggling.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Stop the clock. Both sides of the House must come to order.

Restart the clock. I apologize to the member for Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: This morning, media are reporting that even more parents are struggling to have their children “verified” by the ministry. Those parents are being directed to an automated phone line that tells them that the ministry can’t help them—so much for looking out for parents.

This government ignored what parents had to say in their sham consultations, and they ignored students, who are upset with lost courses and less one-on-one education. Their entire education agenda has been one boondoggle after another.

Will the Premier stop his cuts, get back to the negotiating table and get our kids back to class?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The government is always committed to getting a deal. In fact, on Monday, we went to

the negotiating table with a mission to drive that outcome. However, what has become ever so clear is that the union leaders are prepared to impede progress of a deal because of a benefit enhancement ask.

OSSTF's website has a request of 6%. ETFO, according to the *Globe and Mail*, is at 7%.

Let's take the 6% number for the purpose of this data. If you provincialize that—

Interjections.

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

Minister of Education, please wind up.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: A 6% increase in benefits, which represents over \$600 million to the taxpayer over the course of that contract, is incompatible and inconsistent with what taxpayers want to us to advance, which is a fair deal for our workers but a good deal for our students, and that's exactly what we're committed to doing in this negotiation.

TOURISM

Mr. Stan Cho: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I am thrilled about our economic success in this province. We are leading the country and providing good jobs again for families and individuals. Finally, the people of this province have a government who will champion all entrepreneurs and businesses, no matter what sector they are in or what part of the province they are from. The people have a government that is creating prosperity, growth and opportunity the likes of which this province has never seen before.

Through you, Speaker: Can the Premier please share with the House the positive economic impact the tourism sector is having in our province thanks to the support of this government?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank our all-star member from Willowdale. First of all, I want to give a great shout-out to our Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. She's doing an incredible job. She is out there working, spreading the message to come to Ontario, telling the world Ontario is open for business and open for jobs.

I want to congratulate the city of Toronto and the GTA. Toronto alone set a new record of 28.1 million new visitors, compared to 27.5 million last year. People love this province. They love the city of Toronto. The Toronto Region Board of Trade further stated that the visitor economy generated \$10.3 billion in overall impact in 2018. Visitors to Toronto spent \$6.7 billion on restaurants, attractions, transportation and accommodation.

Again, Mr. Speaker, everywhere around the world—

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

Mr. Stan Cho: Back to the Premier: Premier, those are some really great, record-breaking numbers. The success of this vital industry would not be possible without the dedication of tens of thousands of Ontarians from that industry.

Scott Beck, president and CEO of Tourism Toronto, said it best: The Toronto tourism sector supports 70,000 jobs, with new jobs being created every day. This industry further

helps to generate billions in tax revenues and drives growth in the overall economy for the city, the region and the province.

Premier, our government's mantra is Ontario being open for business. Can you share with this House about the Ontario tourism sector's success in strengthening our economic ties to other countries?

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you to the member. Toronto's tourism market is on fire right now. It's absolutely booming, like the rest of the province. The economic impact for meetings in Toronto in 2019 reached a record of \$1.24 billion. In 2019, Toronto was named Canada's top meeting destination for the second consecutive year from Cvent.

Visitors from the US, our great friends from the US, Ontario's most important trading partner, which we do over \$390 billion a year in two-way trade with—over two million visitors, a 15% increase over the last five years. That's over two million visitors, spending \$1.3 billion; that's 51% growth over the last five years.

China remains one of our largest overseas market, with 220,000 visitors; Mexico, with 64,000 visitors, up 146%, Mr. Speaker—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jessica Bell: This question is to the Premier. Ottawa transit riders woke up this morning to learn their brand new LRT had broken down—again. Transit users today are stuck on platforms waiting for trains, wondering how transit in Ottawa is ill-equipped to handle snow. They want answers.

The Ottawa LRT is a public-private partnership imposed on Ottawa by the previous government. I have asked the Auditor General to investigate transit P3s like the Ottawa LRT. In the meantime, will the Premier put a moratorium on costly and risky public-private partnerships?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The question will be replied to by the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'm happy for the opportunity to respond to the member about the great infrastructure investment that the province of Ontario is making: \$144 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years, Mr. Speaker. We're building and renewing Ontario's infrastructure.

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I was at the Good Roads convention this week, and I asked a question of our municipal partners. I said: Are your shovels ready? And they said yes, because they want to partner with the province of Ontario on this record infrastructure investment.

Mr. Speaker, this is changing the province of Ontario under the leadership of Premier Ford to get Ontario open for business, open for jobs, and building the infrastructure that the province needs, which was neglected for 15 years by the Liberal government.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Well, this is a message from the people of Ottawa to you: You'd better make sure you get it right.

This is a question again to the Premier. People in Ottawa were told, first by Liberals and now by Conservatives, that public-private partnerships would make their commute easier. Instead, they've endured month after month of cancellations, delays and problem after problem.

The Ottawa LRT and the Eglinton Crosstown are proving that P3s are riskier, costlier and take longer to build. People deserve some answers. Will the Premier put a moratorium on costly and risky public-private partnerships until these projects are reviewed?

Hon. Laurie Scott: To the member opposite again: Let me tell you about Ontario's P3 projects. Since 2005, Infrastructure Ontario has been assigned 125 P3 projects worth over \$100 billion. Do you know what IO's track record is with that? The results, confirmed by a third-party report in 2018, showed that 95% of projects are completed on budget and nearly 70% on time to their original completion date.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know why the member opposite doesn't want transit built, roads built, hospitals built, schools built, courthouses built. Why does the member opposite not want these things built for the people of the province of Ontario? Because guess what? We're listening to the people of the province and they want those things—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order. Thank you.

Please start the clock. Next question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question is for the Minister of Education. Since the government introduced its scheme of requiring mandatory online courses for high school students, it has been rejected by students, educators and families. The government cannot point to one jurisdiction where such a policy has increased the likelihood of graduation or improved the learning environment for students, particularly those students most at risk of not graduating. Likewise, there is no support for increasing class sizes in our schools, and the government has clear evidence of that in the virtually unanimous responses it has received from parents and students across the province.

In a Ministry of Education memorandum to directors of education sent March 15, 2019, from the Deputy Minister of Education, in fact these two wrong-headed policies come together. It's a laying out of the delivery of mandatory online courses, and the memo specifies this: "The average class size would be adjusted to an average of 35." Not 28, not 25, but 35. An average of 35 students means that in a particular class, there could be and would be 40 to 50 students, making it impossible for a teacher to provide any consistent individual attention.

Mr. Speaker, this is clear evidence that these policies are about—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Minister of Education to reply.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. In this negotiation, we are committed to seeing more investments year over year in public education. I'm proud to report that in the Toronto District School Board, for example, where the member proudly represents constituents, special education funding has increased under this Conservative government by over \$342 million. That's the investment this year. In Indigenous education, it's over \$5.6 million; in student transportation, over \$62 million.

Mr. Speaker, we're putting money where it counts, but we expect a deal that ensures that student interests triumph over union interests. That means getting a deal that ensures that seniority in a union is not the priority, but rather merit and qualification—and diversity is what, in fact, triumphs in the negotiation.

More importantly, what is important is that investments flow in schools, in classrooms, in spec ed and the areas of the priority for working people—not in heightening the benefits and wages for educators in this province.

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

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the implementation of mandatory online courses will put students at risk, and it will put students who are already at risk of not graduating at further risk.

The question to the minister is: How can he justify that? He can say that funding is up, but per pupil funding is down—and he knows that, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is that simply requiring that students take a course online in a huge class, without the opportunity to receive any of the learning support that they need, is a ridiculous notion. In a situation like that, not only will students learn nothing about the technology—especially if they don't have access to it in the first place—but they will not learn the content of the course that's being offered online. What has happened in other jurisdictions is that the kids most at risk simply don't complete the course.

How does putting more students at risk help those students, and how does weakening our publicly funded education system support the economy? In Ontario, our educated workforce is our advantage. Why would the government choose to undermine that economic advantage?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we're committed to ensuring that Ontario students have an economic advantage in this country, and that's why we're ensuring that they have every competency required, including technological fluency, to ensure that they know how to embrace the jobs of the future online. The digital economy is growing. We want to seize that opportunity.

Let me just address some of the issues and misnomers. We are ensuring that students of this province have access to more courses that they would not have had before. We're ensuring high-speed Internet at every school in Ontario in September 2020. We're ensuring that the courses do not require Internet to operate them. We're ensuring exceptions for those students—for example, special education needs—who otherwise ought not to be taking learning online.

Student success is an issue that was raised. The average final mark in online learning is within five percentage points of face-to-face courses. And remember that there is an Ontario-certified teacher leading this program who is able to interface, dialogue and support those students.

We think this is critical to the jobs of the future. We're going to help students get this, Speaker.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Speaker, I heard that it's a special piece of land's special birthday tomorrow. I know our government understands that the greater Golden Horseshoe is one of the fastest-growing areas in North America. We're expecting 13.5 million people to call the Golden Horseshoe home by 2041.

With increasing growth, it's as important today as it was 15 years ago to continue to prevent the loss of farmland and natural heritage, restrict urban sprawl and develop vibrant communities in our backyard.

Speaker, could the minister please tell this House what is so special about tomorrow and how the special piece of land takes the cake?

Hon. Steve Clark: Firstly, I want to thank the member for Niagara West for that important question. Tomorrow, as most of you have probably guessed by now, is the 15th anniversary of Ontario's greenbelt. On behalf of the government, I want to say happy 15th birthday to the greenbelt.

At two million acres, the greenbelt is the world's largest permanently protected area of land. It's actually larger than Prince Edward Island. It protects green space, farmland, forests, wetlands and watersheds. It arcs around Lake Ontario for 325 kilometres, from Rice Lake in Northumberland county to the Niagara River, and as far north as Tobermory. In fact, just last week I was in the honourable member's riding in Niagara West.

Our government knows how important the greenbelt is to all Ontarians and to the environment. I want to assure everyone that I am committed to protecting the greenbelt for future generations.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you to the honourable minister for his response. I also want to wish the greenbelt a happy 15th birthday. I've spent many, many hours over the years enjoying the beautiful natural heritage of the greenbelt and I look forward to spending many more.

On a serious note, the greenbelt does a lot for our environment and for our ecosystems. It's home to endangered animals, insects and plants. Many different species call it home. It's two million acres, over the size of Prince Edward Island. These acres work together to provide Ontarians with fresh air, clean water, fantastic local food and drink—especially in Niagara—and world-class outdoor recreation and tourism experiences.

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Speaker, we know that Ontarians love the greenbelt, so could the minister please tell this House a little bit more about some of the economic and environmental impacts of the greenbelt in Ontario?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again to the honourable member, Speaker: The greenbelt provides so many benefits that I'm worried I'm not going to get them all in at once. I'm going to try my best. It features 721,000 acres of protected wetlands, grasslands and forests. It generates \$2.1 billion in tourism and recreation expenditures and generates \$1.5 billion in farm revenues. It provides homes for 78 species at risk. There are 161,000 full-time jobs that are dependent on the greenbelt, and it provides \$1 billion in annual provincial revenues. The carbon-capturing for the greenbelt is equivalent to removing over 56 million cars from our roads every year.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few reasons why our government is protecting the greenbelt in all its beauty.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Premier: This government's reckless decision to sell off employment services in Hamilton and Niagara to a US-based multinational corporation will leave people in my riding worse off. In fact, my office has uncovered reports from the state of Maine showing that Fedcap, the corporation that this government just signed a massive deal with, "lacks capacity to fulfill its contractual obligations."

The Department of Health and Human Services found that the program was not individualized, had poor customer service, poor confidentiality of clients' data and poor professionalism, and was unresponsive to participants' needs. In Maine, only 10% of participants were ever placed in any real skills training program and 48% of all participants referred to Fedcap lost their assistance without securing a job.

Based on this disastrous evidence from Maine, will the Premier cancel the pilot program and admit that this was all a mistake?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To the Minister of Labour to reply.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Our government's priority is to ensure that those people find jobs in the province of Ontario. The Auditor General made it crystal clear: Only 1% of people on OW and ODSP on a monthly basis are finding employment. That is not good enough for Premier Ford. It's not good enough for our government. The opposition can continue to defend the status quo; we're not going to do that.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me remind the opposition NDP of something. In British Columbia, BC Premier John Horgan's government also moved to an outcomes-based model. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they also awarded contracts to a mix of non-profit and private providers, including the very same organization that we selected for the Peel region.

Mr. Speaker, we want everyone in Ontario to share in the prosperity that is happening. In 18 months, 300,000 people are working today who weren't working then. We will not defend the status quo.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier: Fedcap has a terrible track record. If the state of Maine is any indication, we're heading for big trouble. We also know that in New York and New Jersey, the Department of Labor investigated Fedcap and found that they shorted benefits and illegally collected fees from their employees' paycheques. Our Canadian dollars are going to a private American corporation that delivers bad results and rips off its own employees.

All 65 good-paying jobs administrating employment services in the state of Maine were terminated once Fedcap came in, and the community agencies that administrate the programs were let go too. I'm concerned that hundreds of good-paying local jobs are on the line because this Premier sold a contract to a US company with no roots or connections to Niagara or Hamilton. How much is the government paying Fedcap to swoop in—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. To the Minister of Labour to respond.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Again, our priority is to ensure that the people of Ontario have jobs. We all know that jobs help put food on the table. Jobs also ensure that people have a sense of dignity.

The Auditor General, in 2016, was crystal clear on this. Only 1% of people on social assistance are finding a job every month in Ontario under the current system supported by the NDP and Liberals. In fact, of all job seekers, only 38% are finding jobs. That is unacceptable to our government.

Again, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we've turned Ontario into a place where over 300,000 brand new jobs have been created. The unemployment rate is at a three-decade low. Mr. Speaker, one of the things I'm most proud of: In Ontario today, for the first time in over a decade, people are seeing their wages rise under the leadership of Premier Ford.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Many of the visitors in the gallery are here today to speak out for stronger water protections for Ontario communities. While they were happy that the temporary moratorium on new water bottling permits was extended until October 1, they know that that does not provide permanent protection to communities whose water is under threat because they are in competition with commercial water bottling operations. There are only so many straws you can put into an aquifer before it goes dry. Does the minister agree that people and communities should have priority access to water by making the moratorium on new water bottling permits permanent?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I thank the member opposite, and I thank the people from the region for coming down and sharing their viewpoint today. I especially want to take the opportunity to thank the member opposite, who met with me on this issue, and we had a good discussion, and of course the Speaker here, as well, who came into the office with local mayors. We had a good conversation.

I was proud to extend that moratorium, because we just weren't ready to act on this issue at this point. We were doing a third-party review on the data which we are going to release publicly in the short term, coming up in the next few weeks. We plan to make sure that we are protecting the water in that area and ensuring that we have a balanced approach to a healthy economy and a healthy environment. What we are going to do is ensure that, going forward, the water is being protected and ensure that the people of the area are happy with what's going forward and ensure that we're representative of the entire province at the same time.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I would like the minister to know, and I'm sure he does know this, that the residents of Centre Wellington in particular have science on their side. The province's own tier 3 risk assessment establishes that Centre Wellington is at significant water risk, which is the highest threat level. I've had people from all over Ontario say that they want their community protected from water bottling operations.

I'm pleased to know that you're going to make the comprehensive review public, because the public should have access to that data. I remind the minister that when the public consultations for the moratorium were held last fall, 96% of the respondents said that they would like to see a moratorium on water bottling operations. Later today, I will read in 3,500 petition signatures on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Will the minister listen to the respondents to the review in the fall and the 3,500 people who have signed a petition who would like to see a permanent moratorium on new water bottling permits in this province?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks, again, for that question. We're always listening to the people of this province, day in and day out, and we're strong advocates of listening to science on this side of the House. We will—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. I'm very interested in this reply, and I would ask the House to come to order so I can hear the minister.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I don't have to remind the members opposite that I do have a university degree in science, in pharmacy. So yes, we do follow science on this side of the House. We're going to make sure that the decision, going forward, is a good decision for the people of the region, for the representatives of the region, and balances out our healthy economy and our healthy environment, because we are able to do so.

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We are listening to those voices. We are going to release that data. I pledge to the member opposite: If you

want to have further meetings, my door is open for you to come and talk to me. Thank you very much for doing your job as an opposition member and actually having conversations with me. I can't say the same for the official opposition. I haven't heard a word on this issue from them at all. It's unfortunate, but we are going to make sure that this is done right and this is done for the best interests of the people of this province.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Our government has a plan to build Ontario together with a better quality of life in every region of the province. We recognize just how important the forestry sector is to communities across northern and rural Ontario. For 15 years the previous Liberal government ignored and neglected this industry. They forgot about northern Ontario. Some 35,000 jobs were lost in the forest sector alone.

Can the minister update the House on how our government is working toward building a sustainable and thriving forestry industry in Ontario?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the great member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for the question and also for his advocacy for the people of Ontario.

It was a great pleasure to attend the Ontario Forest Industries Association's annual general meeting yesterday with the Premier. He recognizes the critical role the forest sector plays in northern and rural Ontario. This industry generates more than \$16 billion in revenues and supports 155,000 direct and indirect jobs in communities across the province.

We have a plan to help the sector grow and reach its full potential. I was so pleased when the Premier announced that we're investing \$54 million in the forest access roads program this year. We are providing support and certainty to the industry through our forest sector strategy. The goal of the draft strategy is to sustainably grow the forest sector so that it will create opportunity and prosperity for thousands of Ontario families, encourage innovation and investment in the industry, and make northern and rural Ontario open for jobs and—

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

Mr. Norman Miller: It's great to hear that things are looking up again for the forestry sector in our province. I know that a priority for our government and the people of Ontario is ensuring sustainability and protecting our environment. We want to be responsible stewards of the land so we can preserve our beautiful natural resources for generations to come.

Wood products are renewable resources, and Ontario's forest sector has earned a well-deserved reputation as a world leader in sustainable forest management. Could the minister inform us about the sustainability measures in place in the forestry industry?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member again for his supplementary.

Ontario wood products are recognized around the world as coming from forests with rigorous, sustainable forest management practices. Sustainability is a key principle in our draft forest sector strategy. We know that for Ontario's forest industry to remain strong and vibrant in the long term, we need to ensure that our crown forests remain healthy, diverse and productive.

Ontario can leverage the growing consumer preference both at home and abroad for renewable, more environmentally conscious and sustainably sourced products and play a key role in satisfying this demand.

We will continue to support our forest sector by laying the groundwork for their success. That's why we've developed a draft strategy that promotes stewardship and sustainability by enhancing recognition of Ontario's world-class forest management plan system.

FORENSIC TESTING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is for the Premier. Last summer, the sudden closure of Ontario's second-busiest forensic pathology unit, in Hamilton, led to delays in completing autopsies and delays in closing criminal investigations. Moving Hamilton's caseload to Toronto has forced grieving families to travel longer distances and incur unnecessary costs to bring their loved ones home to rest.

We have called for the Solicitor General to do her job and conduct a full and transparent review of this decision, but the government has done nothing. Instead, they have doubled down, now forcing Niagara region to send its autopsy cases to Toronto, starting March 1.

When will the Premier do his job, step up, and conduct a full, arm's-length review of this decision?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It is devastating for families when they have victims and they must go through a coroner's report. However, as a result of the untimely death of the leader in the leadership in Hamilton, we had to make some decisions.

The chief pathologist and the chief forensic coroner made a decision that the Hamilton unit would be closed down and the state-of-the-art activity that is happening in Toronto would allow us, in a timely and efficient manner, to get those reports done.

We need to make sure that the police, the families and everyone engaged has very efficient and very quick returns when we are doing those investigations. That's why we have transferred the reports to the forensic unit in Toronto.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Back to the Premier: Dragging people to Toronto is going to take longer. It's not going to improve the services at all. It certainly seems like when Conservatives choose, they interfere, like wasting thousands of dollars when they cancelled the LRT in Hamilton. But when it comes to actually improving services, the Conservatives turn their backs on Ontarians and say that it's not their problem; someone else should deal with it.

Longer wait times for autopsies mean that families mourning the loss of their loved ones have to wait to get closure. What's even worse, many police officers are concerned that closing the forensic pathology units could seriously, seriously compromise criminal investigations.

So I will ask again: When will the Premier order his Solicitor General to conduct a transparent review of the decision to close down Hamilton's forensic pathology unit and move autopsies out of Niagara?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Look, what is unacceptable to me is any type of delay, and as I said, there was the untimely death of the leader in the Hamilton unit. We needed to make sure that those forensic investigations were done in a timely manner at a state-of-the-art facility in the city of Toronto, north Toronto. We have ensured that we have the staffing in place.

To be clear, we are getting faster responses and faster turnarounds on these very important investigations. It is incumbent on us to make sure that those—

Interjections.

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

I apologize. I ask the Solicitor General to conclude her remarks.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I understand why certain members want to politicize this issue, but I also have a responsibility to ensure that we have timely access to these critical reports—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones:—and that is what we're doing with the state-of-the-art organization that we have in our new facility in north Toronto.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, through you, my question is to the Attorney General. It's no secret that the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal has experienced significant delays and a backlog of legacy cases that have impeded the construction of new homes in the province, impacting approximately 100,000 would-be housing units in Toronto alone.

What progress has the government made with respect to unclogging the backlog of cases that is preventing new housing units from being built?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you for the question from the excellent member from Carleton. It is true. This is yet another area where we have had to clean up from the Liberals. They let cases pile up. They let delays happen. They didn't take the necessary action—or any action, as far as I can tell—to do anything about advancing the cause of cases in front of the LPAT.

That's why our government came into power. That's why our government got to work right away. We appointed Marie Hubbard. Marie Hubbard is one of the most well-respected authorities on land use planning in Ontario—so happy to have her there as the interim associate chair of

the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. She's helping to fix the backlog and get the LPAT back on track. Our government has appointed 18 new members to the LPAT and reappointed six members in the last seven months alone. We're bringing the LPAT roster up to full complement.

There are clear signs our determination to improve the LPAT's efficiency is producing results. In June of last year, the LPAT had 1,700 cases backlogged. We have that reduced by 20% already, and we're just getting started.

1130

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Ontario is facing a housing crisis. There's no two ways about it. Under the previous Liberal government, people struggled to find homes they could afford, and not enough homes were being built to meet the needs of people in every part of the province, including in my riding of Carleton. These challenges were compounded by unnecessary steps, burdensome regulations and barriers to creating the housing that Ontarians need.

Mr. Speaker, through you: Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing please tell this House any concrete numbers to show the government's plan is working?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to reply.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank my neighbour, the member for Carleton, for that excellent question.

Our government knows that having objective oversight on land use planning matters is a real necessity. That's why the work of the Attorney General is so critical for our plan. We also know that clearing the backlog of cases at the LPAT is just one of the important steps we need to take to build more homes in our province.

Our Housing Supply Action Plan was developed to build more homes and give Ontarians more choice when it comes to finding a home that meets their needs and their budget. We're implementing the plan as I speak to drive up new supply and we're already seeing some results, with starts across the province up 22% in January to almost 70,000 units. Additionally, there were more than 9,000 rental starts in 2019 alone, the highest since 1992.

Speaker, when you look at housing supply in Ontario, it's clear our plan is working, and we're just getting started.

EMERGENCY MEASURES

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is to the Premier. Today, the Solicitor General's report on the January 12 province-wide false alarm showed that when a scary nuclear alert was issued to every cellphone in Ontario, the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre was unaware of their own procedure and staff were not given the proper training. That meant there was nearly a two-hour delay before a correction was issued. Families were anxious; some were packing up and planning to evacuate.

When did the minister become aware this was a false alarm, and why didn't the minister order a correction quicker?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The one thing that the member opposite and I can agree on is that people were concerned, which is why we issued an apology and explained that we would do a full report.

That full report, has now been issued. Frankly, I am very pleased that we now have recommendations. We have already moved forward on 13 of those recommendations to change the processes to ensure that this doesn't happen again and, if it does happen again, everyone has clear expectations and outcomes of what they need to do and when they need to do it.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: In fact, according to today's report on the false alarm, the private company that provides the emergency alert, Pelmorex Corp., was calling the shots. I quote from the report: "At senior and working levels, Pelmorex staff consistently advised EMO against sending a second alert via the Alert Ready system."

Again, Mr. Speaker, families were anxious and some were packing up to leave. Your ministry knew it was a false alarm. Why were you letting the private corporation, Pelmorex, call the shots rather than showing leadership?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The report clearly highlights some opportunities that we can put in place and, frankly, have already put in place on how to improve the system.

The Pelmorex connection, frankly, is a Canada-wide issue. It is regulated by the CRTC. It is a system that is used federally, provincially and territorially. As is mentioned in the report, some of the recommendations include clarifying their role at a national level.

But to be clear, we have already put in place a number of initiatives and changes, including staff upgrades and training, to ensure that this does not happen again and, if it ever happens again, everyone knows exactly what their roles and responsibilities are.

HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: My question is for the Minister of Health. Our government has invested \$155 million in home and community care, but we recognize that more work is needed to make these services truly accessible. That's why the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act has been introduced.

We have seen several issues come up again and again in the home care sector, including care plans with set numbers of hours or visits, and personal support workers travelling long distances between clients.

Mr. Speaker, this issue is near and dear to my heart. My mother is in palliative care. I'm happy to hear that our government recognizes these issues and is taking steps to solve the problem.

Minister, how will this legislation help the home care sector and allow our health care workers to provide the most innovative care to patients?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Markham–Thornhill for your question, which I know is very important to you.

We fully recognize there is a need to better coordinate home care services. Currently, those seeking home care can face multiple assessments and, certainly, long wait times. That's why we're empowering Ontario health teams to take an active role in helping home care patients get the care that they need at the time that they need it.

We're also enabling more flexibility in care planning so that delivery is more responsive and based on patient outcomes, not service maximums.

Our government is putting patients first and ending the current one-size-fits-all approach to home care. This will allow us to reduce pressures on our hospitals and help Ontario patients stay in their homes and receive the community services that they expect and deserve.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, Minister, for that answer, and thank you to the minister for introducing this important legislation.

Our government is going to continue finding innovative solutions to improve our health care system, and we are going to empower our health care professionals to do the same. This will be enabled in part by the Ontario health teams, which will help patients navigate the health care system. Improving home care will do so much to improve the lives of patients who currently have no other choice but a hospital bed.

I am glad to hear that this legislation, if passed, will allow for new models of delivery and support more flexible care that incorporates hospital and primary care providers.

Can the minister tell us more about how these changes will be implemented and what will change about home care provision in Ontario?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Yes. We intend to empower local Ontario health teams to take over home care coordination functions. To make sure, though, that services are not interrupted during this transition, we will focus the remaining LHINs on home care in those areas where Ontario health teams are still in development.

Improved home and community care support services can help us move to a more integrated, flexible and patient-friendly model while maintaining full oversight and accountability. We want patients to be able to access home and community care through trusted clinical providers, and that is what this legislation would accomplish.

Our government will continue to listen to patients and families, as well as our health care professionals, to make sure that we will bring more eligible patients publicly funded health care at no personal charge.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the government's own consultations confirmed what we have been saying for months: that there is

“virtually no support” among Ontarians for increasing class sizes.

Here today to second that is Shari, a parent from my riding of Scarborough Southwest. Her daughter, Suzanna, is a wonderfully gifted four-year-old who has recently been diagnosed with autism. Shari told me that “Suzanna is currently getting the attention she needs in the classroom, and she is thriving. But when she transitions into a bigger class next year, we are worried that she will disappear and never fulfill her potential.”

So I ask the Premier, Mr. Speaker: Why would you jeopardize the limitless potential of kids like Suzanna by cramming them into a crowded classroom?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Obviously, we are absolutely committed to the success of Suzanna and all children in this province, particularly those with special education needs. That’s why I’m proud to confirm to this House that in this negotiation, this government has committed to the Catholic teachers and to all the federations a commitment to ensure 100% in special education continues to flow, to support the most vulnerable in our schools. In the CUPE deal months ago, we created a win-win outcome where hundreds of new EAs are being hired to the front lines of schools to help those children get ahead.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to education funding outside of the negotiation, I am proud as well that this government is investing \$3.1 billion—the highest amount ever recorded in public education—for special education. We’ve doubled the autism envelope within education. We’ve doubled mental health supports in education.

We know that the journey continues, in partnership with Minister Smith and Minister Tibollo, to support the most vulnerable in our province, for every child in Ontario.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: That answer does not comfort parents like Shari.

Mr. Speaker, Suzanna is good at math. She is learning to read and she loves music. This is all because of the support she is receiving in the classroom. For Suzanna, larger class sizes and cuts to special education will make it harder to learn the skills she so desperately needs.

I want to quote Shari: “This government thinks that cuts will teach our kids resilience. What helps my daughter to be resilient is the teachers and the education workers in smaller class sizes, who have the time and expertise to manage her anxiety and work at her level.”

For Shari—and frankly, for all of us—class size matters because that’s the difference between her daughter being a gifted child and a child who is left behind. Suzanna has the potential to be an asset to this province.

Will the Premier listen to the parents, not come in the way of Suzanna’s future and reverse the cuts and the planned increase to class sizes?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, our plan in the negotiation is to keep classroom sizes low. It is to ensure that for the earliest years in Ontario, classroom sizes will remain the smallest in Canada. It is to protect full-day kindergarten, and it’s to ensure that for special education funding—contrary to the assertion made by the member opposite, special education funding will increase under our government year over year, because we believe in supporting the most vulnerable kids within our schools. That is a matter of fact.

What we also expect is that our education workers accept a fair 1% enhancement in compensation benefits—not to make red lines on 6% or 7% benefit asks—to put students first and support the most vulnerable in our schools.

Let’s make sure every child in Ontario is back in class.

DEFERRED VOTES

TRUST IN REAL ESTATE SERVICES ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA CONFIANCE ENVERS LES SERVICES IMMOBILIERS

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

Bill 145, An Act to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 145, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier.

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

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On February 26, 2020, Ms. Thompson moved third reading of Bill 145, An Act to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom
Andrew, Jill	Hardeman, Ernie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Mike	Roberts, Jeremy
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Romano, Ross
Baber, Roman	Hatfield, Percy	Sabawy, Sheref
Babikian, Aris	Hogarth, Christine	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bailey, Robert	Horwath, Andrea	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Begum, Doly	Jones, Sylvia	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Kanapathi, Logan	Schreiner, Mike
Bouma, Will	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Scott, Laurie
Bourgouin, Guy	Ke, Vincent	Shaw, Sandy
Burch, Jeff	Khanjin, Andrea	Singh, Gurratan
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova, Natalia	Singh, Sara
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Cho, Stan	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Mamakwa, Sol	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Stiles, Marit
Crawford, Stephen	Martow, Gila	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McDonnell, Jim	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McKenna, Jane	Taylor, Monique
Dunlop, Jill	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay

Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norman	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Paul	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fife, Catherine	Morrison, Suze	Vanthof, John
Ford, Doug	Mulroney, Caroline	Wai, Daisy
French, Jennifer K.	Natyshak, Taras	Walker, Bill
Fullerton, Merrilee	Nicholls, Rick	Yakabuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Oosterhoff, Sam	Yarde, Kevin
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Yurek, Jeff
Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	
Glover, Chris	Pettapiece, Randy	

PETITIONS

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm very pleased to present this petition on behalf of a large number of folks from Peterborough, including Kavya Chandra. It reads as follows:

"Stop the Cuts to Indigenous Reconciliation.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is situated on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples, many of whom have been on this land since time immemorial;

"Whereas in 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report: 'Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future' which made 94 recommendations or 'Calls to Action' for the government of Canada;

"Whereas reconciliation must be at the centre of all government decision-making;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—continue reconciliation work in Ontario by implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;

"—reinstate the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation;

"—work with First Nations leaders to sign cooperative, government-to-government accords;

"—support TRC education and community development (e.g. TRC summer writing sessions);

"—support Indigenous communities across the province (e.g. cleaning up Grassy Narrows)."

I'm very proud to support this petition. I'm going to sign my name to it and then I'm going to hand it to page Irma Giselle to table with the Clerks.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Will Bouma: This petition is entitled "Combat Anti-Semitism.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, on December 29, 2019, five people were maliciously killed at the home of an ultra-Orthodox rabbi during Hanukkah celebrations in Monsey, New York;

"Whereas the horrendous events that took place on December 29, 2019, in Monsey, New York, coincide with an upward trend of instances of egregious acts of anti-Semitic behaviour, including within the province of Ontario;

"Whereas anti-Semitism can manifest in various different ways and cannot be adequately countered if it cannot be properly identified; moreover, anti-Semitism is a multi-faceted problem that requires a multi-faceted solution;

"Whereas the province of Ontario prides itself on being a safe and welcoming place free from religious-based hate;

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

"Proceed as effectively as possible to ensure that all Ontarians are protected from discrimination and hate

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 91; the nays are 0.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Will Bouma: It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the people's House some people who are here for the second reading of Bill 168. From the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs: Noah Shack, Sophie Helpard, Jason Grossman and Adir Krafman; from B'nai Brith Canada: Andrea Adler; and from the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies: Avi Benlolo and Jaime Kirzner-Roberts.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to mention some students who also came down to hear second reading of Bill 168: Zachary Zarnett-Klein, Joanne Raphael, Debbie Vidmar and Rhona Sauber.

Also, there's a student participating in the model Parliament today: Maria Maevska. She is here as well.

Thank you very much for joining us.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ROSS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL ACT, 2020

Ms. Hogarth moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr21, An Act respecting the Ross Memorial Hospital.

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): Pursuant to standing order 91, this bill stands referred to the Commissioners of Estate Bills.

amounting to anti-Semitism by immediately passing Bill 168, the Combating Antisemitism Act, 2019, so that the government of Ontario be guided by the working definition of anti-Semitism and the list of illustrative examples of it, adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance plenary on May 26, 2016, when it interprets acts, regulations and policies designed to protect Ontarians from discrimination and hate amounting to anti-Semitism.”

I wholeheartedly endorse this petition and will be signing it and giving it to page Daniel.

MEN’S MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition here on behalf of Zack’s Crib.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the district of Timiskaming has a high rate of mental health and addiction issues in the male population; and

“Whereas there is no specific facility or program being offered in the Timiskaming district for men in crisis;

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

“To request the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care work in partnership with the community stakeholders to develop a crisis bed facility in the Timiskaming district.”

I wholeheartedly agree with the hundreds of people who have signed this, and give it to page Nyle to bring to the table.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I’m honoured to bring forward a petition from Save Our Water—3,500 signatures to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas large-scale water extraction by the water bottling industry can pose a serious risk to long-term groundwater quality and quantity, particularly in communities mandated to grow through the provincial Places to Grow initiative; and

“Whereas climate change and recent record droughts add an additional level of uncertainty to future water supply; and

“Whereas while water is a finite shared public resource, provincial water studies are identifying new areas where aquifers may not be able to sustain themselves with proposed groundwater use; and

“Whereas the water bottling industry is in large part unnecessary, removes water from the watershed from which it is taken and is harmful to the environment; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has a responsibility under its own statement of environmental values to protect the natural environment for present and future generations;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to eliminate new permits to take water for commercial water bottling purposes.”

I support this petition. I will be signing it and asking page Connie to take it to the table.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon. “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario,” this petition says:

“Whereas during the war in Afghanistan, Canada lost 159 military personnel;

“Whereas those brave souls were driven along the Highway of Heroes between CFB Trenton and the coroner’s office in Toronto;

“Whereas since Confederation, 117,000 Canadian lives have been lost in military conflict;

“Whereas there is a recognized and celebrated plan to transform the Highway of Heroes into a living tribute that honours all of Canada’s war dead;

“Whereas that plan calls for the planting of two million trees, including 117,000 beautiful commemorative trees adjacent to Highway 401 along the Highway of Heroes;

“Whereas this effort would provide an inspired drive along an otherwise pedestrian stretch of asphalt;

“Whereas the two million trees will recognize all Canadians who have served during times of war;

“Whereas over three million tonnes of CO₂ will be sequestered, over 500 million pounds of oxygen will be produced and 200 million gallons of water will be released into the air each day, benefiting all Ontarians in the name of those who served our country and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice; and

“Whereas there is a fundraising goal of \$10 million;

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

“That the current government of Ontario put its financial support behind this fundraising effort for the Highway of Heroes Tree campaign.”

I fully support it. I’m going to endorse it with my signature and give it to Michael to bring down to the table.

1310

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: A petition titled “Food Day Ontario Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the agri-food industry employs over 2.3 million Canadians and one in eight jobs in the Canadian economy; and

“Whereas the agri-food industry contributes over \$47.7 billion in GDP annually to Ontario’s economy...; and

“Whereas fresh, nutritious, locally grown food is necessary for daily life and for proper health and wellness; and

“Whereas locally grown food is an essential component of Ontario’s agriculture sector; and

“Whereas the Food Day Ontario Act would encourage restaurants and consumers to purchase locally produced ingredients and to support our local suppliers; and

“Whereas Food Day Ontario will unite our communities, create jobs, and boost our economy; and

“Whereas the day will promote culinary sovereignty by emphasizing local food, local producers and local businesses; and

“Whereas an annual Food Day Ontario will recognize the hard work and dedication Ontario’s agriculture sector workers put in to providing nutritious and healthy food for so many communities;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass Bill 163, Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario) Act, 2020.”

I’m delighted to support this petition. I affix my signature and pass it to page Finnegan.

ROAD SAFETY

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tow truck operators provide an important service across Ontario’s road network; and

“Whereas motorists deserve reliable, timely service from their provider of choice across Ontario; and

“Whereas towing operators deserve a safe place to work in urban and rural communities across Ontario without being subjected to repetitive and punitive costs; and

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

“To protect motorists and towing companies providing important services by addressing issues around highway incident management;

“To include incident scene management in regulations to address the potential for improper actions on scene;

“To support the towing industry and reduce costs to motorists and third parties by mandating a single provincial towing licence;

“To introduce regulations that ensure long-term vitality of the towing industry;

“To implement a towing mobile rideshare application.”

I affix my signature and give it to page Hannah.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Jamie West: I have a petition here titled “Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly: Invest in the Schools Our Students Deserve. Stop the Cuts!

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government has announced over \$1 billion in funding cuts to our schools, which will result in bigger class sizes in grades 4 to 12; significantly less support for the most vulnerable students, including those with disabilities, special needs, and English-language learners; mandatory e-learning for high school students; and cuts to badly needed school repairs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose these damaging cuts and implement:

“(1) Full funding to our public education system at existing levels, and no mandatory e-learning for any students;

“(2) An education funding formula that (a) increases support for special education; (b) reduces class sizes in kindergarten and grades 4 to 12; and (c) increases capacity to deliver front-line services by paraprofessionals;

“(3) An Ontario-wide state of good repair standard for all public schools so they are safe, healthy, well-maintained buildings that provide environments conducive to learning and working;

“(4) An evidence-based review of the education funding formula every five years to determine its effectiveness in supporting high-quality public education.”

Like the majority of parents, I’ll affix my signature and I’ll give it to page Daniel.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Deepak Anand: My petition is for the Food Day Ontario Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the agri-food industry employs over 2.3 million Canadians and one in eight jobs in the Canadian economy; and

“Whereas the agri-food industry contributes over \$47.7 billion in GDP annually to Ontario’s economy...; and

“Whereas Canada’s rich culinary culture is worthy of celebration; and

“Whereas fresh, nutritious, locally grown food is necessary for daily life and for proper health and wellness; and

“Whereas locally grown food is an essential component of Ontario’s agriculture sector; and

“Whereas the Food Day Ontario Act would encourage restaurants and consumers to purchase locally produced ingredients and to support our local suppliers; and

“Whereas Food Day Ontario will unite our communities, create jobs, and boost our economy; and

“Whereas the day will promote culinary sovereignty by emphasizing local food, local producers and local businesses; and

“Whereas an annual Food Day Ontario will recognize the hard work and dedication Ontario’s agriculture sector workers put in to providing nutritious and healthy food for so many communities;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass Bill 163, Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario) Act, 2020.”

I fully support this petition and hand it over to page Abbey.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition signed by hundreds of Londoners and people from the London area. It is called “Stop the Cuts to Indigenous Reconciliation.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario is situated on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples, many of whom have been on this land since time immemorial;

“Whereas in 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report: ‘Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future’ which made 94 recommendations or ‘Calls to Action’ for the government of Canada;

“Whereas reconciliation must be at the centre of all government decision-making;

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

“—continue reconciliation work in Ontario by implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;

“—reinstate the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation;

“—work with First Nations leaders to sign cooperative, government-to-government accords;

“—support TRC education and community development...;

“—support Indigenous communities across the province....”

I fully agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Nyle to take to the table.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: This petition is entitled “Food Day Ontario Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the agri-food industry employs over 2.3 million Canadians and one in eight jobs in the Canadian economy; and

“Whereas the agri-food industry contributes over \$47.7 billion in GDP annually to Ontario’s economy; and

“Whereas Canada’s rich culinary culture is worthy of celebration; and

“Whereas fresh, nutritious, locally grown food is necessary for daily life and for proper health and wellness; and

“Whereas locally grown food is an essential component of Ontario’s agriculture sector; and

“Whereas the Food Day Ontario Act would encourage restaurants and consumers to purchase locally produced ingredients and to support our local suppliers; and

“Whereas Food Day Ontario will unite our communities, create jobs, and boost our economy; and

“Whereas the day will promote culinary sovereignty by emphasizing local food, local producers and local businesses; and

“Whereas an annual Food Day Ontario will recognize the hard work and dedication Ontario’s agriculture sector

workers put in to providing nutritious and healthy food for so many communities;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass Bill 163, Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario) Act, 2020.”

I fully support this petition, as my riding has many farms. I will be affixing my name to it and providing it to page Catharine.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately, that concludes the time the standing orders provide for petitions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’
PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LE JOUR DE L’ONTARIO

Mr. Parsa moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day / Projet de loi 173, Loi proclamant le Jour de l’Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member now has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Speaker, today I would like to speak about Ontario—our province, our home. For some, it was the home of their parents and grandparents. For all of us, it will be the home of our families for generations to come. All our futures are bound together in this wonderful province we share.

1320

Colleagues, it has fallen to us to be the stewards of Ontario in our time, and what a great privilege this is—and a great responsibility as well. We have an obligation to learn Ontario’s history and do everything we can to preserve it for future generations.

Our province is truly the embodiment of the values we share as Ontarians: individual rights, charity, respect for our neighbours, and political and economic freedom. We see these values every day. We owe it to ourselves and all Ontarians to recognize it, celebrate it and work to preserve it.

With that goal in mind, I am proposing that we declare June 1 as Ontario Day. Ontario Day will be a day to reaffirm our uniqueness, to take pride in our history and to celebrate our bright future together, united as one people.

Ontario is home to some of the most diverse, creative and hard-working people on earth. Ontarians are courageous, welcoming and neighbourly. Together, we have created a society that is the envy of all. Ontario Day will serve as an annual reminder of everything we have to be thankful for and everything we have built, earned and defended by Ontarians before us.

Let’s begin with our history. It’s fitting that Ontario Day will fall on the first day of National Indigenous History Month. I can’t think of a better way to begin our

annual celebration of Indigenous history. After all, Ontario would not be what it is today without the immense contributions of its Indigenous peoples. Ontario was first inhabited by the Haudenosaunee, Algonquin, Wyandot and other tribes who hunted, fished, grew crops and lived good lives off the land. Today, we're privileged to remain surrounded by the communities and sacred forests, lakes and rivers of Ontario's Indigenous people.

Explored and charted by Étienne Brûlé in 1610, the beautiful lands that would become Ontario were a marvel to all who came dreaming of a fresh start and a better life.

Later, Ontario was the primary battleground of the War of 1812, when the Canadian people and their British and Indigenous allies defeated an invasion by a much larger adversary. This was a pivotal moment for us. It solidified our identity as Canadians and planted the seed of our independence.

Today, Ontario is Canada's economic engine, its most populous province and the home of its capital. Ontario is nothing less than the heart at the centre of Canada.

Ontario is also unique within our Confederation. As Ontarians, we have our own identity and our own inspiring story to tell. Today, Ontario is more prosperous than ever before. Our economy is booming. Confidence is surging every day, and the growing optimism of Ontarians can be felt across our province. Our educational, political and cultural institutions are stronger than ever. Five of Canada's top 10 universities are right here in Ontario. Students from all over the world come to our academic institutions for world-class education. Credentials earned in Ontario are not just valued but prized everywhere.

We put those credentials to good use right here in Ontario. Technology and innovation are a significant part of our growing economy. Some of the world's most cutting-edge technologies are created and pioneered in Toronto, Ottawa, Waterloo and all across our province.

Technology plays an integral role in every sector of our economy. Agriculture is a great example of that. Thanks to our excellent safety standards, cultivation methods and the hard work of the world's best farmers, Ontario produces some of the highest-quality food and livestock found anywhere. Countless successful Ontario businesses make products that are sold and have brands that are recognized all over the world.

Our economic freedom has made us prosperous, but our political freedom is what truly drives Ontario's incredible success. Our democracy is vibrant, inclusive and gives a voice to all people. The debates and discussions we have here in the people's House are often spirited, but we have respect for one another as individuals and as representatives. Ontarians would have it no other way. This House is as diverse as the people who put us here, not just in terms of race and ethnicity—though that's true as well—but in terms of thought and opinion. Our democracy is functioning as Sir John A. Macdonald and the Fathers of Confederation intended it.

In Ontario, all are free to speak their mind, love who they love, and worship in accordance with their faith. Churches, synagogues, mosques and temples of every

denomination beautify our towns and cities. We are free to worship, or not, free of persecution and harassment.

In Thornhill, for example, there's a mosque and a synagogue right next to one another, sharing a parking lot, and their members often attend each other's events and functions. This simple example of unity is seen so commonly in Ontario that many of us take it for granted, but those of us who came from other places understand just how rare and remarkable it really is.

In Ontario, over 3.8 million foreign-born residents represent over 29% of our province's total population. Among these residents are myself and several of my colleagues right here in this House. Millions have come to Ontario to escape war and persecution, to reunite with loved ones and to seek a better life, and we have been welcomed with open arms and open hearts. Nowhere else in the world do newcomers find their place so quickly and so successfully as they do right here in Ontario. Their invaluable social, economic and cultural contributions make our province better and stronger every single day.

Whether it's restaurants in Chinatown and Little Italy or the vibrant cultural events like Taste of the Danforth and Caribana, Ontario's cultural mosaic has made it a tourist destination like no other, enjoyed by tens of millions every year.

Although Ontarians come from all over the world, speak almost every language and follow every religion, we are united, living and working peacefully side by side for ourselves, our family and our province. Ours is a society that values the individual rights and freedoms of its people above all things. These values are the foundation of our shared identity, and the results are extraordinary.

Speaker, on the topic of culture, Ontarians have a powerful cultural identity that we should recognize and often celebrate. From the Stratford Festival to the Toronto International Film Festival, Ontario is one of the world's most vibrant cultural and artistic hubs. Our talented actors, writers and artists are renowned in every corner of the globe. Beloved comedians like Mike Myers and John Candy and iconic musicians like Drake, Justin Bieber and Gordon Lightfoot are just a handful of people on a long list of world-famous artists from Ontario. It would take me days to recognize all of them.

Ontarians have distinguished themselves in the fields of science and medicine as well. From Sir Frederick Banting, the discoverer of insulin, to George Klein and the electric wheelchair, the contributions of Ontarians have improved or saved countless lives all over the world.

And who could forget that Ontario is home to some of humanity's greatest athletes? Ontario sports heroes like Wayne Gretzky and Bianca Andreescu have set the world standard for excellence in athletics.

Speaking of Ontario sports heroes, our province's own basketball team, the Toronto Raptors, stunned the world last year when they captured the NBA championship. That victory meant a great deal to the people of the province and inspired a new generation of young Ontarians to pursue their dreams.

In Ontario, even the landscape itself inspires us to new heights. Our incredible natural wonders like the Scarborough Bluffs and the Horseshoe Falls in Niagara still amaze us to this day, and like the ideals that built our society, they remain as beautiful as they have ever been. They have stood the test of time, and so will we.

What's surely clear to all is that Ontario is even more than the sum of its parts. The hard work, strong values and perseverance of Ontarians have made it what's truly great today.

Speaker, we must always remember to recognize the Ontarians who make up the bedrock of our great province: the members of the Canadian Forces, past and present. Throughout our history, there have been times when Ontarians have been called on to serve their country. From the red poppy fields of France to the deserts of Afghanistan, Ontarians have fought for Canada and for the cause of freedom with courage and integrity, and they will always make us proud.

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Colleagues, the love that we share for this province and its people has a true meaning because Ontario is not just lines on a map, and it isn't just the soil on which we built our houses, schools and places of worship. This land sustains us and our ideals. It's the cradle of our vision for a safe, peaceful and prosperous world.

The promise of Ontario's bright future is exciting. I feel as though the possibilities are endless and our potential is unlimited, and I know that all of you feel the same way. I believe that this feeling that we've been blessed is something that we have a duty to share with everyone in Ontario. That's what this bill, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day, is all about.

It is my sincere wish that June 1 will, from this year on, be a day to remind Ontarians of everything and everyone that has made our province, our home, the freest and best place on earth. To that end, I hope that all of us in this House can come together to support this bill.

Allow me to close my remarks today with a brief quote. In the green hallways of this beautiful legislative building, the following phrase can be found inscribed on an archway: "Where mind and soul learn freedom's ways."

Speaker, let Ontario Day be a day for all of us in this great province to learn and be reminded of freedom's ways—our ways.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, good afternoon to you. What a wonderful province we live in, such a beautiful province. Some of us were born here, and some moved here from other countries or other provinces, but we now all call Ontario home.

No matter if we live somewhere in between Windsor to Wawa, Wheatley to Warton, Walkerville to Watford, Welland to West Lorne, White Lake to Winchester, Woodstock to Wyoming, or Waterloo to Wolfe Island, we all have a different story. Our background helps shape how we celebrate our love for this great province of ours.

I've only lived here for 48 years. I was born in New Brunswick. That's my story. I started school in what was

then Fort Churchill, Manitoba, on the shores of Hudson Bay. It was a joint army base, with the Americans and the Canadians. They tested a lot of weather balloons up there. The polar bears were around. The whaling industry was strong. If you went down to the shores, the whales were lined up. When we went south, we went to Winnipeg.

We moved to Halifax in 1957. Maybe a couple of you in the room will remember Wake Up Little Susie by the Everly Brothers. That was the big song on the radio in 1957, when I got to Halifax. We used to swim in the harbour, down where the ferry comes in from Dartmouth. Sometimes we'd have to kick the rats off the wharf in order to make room to jump in. It's now called Historic Properties.

If you look at Nova Scotia, it's a lot like Ontario. When you get away from the ocean, you get into the lakes and the birch trees, even the rocks, and it looks a lot like Sudbury and it looks a lot like North Bay.

Army brats, as we were, moved every four years or so, so next I went to Oromocto, New Brunswick—Base Gagetown. It's about two hours away from where I was born in St. Martins, on the shores of the Bay of Fundy.

St. Martins is a beautiful tourist town. They have two covered bridges, and the tides in the Bay of Fundy go anywhere from 11 feet to 53 feet. Right at the wharf, when the tide is in, the fishing boats are right up to the wharf, and when the tide is out, they're resting on the red mud at the bottom of the wharf. If you've been there, we used to live just up over the hill from the caves. A lot of people come to St. Martins to go into the caves—on the beach, over the rocks, to get into the caves.

My grandfather used to be a sea captain from the Parrsboro area, the Fox River-Port Greville area of Nova Scotia. As a kid, when my relatives would speak of Port Greville, I would think they were saying "porker ville."

We Hatfields trace our roots back to the United Empire Loyalists. Captain John Hatfield, who originally came from Dorset, England, served with the 3rd New Jersey Volunteers during the American Revolution. He was given a grant of 700 acres and moved to Nova Scotia in 1783. Our family helped celebrate that 200th anniversary when my son was five and my daughter was on the way. My brother Barry and I are part of the sixth generation tracing back to Captain John; our kids are the seventh, and our grandkids are the eighth.

My dad's father moved his family across the Bay of Fundy and settled in St. Martins, New Brunswick.

My dad, who was also a Percy, met my mother while he was serving in the army during the Second World War, in Newfoundland. They had just crossed from Nova Scotia to Newfoundland on the SS Caribou.

Speaker, as I've mentioned in the House once before, the Caribou, on the very next crossing, was sunk by a German submarine, submarine U-69, and 137 people died in that attack.

Mom and Dad met on the train, affectionately known as the "Newfie Bullet"—and that's a misnomer. The top speed was about 30 miles an hour. They say you could get off at the front of the train, pick a quart of blueberries and still hop on at the back.

I loved the time we spent in Newfoundland over the course of our family life. I still cherish the time I spent jigging squid or cod with my grandfather, a little guy who made his life on the water. As a teenager, he worked on the schooners, on the grand banks. As teenagers, they would go out in small dories, set their nets, catch their cod, and hours later try to find their schooners somewhere in the middle of the ocean, in the middle of the fog.

The tidal wave in Newfoundland in 1929 nearly wiped our family out. The men—Grandfather Brushett and his two sons—were in the woods gathering firewood for the winter. The first wave knocked our home off the beach and out into the ocean. The second one brought them back into the harbour. A neighbour rode out in his dory, so my grandmother broke the kitchen window and she and my mom and her two older sisters scrambled out, got in the boat and were saved.

Twenty-eight people lost their lives in that disaster, and hundreds were left homeless. Food, boats, docks and provisions were lost—all of this just as the world recession hit, the dirty thirties. Times were tough all over, but even worse along the south coast of Newfoundland.

After the war, Mom and Dad moved to New Brunswick. Dad re-enlisted in the army, and our first posting was up on the shore of Hudson Bay.

My first trip to Ontario was on a summer vacation to visit relatives here in Toronto, in the mid-1950s. I had an older cousin Jimmy. He took me to a park. He must have met up with a girl or something, and somehow I got left behind and couldn't find my way home. I ended up at a police station. They gave me an ice cream to stop me from crying. Eventually, they found my folks, and they came and got me.

The highlight for me on that Toronto visit was watching television, because way up on the shores of Hudson Bay, we didn't have—the Americans who came up had TV sets, but they couldn't pick anything up. We sat for hours and watched the test pattern. It was an Indian-head test pattern from Buffalo. We used to sit there waiting for something to happen.

The other thing that I remember from that first visit to Ontario was the miles and miles of tail lights when you're on the highway and just seeing all those other cars out there. A lot of things don't change over the years.

The second time I came to Ontario, I hitchhiked. In those days, we used to hitchhike. A lot of you young people have never done that. In 1967, I hitchhiked from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Brockville, Ontario. I was stationed up with a buddy who had joined the army. He was stationed in Kingston, but his mom lived in Brockville—actually, in Algonquin, just outside, on a farm. It was quite the trip. Then we went to Expo 67 in Montreal, and then back to Newfoundland.

When I was hitchhiking back to Newfoundland, I had a sign that said “NFLD,” for Newfoundland. A car pulled up and said, “FLQ?” I said no, so he sped away and left me on the side of the road. Those were the days of just getting into some very tough situations in Canada.

I dropped out of Memorial University in 1970 and went to British Columbia to work in a sawmill. We went on

strike, so I came up to Ottawa, then to Pembroke. I was living with six army guys—my buddy I had come to visit before. They were living in Chalk River in a big, old home. They all had motorcycles. We drove the motorcycles up and down the Ottawa Valley that summer, until the October Crisis hit in 1970, and they went off to save Canada.

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I got a job at a TV station in Pembroke; it was then called CHOV. I was an audio operator. I worked part-time sales and part-time announcing. I used to go to the Pembroke arena when the “rasslers” were in town, and I'd introduce the wrestlers—I had a lot of fun with those guys. Eventually, I was a coordinator between radio and TV. I used to interview people like Paul Yakabuski. It's a name you might remember. He's the father of a certain cabinet minister here in Ontario today.

I wrote a letter to Ottawa one day. I was looking for a job, ready for a larger market. Then my phone rang, and it was a news director in Leamington. He said, “I hear you're looking for a job.” I said, “Yeah. Where the heck is Leamington?” He said, “We're North America's fifth-largest radio market,” because in the daytime you could pick up the signal in Detroit. In the nighttime, you couldn't get it more than a couple of hundred yards away from the station—but that was a different story. Tomato country, greenhouse capital: Leamington, Ontario. For those of you who haven't been there—Leamington and Kingsville—there are way more than 2,000 acres now of greenhouses. It's right on Lake Erie. The cannabis industry is doing very well down there. I was meeting with one of the electricians who was lobbying today at breakfast from Chatham, and Dale was telling me how his business is booming as an electrician because all the greenhouses need electricity to grow their product.

I left CHYR radio and went to the Windsor Star. I went to CBC Radio in Windsor and then to TV. I spent 30 years with the CBC in Windsor. A lot of you don't know much about Windsor. You have to come and visit. We were the first Canadian city with an electric streetcar system, three years before Toronto, in 1886. The first road laid out in Ontario was Highway 18, just outside of Windsor.

You've heard of the Hatfields and the McCoy's. I'm not one of them. But Elijah McCoy is from right outside of Windsor, in the town of Harrow. He was a Black man born in 1844. He invented an oil can to lubricate bearings on an old steam engine—“the real McCoy”; that's where that slogan comes from. He also invented the ironing board and lawn sprinklers.

The first labour strike in Ontario was at the Great Western Railway yards in Windsor in 1856. The first Black lawyer in Canada, Delos Davis, set up a practice in Amherstburg in 1886. In 1907, the first mile of concrete for a road in North America was poured in Windsor. The first gas station in Canada, on Ouellette Avenue, our main street, and Park Street, near where the tunnel exits today, opened back in 1911. Of course, the tunnel didn't open until 1930, a year after the Ambassador Bridge was built.

The Rand formula, 1945: Auto workers at the Ford plant in Windsor went on strike for 99 days—September 9

to December 19. They won the right for automatic dues check-off. If you work in a unionized plant and benefit from a union, you had to pay your dues.

I could go on, Speaker. No matter where you're from in Ontario—Oakville to Oil Springs, Orillia to Orleans, Oshawa to Ottawa, Otter Lake to Owen Sound, or Orton to Orono—Ontario is still yours to discover.

Thank you to the member for bringing this forward today. We should be selling more of our good times in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm proud to stand up in support of the Ontario Day Act.

On March 29, 1867, Queen Victoria gave royal assent to the British North American Act, establishing the federal union of the Dominion of Canada. Since then, many people like myself have immigrated to the land of the strong and free in pursuit of happiness, liberty and equality, to a land of equal opportunity.

One of those individuals like myself was Fanny Rosenfeld, often known as Bobbie for her bobbed haircut. She was also born in Russia, like myself, to Russian parents. Later, her family immigrated to none other than Barrie, Ontario, similar to my family. As we all know, basketball—James Naismith—was created here in Ontario. In 1922, when Bobbie moved from Barrie to Toronto with her family, she joined the Young Women's Hebrew Association and their basketball team. In 1923, they won not just the Toronto but the Ontario basketball championships.

Not a day went by that she wasn't a huge athlete in her field. For example, she was at the Ontario Ladies Track and Field Championships, where she placed first in discus, the 220-yard dash, shot put, long jump and low hurdles, and she placed second in the 100-yard dash and javelin.

Rosenfeld became recognized as one of the greatest Canadian female athletes, with many national records. She competed in the 1928 Summer Olympic Games, where she won both gold and silver medals. Throughout the 1920s, she was called the superwoman of ladies' hockey. In 1932, she was named the most outstanding female hockey player in Ontario.

Bobbie Rosenfeld was not just remembered for her incredible athletic abilities, but for challenging the stereotypes in sports concerning women. She was quickly called a role model in sports, not just in Ontario but for all of Canada as well.

Madam Speaker, I am very proud to support this private member's bill today, because it allows us to share many stories like the ones of Bobbie Rosenfeld and the many Canadians and Ontarians we can be very proud of in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: It is a great honour to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 173, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day. I congratulate my colleague the member

from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for putting this bill forward.

I am proud to call Ontario home, and I do not think there is anyone in this chamber who feels differently. Ontario is home to over 14.5 million people, and whether your family is new to the province, like mine, or has been here for generations, or has always been here, we know that Ontario is the best place in the world to live, work, play and grow.

Ontario has always been a place that inspired innovation, invention and progress. Ontario gave the world the telephone, through the ingenious Sir Alexander Graham Bell, in Brantford, as well as the smartphone, generations later, dreamed up by visionaries in Waterloo.

Alliston, Ontario, was home to a Nobel Prize laureate who co-discovered insulin through his pioneering work in science and technological innovation in medicine in 1923. I am, of course, speaking of Sir Frederick Grant Banting. Thanks to his work, the world is now able to treat patients with diabetes, which has turned the previously deadly disease, with symptoms such as blindness, loss of limbs, stroke and eventual death, into a manageable chronic condition where patients can enjoy a long lifespan and a decent quality of life.

Madam Speaker, as you see, countless pioneers and visionaries come from Ontario. Therefore, it is not only adequate, but welcomed, that we have a day to honour our great province, to inspire the next generation of Ontarians.

Ontario is truly a global community, with people from all over the world, from all walks of life, choosing to live here, choosing to share their music, culture, tradition and food, of course—choosing to call Ontario home. Ontario truly is the whole world in one province.

L'Ontario est vraiment une communauté mondiale, avec des gens de partout dans le monde qui choisissent de vivre ici, en choisissant de s'installer en Ontario. Je ne sais pas à quoi ressemblerait la vie dans notre belle province sans les gens des quatre coins du monde qui partagent leur musique, leur culture et leur nourriture, bien sûr, avec nous autres, Ontariens et Ontariennes. Cela montre pourquoi nous ne devrions pas tenir l'Ontario pour acquis. L'Ontario attire les meilleurs et les plus brillants du monde, et il le fait régulièrement.

Madam Speaker, this leads me to the question: Why not celebrate Ontario more? Every year, we look forward to celebrating Canada through Victoria Day and Canada Day. But it feels like Ontario needs more reason to celebrate.

I am proud to say that I am a Canadian, and I am equally proud to say that I am an Ontarian. I am beyond grateful to my parents, who decided to bring our family to Canada and put down our roots in Ontario. This October, my mom, my brother and I will be celebrating 20 years of calling Ontario home.

As an immigrant, a woman and a person raised in a single-parent family, I cannot adequately express my gratitude to this province for the opportunities it has given me to succeed in education, in my career as a nurse and as a parliamentarian. Ontario has allowed me to learn and

grow in immeasurable ways, soaking in the vibrant cultural and ethnic diversity of this amazing province.

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L'Ontario m'a permis d'apprendre et de grandir de façon immesurable, en profitant de la diversité culturelle et ethnique dynamique de cette province incroyable.

In conclusion, I would just like to congratulate my friend the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for putting this bill forward. Let's celebrate Ontario each and every day.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I am most delighted to stand here today to support my friend from the great riding of Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill and endorse Ontario Day. As many of you know, I'm an immigrant to this great province. Ontario has embraced me ever since I stepped out of Pearson airport when I was only 14 years old.

Ontario did not arise already great out from the azure main. Rather, it has been made great through the hard work of men and women throughout the generations. Patriots have poured out their hearts and souls to ensure that their children would see a better and brighter Ontario, like Indigenous nations, who have been here long before anyone else, and the millions who have emigrated here from far lands, in search of a better life.

Of course, we must remember the brave men and women who have given the ultimate sacrifice and had their bodies wrapped in our maple leaf flag on their last journey, all so that we can live free.

The passing of this bill would honour the many and varied contributions Ontarians have done and will continue to do not only here in this province, but in the federation as a whole. We lead the country in academia, industry, innovation and in arts. Ontario is the clear economic engine of Canada. We have been the home of five Prime Ministers and countless business leaders, in addition to everyday heroes such as parents, nurses, firefighters and policemen.

I would also like to highlight Ontario's multiculturalism, which is near and dear to our hearts. Nearly 30% of all Ontarians are born abroad. It is a matter of immense pride that in this province, one does not have to choose between being an Ontarian and being Jewish, Christian or Muslim, for example.

The potential Ontario holds is vast and limitless, and I'm sure that Ontario will continue to prosper because of the people who call her home. Madam Speaker, I believe that it is high time to declare June 1 as Ontario Day. I'm looking forward to voting in favour of this bill and encourage all my colleagues to do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for introducing this bill, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day. Our province has a rich and diverse history which deserves to be celebrated.

Looking into our past, Ontario has been home to innovation and ideas, ideas that have changed the world,

such as in 1921, when Sir Frederick Banting discovered how to extract insulin to help treat diabetes right here in Toronto, or the electric oven, patented in 1892 by Thomas Ahearn of Ottawa.

Since then, Ontario has retained its place as a province that changes the world, but it also has undergone many changes itself. Today, Ontario is home to the most diverse population of any province or state in North America. As the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill said previously, this diversity is celebrated and welcomed by all Ontarians.

Ontario is home to well over one third of Canada's population, and almost one third of Ontario residents were born abroad. People choose to immigrate to Ontario—me included. At the ripe old age of 15, I came to visit Ontario and I fell in love. Just a few short years later, I moved here. I found a guy to get married to, but I moved here and I stayed here because I loved it so much, and I still do. I'm very proud to call Ontario my home.

Should this legislation pass—I certainly hope that it does—June 1 of every year will be declared Ontario Day. While those of us in this House and people across this province are proud to be Ontarians every day of the year, this will allow us to take time to reflect on our province's past, present and future—and we do have a bright future ahead. Today, Ontario is the economic engine of Canada, with a gross domestic product of \$854 billion, representing 38.7% of Canada's GDP.

As a proud Ontarian, I look forward to the opportunity to celebrate our great province and call on all members of the House to support Bill 173.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you to all my colleagues in this House who supported this bill.

As someone who immigrated to Canada as a young boy, I remember when I arrived. When you arrive in a new place with new people, a new language, a new culture and a new landscape, it's not easy. It was difficult at the beginning. But my family and I settled quickly, and we began to make good friends and acquaintances that to this day I keep in touch with.

Growing up in Ottawa, I looked a little different than most of my friends, but I never felt like an outsider and I was never judged based on the fact that I had come from another region. I felt welcomed here, and today Ontario truly is my home. Speaker, I couldn't be more proud to say these words, and I know that there are many immigrants living in Ontario who definitely feel the same way.

As I said, having arrived here at a very young age, I looked at Ontario, and people embraced me. I fell in love with everything about this province and our country, but never in my wildest dreams did I think that I would one day stand in the Legislature as a member of provincial Parliament to represent the province that opened its heart and opened its arms to me. That's not just the province itself; it's the great people of our province and our country.

I really hope that this bill passes, because it would be a way for us to show our appreciation to this great province and, in fact, to our great country. This is another opportunity for me to be able to say thanks to all of you for allowing a dream to come true for so many of us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There being no business designated for ballot item number 101, we will now proceed to the next ballot item.

COMBATING ANTISEMITISM ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE L'ANTISÉMITISME

Mr. Bouma moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 168, An Act to combat antisemitism / Projet de loi 168, Loi sur la lutte contre l'antisémitisme.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Speaker. It is a privilege and an honour to rise today in this House to debate my private member's bill, co-sponsored by MPP Robin Martin, the Combating Antisemitism Act, 2020.

I'd like to welcome our guests, but I'd especially like to welcome our model parliamentarians who are sitting in the galleries today. You asked me this morning what my favourite part about being here was, and I would say that this is definitely one of my favourite parts about being here—the opportunity to make differences like this for the people of Ontario. Thank you for being here.

I'll be sharing my time with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

I want to begin by saying that anti-Semitism is wrong, no matter who you are or where you live. It has been a scourge on society in times past and continues to be so in areas all across the world today. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, that includes Ontario.

1400

This can be seen in the increase in hate crimes that target the Jewish community and the rise of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, also known as BDS. In fact, an incident targeting the Jewish community takes place roughly every 24 hours in Canada. They remain among the most frequently targeted group for hate crimes in this country. I think everyone would agree that this is completely unacceptable.

As members of provincial Parliament, we have been given a trust by the people of Ontario to take action, and it is time for us to act.

This bill, if passed, will align the many acts, regulations and policies of the government of Ontario that protect Ontarians from hate, and will be guided by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition and list of illustrative examples of anti-Semitism.

We know that anti-Semitism is a complex problem and requires a coordinated and multi-faceted approach to addressing it, and that it can be expressed in many different ways. Hate speech is an example of a verbal manifestation.

It can be expressed in visual form through negative depictions of the Jewish people. It can be seen in the written word. And anti-Semitism can certainly be violently acted out. These are just a few of the many ways in which we have seen hate against the Jewish people.

To clarify this, the IHRA has a number of illustrative examples which serve to illuminate this working definition. These include contemporary examples such as, "Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion," or "Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms ... or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust)." These are just two of the many illustrative examples.

As we can see, hate can be expressed in so many ways. That is one reason why it is so difficult to put an end to it. The first step to doing so is by clearly defining what anti-Semitism is. Currently, there is no universally accepted definition within the government. This leads to a disjointed, incoherent and ineffective response in addressing it. By unifying the government to be guided by the IHRA working definition, this bill will permit a whole-of-government response to the scourge that is anti-Semitism.

The IHRA working definition has international support and is supported by numerous Jewish organizations. It was adopted by the IHRA plenary on May 26, 2016, and has been adopted by 33 countries around the world. It has that support because of its value in ending anti-Semitic hate. And that is exactly what we want to do.

Speaker, I'm going to read a quote from Michael Mostyn, CEO of B'nai Brith Canada: "B'nai Brith Canada wholeheartedly supports Bill 168 and the adoption of the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism by the province of Ontario and extends its gracious thanks to MPPs Will Bouma and Robin Martin for bringing this important bill forward. This is a milestone event. It would make Ontario the first province in Canada to adopt the world's most expert and consensus-driven definition of anti-Semitism which has been adopted or endorsed by 24 governments and jurisdictions, globally, as well as the Secretary-General of the OAS," which is the Organization of American States. "Only by defining anti-Semitism in its modern context can we collectively take the steps necessary to identify, prevent, and combat the phenomenon wherever it arises."

Here's what Vice-President Noah Shack of CIJA GTA, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, had to say on this private member's bill: "The passing of Bill 168 at second reading comes at a crucial time for Jewish Ontarians. Our community continues to be disproportionately targeted with hate by a broad spectrum of individuals and groups. Moving this important initiative forward demonstrates that our legislators stand shoulder to shoulder with the Jewish community in confronting this insidious threat. We applaud MPPs Will Bouma and Robin Martin for their leadership and support."

Another quote, and this one from Avi Benlolo, president and CEO of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center

for Holocaust Studies: “Anti-Semitic incidences and hate crimes have been growing in Canada at an alarming rate. It is critical that governments at all levels take an active approach to combatting hatred towards the Jewish community. But hatred towards Jews cannot be effectively addressed unless we can agree on what does, and what does not, constitute anti-Semitism.”

Speaker, by creating a unified framework, we, as a government, can act as a whole to fight hate, discrimination and violence against the Jewish people.

In conclusion, I am proud to have worked with my co-sponsor for this bill, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, on bringing this important piece of legislation to the assembly. Also, I would like to thank the member from Burlington. She is responsible for the original draft of this legislation. Thank you, Jane.

I would encourage every member of this assembly to support this very important bill.

I want to end by saying that we must do everything we can to put an end to anti-Semitism. It is simply the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I am very proud to be rising today to speak on Bill 168, the Combating Antisemitism Act, and to be co-sponsoring this important legislation with the member from Brantford–Brant. If passed, this bill will ensure that the government of Ontario is guided by the working definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance plenary on May 26, 2016, when interpreting acts, regulations and policies designed to protect Ontarians from discrimination and hate amounting to anti-Semitism.

Speaker, as a government and as a society, we have a responsibility to stand firm against hatred and intolerance in all of its forms. Sadly, one of the most common forms that hatred and intolerance manifests itself is through anti-Semitism.

In their most recent Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents, for the year 2018, B’nai Brith recorded more than 2,000 incidents of anti-Semitism across Canada, sadly, representing a 16% increase from 2017. The vast majority of cases were recorded as harassment—which is somewhat comforting—but they also noted a number of cases of vandalism and violence. And we’ve seen it all too often.

Here in Toronto, we’ve all seen synagogues, Jewish day schools, community centres and cemeteries vandalized with hateful graffiti, targeted for no other reason than affiliation with the Jewish faith.

You may recall, Speaker, in November 2018, four Jewish students in my own riding of Eglinton–Lawrence were assaulted while walking home—an incident seemingly motivated by what they were wearing, a kippah. Jewish students, and Jewish Canadians, broadly, should never fear wearing a kippah or other visual indications of their faith in public. And they should never fear participating in or attending Jewish activities, institutions, events or organizations. But this past November, again, we saw

Jewish students and Jewish student organizations targeted at York University, when protests at an event organized by a student group on campus led to both verbal and physical altercations with protesters. My friend Michael Mostyn of B’nai Brith said at that time, “Enraged mobs cannot be allowed to prevent lawful and peaceful gatherings from taking place on campus.” I could not agree more.

That same month also saw the University of Toronto Graduate Students’ Union oppose a proposal to make kosher food more accessible on campus, simply because it was put forward by Hillel, an on-campus Jewish organization that is known to be pro-Israel. While valid criticism of the State of Israel does not constitute anti-Semitism, a failure to separate the needs of Jewish students on a university campus in Toronto from valid criticism of the Israeli government certainly does. And I think that leads to a good opportunity to look at what exactly this act asks the government of Ontario to adopt.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, or IHRA, defines anti-Semitism as “a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

IHRA goes on provide some guidance as to how to apply the definition, particularly when it comes to criticisms of the State of Israel. They state that manifestations of anti-Semitism “might include the targeting of the State of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic.”

Some of the specific examples they present as examples of anti-Semitism include—I think my colleague went through some of these: “Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion....

“Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.”

And there are many other examples.

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Speaker, I recognize that I’m running out of time, so in concluding my remarks, I want to recognize the hard work and the commitment of our province’s Jewish community in advocating for this change, and, in particular, the efforts of advocacy organizations, including B’nai Brith Canada, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center and many others, in working to combat anti-Semitism.

I also want to thank the member for Brantford–Brant for introducing this legislation in December, and for the opportunity to add my name and my support to this important bill as a co-sponsor.

I encourage all members of this House to join us in standing up for what is right, for tolerance—which we all profess to believe in—and for Ontario’s Jewish community by adopting this legislation and the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It is always an honour to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the NDP.

I would have to say that many of us share personal histories related to anti-Semitism. For that reason, this is one of the toughest speeches I've ever had to make.

I'd like to welcome our guests on this solemn occasion. It's unfortunate that the children had to leave, because this is something that young people need to know about.

The persecution of the Jewish people has left an indelible mark on our shared history as Canadians and as members of the global community. Generations of Jewish people from every background and from countries all over the world have come to our shores, seeking freedom from oppression, violence and hatred.

No soul alive today nor for generations to come should be permitted to forget the genocide of Jewish people—the murder of six million Jews—by a Nazi regime that started as a democratically elected government.

Earlier this year, we marked the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the Nazi death camp where 1.1 million Jewish people were sent. It was a vivid reminder to us all of the evil crimes against humanity committed during the Holocaust.

There remain Holocaust survivors here among the almost quarter of a million Jewish people in Ontario. One of those survivors, Max Eisen, wrote the award-winning memoir *By Chance Alone*. He now lives in Ontario. His story is emblematic and needs to be told.

In 1944, at the age of 15, Mr. Eisen was sent to Auschwitz. His three siblings, mother, grandmother, grandfather and aunt were immediately sent to their deaths, while Eisen was put to work, cutting mustard plants and draining the marshlands in a nearby satellite camp. He later endured a 13-day death march from Auschwitz to the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. Mr. Eisen survived, and he made it to Canada after the war.

He is responsible for what I find one of the greatest quotes: "Without history there is no memory, and without memory there is no future. Never be a bystander."

We have a collective responsibility to never forget the suffering inflicted against the Jewish people and others during these atrocities, and to ensure that this can never happen again. And yet, I stand here today in this House, deeply troubled, to say that in Ontario and around the world, in 2020, we are witnessing a growing threat: We are witnessing increased anti-Semitism.

Hate crimes targeting Jewish people represent almost 20% of all hate crimes in Canada—more than any other group.

Jewish leaders in Canada and across the globe have described the levels of anti-Semitism as the worst seen since the end of the Second World War. We must not allow this evil to creep back into our society. We cannot be complacent in the face of increasing threats to the Jewish people.

Today's debate is important—to recognize and name the anti-Semitism that exists and have a dialogue about how we, as a province and as legislators, will combat it. We believe that that fight requires concrete action. That means investing time, resources and expertise to confront and address anti-Semitism here in our province, to protect the 227,000 Jewish people in Ontario and to assure them that this home is a safe home.

The official opposition, the NDP, is committed to action on anti-Semitism. If we, as an assembly, do not back up our words of support in the chamber here today with real action, we will have failed in our duty. We must never be bystanders.

That's why we tabled a motion in this Legislative Assembly that emphasizes the need to recognize the unique ways that racism impacts Jewish people, as well as Muslim, Black, and Indigenous community members.

The Anti-Racism Directorate was a fundamental part of Ontario's efforts to address the systemic racism against Jewish people and other minorities in our province. The current government's decision to eliminate funding for the directorate and to disband the advisory subcommittee on anti-Semitism was a backward step, in our opinion. If we are to back up our words with actions, we must reverse the funding cuts to the Anti-Racism Directorate and put resources into combatting racism and discrimination in every form.

Our motion would re-establish the directorate's subcommittees on anti-Semitism, anti-Black racism, Islamophobia and anti-Indigenous racism, which this government disbanded in 2018.

Regarding this bill, we know that this bill and this definition, on its own, will not be enough to significantly combat anti-Semitism in Ontario. We've listened to voices in the Jewish community and from civil liberties advocacy organizations, and we understand there are some legitimate, deeply held reservations.

Free speech and the ability to speak one's mind and heart, especially about governments and about the protection of human rights, is a cornerstone of a free society. Had it been so in the 1930s, perhaps it could have been prevented.

The NDP has heard concerns that suggest that this definition doesn't do enough to acknowledge that right. We also recognize that this was not intended as a legally binding definition.

We have heard from scholars, civil liberties defenders and community members their concerns about the impact it would have if this definition were to be used as legally binding when it wasn't written for that purpose.

In that spirit, this bill should function as an expression of our shared commitment to fight anti-Semitism and as a tool for understanding the many forms it takes in our society. The official opposition, the NDP, will not oppose this bill.

A private member's bill is a tool to open dialogue, and the NDP will be there to listen, to speak, and to stand up and be counted. We are proposing to invest more time,

more energy and more resources into the ongoing fight against anti-Semitism.

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Real change comes when we put our words into action, and that's what we intend to do not just today, but every day we come to this Legislature—to act on our words and ensure we do much more to confront anti-Semitism and every other form of hatred that undermines our shared values as Ontarians.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak. Once again, I thank everyone for allowing me to speak and for this debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Roman Baber: I'm blessed to represent the second-largest Jewish constituency in the country. I'm also of the Jewish faith, and therefore humbled and grateful for the opportunity to make submissions on An Act to combat antisemitism, 2020.

Speaker, hate and incitement to violence against the Jewish people go back more than 2,500 years. This evil is responsible for violence, prosecutions, pogroms, expulsions and murder.

My family and I have been victims of blatant, vicious and frightening anti-Semitism in the former Soviet Union. Being Jewish often meant that you couldn't get a job or be accepted to an academic institution. My own family members feared attending my own bris, my baby-naming ceremony, for fear of imprisonment. I know what anti-Semitism is and what it could be. It's scary and it's awful. But we're blessed to live in the most diverse and loving country in the world. With one or two meaningless exceptions, I never felt anti-Semitism in Canada. God bless our wonderful country.

Despite my perceptions, we know that it's here. It's happening in York Centre. It's happening in my neighbouring riding of Humber River–Black Creek, at York University. It's happening in my neighbouring riding of Thornhill, with graffiti on houses and Nazi drawings on playgrounds. It's happening in Eglinton–Lawrence, with a vicious assault on Jewish students. At least once a year, members of this House are exposed to violent, blatant anti-Semitism during the annual Al-Quds Day, be it on the legislative grounds or across the street.

The point is, colleagues, this debate is not academic. This is happening to people around you. This is happening to your colleagues. I consider each of you in this House, from all parties, a friend. This is happening to your friends.

So what are we doing here today? We're going to stand up for our friends and colleagues. We're going to stand up for our constituents. We're going to stand up for Canadians. Because look at what's going on in the world: Global anti-Semitism is on the move again. It's dangerous and horrifying and, in some places in Europe, it's becoming the norm. It's not limited to Twitter or the neighbourhood. As I've said before, it grows through a chill in governments, when government is apathetic, when government doesn't act, or fails to act, or is afraid to act. You see, the only way to keep this evil in check is to call it out and fight this evil.

Speaker, today we're drawing a clear line. Today we're going to do something about it. Do you know what we're doing? We're calling anti-Semitism what it is. We're putting our finger on it and defining anti-Semitism. We make it explicit, so no one will miss it. We're highlighting it and we're saying this is wrong.

And why are we defining it? Because we will not accept it. If it's happening in one of Ontario's academic institutions or it's pushed by a grant recipient or anyone who wants to do business with the government of Ontario, we will know how to identify it and we should not stand for it—not this government.

I thank my colleagues from Brantford–Brant and Eglinton–Lawrence. I thank you sincerely for standing up for me, for standing up for everyday Canadians, for standing up for all of us. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: As the longest-serving Jewish MPP presently serving in this Legislature, I'm pleased that my colleagues have brought this important bill forward. But at the same time, I'm very deeply troubled that it's even necessary.

Anti-Semitism is on the rise across the world, and we must be vigilant, all of us, across this great province. We must ensure that society is not degraded by this dangerous and toxic virus.

I'm confident that, beginning with Bill 168, we will prevail. The vast majority of Ontarians are good people who support their Jewish friends and neighbours. My honourable colleagues from Brantford–Brant and Eglinton–Lawrence are two shining examples. Neither of them is Jewish, but both of them recognize the scope and the challenge we face and are unafraid to stand tall—in the case of Brantford–Brant, very tall—and stand shoulder to shoulder with the Jewish communities across Ontario in these troubling times.

In my riding of Thornhill, a local family awoke one morning a few months ago to find their home defaced with horrifying, anti-Semitic symbols and messages: swastikas and threats. A local synagogue has had its front window smashed by a rock-throwing Jew-hater. A local rabbi has been subjected to vicious online intimidation. And just last week a Jewish charity that serves the needs of vulnerable seniors, including many Holocaust survivors, had to call police when a man burst into their centre, threatening to kill Jews.

Thornhill is home to one of the most vibrant Jewish communities in the world. We will not tolerate this hatred in our midst. We will not sit idly by. I'm proud to take a stand here today on behalf of my constituents, and with the entire PC caucus, and take note of the fact that this government—and, I believe, all of us here serving all of our constituents—understands that we can do more, and we must do more.

As my colleagues have mentioned, the first step in taking action against anti-Semitism is to make sure that Ontarians can properly identify it. This bill will make sure that the global standard for what constitutes anti-

Semitism, supported by many governments and human rights organizations around the world, will be applied here in Ontario too.

There is a prominent Holocaust survivor in our community named Pinchas Gutter. This week, he wrote a stirring piece in support of this bill, and I'm going to quote him:

"As a survivor, I have spent my life speaking to our children, grandchildren and others about the necessity of remembering the past in order to prevent atrocities in the future. But remembrance and commemoration must be complemented by a commitment in the present.

"I am deeply worried by the resurgence of hate. That is why I believe adopting the IHRA"—the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance—"definition of anti-Semitism is so crucial.

"Passing this bill would send an important message of solidarity and support to Jewish Ontarians, while also sending a clear signal to bigots that there is no place for anti-Semitism in the province."

Bill 168, An Act to combat antisemitism, is something that all members of this Legislature should support, no matter where they sit in this Legislature. We all recognize that free speech is one of the cornerstones of democracy in Ontario, and we heard the honourable member across just talk about that. But we're also well aware that we can't yell "fire" in a crowded theatre. Free speech is supported, it's necessary in a democratic country, but we also have to recognize that sometimes speech can lead to violence, and we must ensure that does not continue to happen to the Jewish community.

We were disheartened on this side of the House when the NDP hosted a press conference just this week, where one of their invited speakers was recorded as saying, "Israel is a racist state." That is incitement. That is cruel. That is untrue, and it is unjustifiable at Queen's Park, in our Legislature and in our press gallery.

The Jewish community is tired of just talk. This bill allows action, and I'm supporting it. I'm heartened when I see my colleagues from all sides of the House, from all communities, from all ridings, from all religions and ethnic backgrounds support me and support my colleagues in ensuring that violence does not occur in Ontario, and not in Thornhill and not on my watch.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I represent the riding of Barrie–Innisfil, where we have a glorious and growing Jewish community. As someone who was born in the former Soviet Union, my family knows first-hand how hard it can be to fight against anti-Semitism, and how terrible hate can be. In fact, anti-Semitism is the most pernicious form of hatred in human history. That is why, as parliamentarians in a liberal democracy, we must reject and condemn manifestations of anti-Semitism and hate.

Today, we have an opportunity to condemn such actions by supporting Bill 168, An Act to combat anti-Semitism. It is crucial that we in Ontario implement a

whole-of-government approach in combatting anti-Semitism. Bill 168 would require that the government be guided by the working definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance when it interprets acts, regulations and policies, in order to protect Ontarians from discrimination and hate amounting to anti-Semitism.

Why, Madam Speaker? Statistics Canada reports that Jewish communities all across Canada are the most frequently targeted by hate crimes. The largest increase in hate crimes is here in Ontario. Ontario cannot afford to be complacent. We must stand together, shoulder to shoulder, to fight against hate and intolerance in this province.

The fight against anti-Semitism starts here at home, in Ontario, where we can have a clear definition so we can define and combat anti-Semitism when it arises. Bill 168, the Combating Antisemitism Act, will do just that.

Let's undo the wrongs in history today. Let's make Ontario the first province to adopt the IHRA definition. Let's stand up for our Jewish friends all around the world and in Ontario. I want to thank the member for Eglinton–Lawrence and I want to thank the member for Brantford–Brant for setting a legacy here in Ontario to be the first province to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? The member for Brantford–Brant has two minutes for his reply.

Mr. Will Bouma: It's a good day in the House today. I'd like to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence—and for the changes to the standing orders so that we could co-sponsor this bill. I'd like to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I really appreciated what you had to say, and I really thank you. I'd like to thank the member from York Centre, the member from Thornhill and the member from Barrie–Innisfil for their words on this piece of legislation. I would really like to thank the member from Burlington for her initial work on this.

I was just asked: Why bring this piece of legislation forward? I'm not Jewish. I don't have a large Jewish population in my riding. I come from a position of privilege. We all actually do, living in this incredible country. But my background, my gender, my race—I know and realize that I have distinct advantages, but I resolve to use that privilege to do what I can for everyone else. I see responses sometimes that say different, that people just apologize and then move on, or because of their lack of privilege, they give up. But we live in a country where we can do great things for one another.

Why did I bring this forward? During my election, there was an independent candidate who, at the only debate he was allowed to be at, went into an anti-Semitic rant. I stood up and I left. Do you know what, Madam Speaker? I was the only candidate who left that debate.

I realized then how precarious our position is, when someone can get away, in a debate for this position, with spreading hate, saying hate, towards Jewish people, and no one but me got up and left. That's not to toot my own horn; that shows exactly why we need to continue to work, so that we can never forget.

I look forward to passing this legislation. I ask everyone for their support, and thank you for giving it.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LE JOUR DE L'ONTARIO

The Acting Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item number 100, standing in the name of Mr. Parsa.

Mr. Parsa has moved second reading of Bill 173, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Mr. Michael Parsa: The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? Agreed.

COMBATING ANTISEMITISM ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE L'ANTISÉMITISME

The Acting Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Bouma has moved second reading of Bill 168, An Act to combat antisemitism.

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 five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1436 to 1441.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All members will please take their seats. All ministers will please take their seats.

Mr. Bouma has moved second reading of Bill 168, An Act to combat antisemitism. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Jones, Sylvia	Roberts, Jeremy
Baber, Roman	Kanapathi, Logan	Romano, Ross
Babikian, Aris	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Sabawy, Sheref
Bailey, Robert	Ke, Vincent	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Khanjin, Andrea	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Shaw, Sandy
Cho, Stan	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Surma, Kinga
Coe, Lorne	McDonell, Jim	Tangri, Nina
Crawford, Stephen	McKenna, Jane	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Miller, Norman	Vanthof, John

Downey, Doug
Ford, Doug
Ghamari, Goldie
Harris, Mike
Hassan, Faisal
Hatfield, Percy
Hogarth, Christine

Miller, Paul
Natyshak, Taras
Oosterhoff, Sam
Pang, Billy
Parsa, Michael
Pettapiece, Randy
Rasheed, Kaleed

Wai, Daisy
Walker, Bill
West, Jamie
Yakabuski, John
Yarde, Kevin

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 55; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Mr. Will Bouma: Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMARTER AND STRONGER JUSTICE ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 POUR UN SYSTÈME JUDICIAIRE PLUS EFFICACE ET PLUS SOLIDE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 19, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to enact the Legal Aid Services Act, 2020 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 2020 sur les services d'aide juridique et apportant diverses modifications à des lois traitant des tribunaux et d'autres questions relatives à la justice.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order, please. I would ask those members, if they are coming or going, to please do so quietly so we can continue with debate. Order, please. Thank you.

Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise today to participate in the debate on Bill 161, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, on behalf of the people I represent in London West.

We are in the middle of the second reading debate on this bill, a bill that was introduced on December 9, 2019.

This is a bill that truly has devastating consequences for access to justice in Ontario. The Society of United Professionals, which is the union that represents legal aid lawyers, has called it the "biggest attack on legal aid in Ontario's history." They did that in an op ed entitled "New Legal Aid Legislation Removes Access to Justice—Literally."

The president of the Criminal Lawyers' Association made similar comments. He said, "The government is

attempting to eliminate legislative protections for access to justice for the poorest Ontarians.”

Lawyer Michael Spratt, who is a partner in an Ottawa criminal law firm, a former vice-president of the Defence Counsel Association of Ottawa and a former member of the Criminal Lawyers’ Association board said, “Downey’s legislation is a Trojan horse for his ultimate goal—a cruel gutting of access to justice for the impoverished.”

Speaker, there are a lot of legitimate concerns about this bill, concerns that have been expressed by people who are on the front lines of the justice system, and also by those of us on this side of the House who have spoken out against this legislation.

As I said, December 9 was the day the legislation was introduced. Simultaneously, the government also announced that they would not be proceeding with the \$31-million additional cut to legal aid funding that was included in the 2019 budget. Of course, everyone will recall that that was the budget that implemented a 30% reduction to funding for Legal Aid Ontario, which represents a cut of \$133 million.

What this government fails to recognize time and again is that a cut to a cut is still a cut. We hear this in public education. They claim, because they were going to increase class sizes from 22 to 28 and are now only increasing it to 25, that somehow they’re lowering class size averages. They just don’t get that a cut to a cut is still a cut.

This \$133 million that has been taken out of public is going to have a huge ripple effect across this province.

I want to speak today about my community in London, just to give you a sense of what that cut means on the ground in places like London, the city I represent.

We have Community Legal Services, which is at Western University. It’s one of seven student legal aid clinics that have been established across the province. The cut to the legal aid funding had a major financial impact on that organization. It has an annual budget of about \$1 million. It’s looking at an almost \$40,000 hit. This means that they are no longer offering students free help with wills, powers of attorney and immigration. We know how many international students are attending our post-secondary institutions and would like to become permanent residents and contribute to our economy. Community Legal Services is no longer able to provide that assistance.

Doug Ferguson, who is the executive director of Community Legal Services, believes that the funding reductions for legal aid are actually going to cost the government money in the long run. He says, “We can’t represent as many people now ... and the courts are getting full of self-represented individuals who really don’t know what to do, they don’t understand the system....” This means, of course, that the judges have to spend more time assisting these self-represented individuals. That creates more delays in our court system and more cost.

1450

Doug Ferguson also went on to say that “students struggling to deal with legal issues tend to develop health problems”—mental health problems.

But also, critically, community legal services at Western and at the other universities in the province play a critical role in enabling law students to get hands-on experience. For example, U of T law student Teodora Pasca did an opinion piece. She talked about the importance of the hands-on, experiential learning opportunities that are offered in legal aid clinics. She expressed major concern that the system of university legal aid clinics is going to be totally undermined by the cuts to legal aid. Her editorial is called “The Ontario Government is Destroying University Legal Clinics.” This means that young lawyers, graduates, law students, who are looking to get into the legal profession are more limited in the opportunities that they can get working with marginalized communities. Many may want to go on to practise poverty law, and those opportunities are going to be more limited.

Another consequence or implication of the cuts to legal aid funding is around bail. London lawyer Gord Cudmore, again, talked about the fact that clients are representing themselves during bail hearings. He says that “(Having people represent themselves) creates further backlogs because they don’t know what they’re doing so it takes longer to deal with them because they don’t know the process. The judge is obliged to try and give them some assistance.”

He went on to say that, “even before these cuts, there were already many people representing themselves because they had been denied financial help with legal counsel.”

He says, “You’d be amazed at the number of unrepresented people in our courts today. I’d be willing to bet more than half the people in family court are representing themselves.”

When you have more people representing themselves, not only are they not able to—they don’t have the expertise or the background to advocate as effectively on their behalf as a practising lawyer could, but they also cause these delays in the court system.

I want to talk a little bit about Neighbourhood Legal Services in London, which is one of 73 community legal aid clinics that are established across the province. On June 3, Neighbourhood Legal Services sent a letter to London city council, requesting that the council of the city of London send a letter to the Attorney General to ask for a commitment to promote access to justice and not decrease front-line services.

In their letter, they said, “These cuts will have a sweeping effect on the residents of London and on the community as a whole. Local legal clinics, immigrants and refugees, and the certificate system are all profoundly affected by these budget changes.”

They go on to talk about the kinds of services that Neighbourhood Legal Services provides to low-income residents in the city of London, which include advice and representation on social assistance, housing, employment, criminal injuries and compensation. They “work closely with the City of London and community groups to help improve the lives of Londoners.”

In response, the city of London did unanimously pass a motion at council that the mayor was going to advise the

Premier and the Attorney General of the city's request that the province promote access to justice by ensuring that front-line services are not decreased.

I want to quote one of the councillors who spoke to this resolution when it was discussed. She noted that without the services that are provided by Neighbourhood Legal Services, there was going to be additional pressure put on city resources around policing, housing and mental health services. She said, "If front-line services end up being cut because of these cuts to funding, then we are going to see a lot of these very vulnerable people being denied benefits they are entitled to ... and there's certainly a social cost."

Speaker, the decision to make such a drastic reduction to legal aid funding is going to have long-term implications and negative consequences for Ontarians for years to come, because the government did not reverse those cuts. All the government said is that they weren't going to proceed with an additional cut.

The other thing that I heard from Neighbourhood Legal Services is that they are very concerned about the loss of any kind of budget room to provide training for their staff. Obviously lawyers and paralegals need to be kept updated on the law, and training for clinic work is particularly important because the staff lawyers at Neighbourhood Legal Services are working with vulnerable populations and that requires some specialized training for their ability to do that work.

Neighbourhood Legal Services is also experiencing an increase in caseload, because the \$133-million provincial cut to legal aid affected some of the specialty clinics that existed for injured workers, the Social Benefits Tribunal. Without access to those specialty clinics, Neighbourhood Legal Services is seeing an increase in the number of people who are coming to get services there.

I want to reflect a bit on those specialty clinics and what the loss of these specialty clinics will mean for Ontarians. The Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic, which is providing—or had provided—excellent service for injured workers, helped injured workers get recognition for the injuries that they had received on the job. They helped support those workers who were dealing with issues such as chronic pain and chronic mental stress. They were able to get pension supplements for older workers, clothing allowances, benefit adjustments to keep pace with inflation, and other issues. The Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic had to lay off 40% of its staff in the wake of these cuts. That is going to be particularly harmful to—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Sorry to interrupt the member. A point of order: the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: A point of order, Madam Speaker: Under standing order 25(b), if a member directs their speech to something other than what is under discussion, then it is a violation of the rules. We're hearing—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. I will remind the member to speak to the bill, or to make it clear to the House how it connects.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. I found it interesting that the very same day the legislation was

introduced and in the very same media conference, the Attorney General also talked about the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario. I think that's important context when we're looking at the bill.

But my time is running out very quickly and I did want to focus on some of the schedules of the bill. This bill includes 20 schedules. I want to focus specifically on schedule 4, which is regarding class action lawsuits, and also schedules 15 and 16 that talk about Legal Aid Ontario.

Schedule 4 essentially makes it much, much more difficult to launch a class action lawsuit in Ontario. An interesting thing, Speaker, is that the Law Commission of Ontario, on January 22, sent a detailed letter to the Attorney General expressing their unequivocal opposition to the changes that have been made in this legislation to class action proceedings.

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Basically, with this legislation, a class action can only proceed if it is superior to all other forms of relief. They point out that these provisions, if they had been in place, would have prevented such class actions as those regarding Indian residential schools, the Walkerton inquiry, tainted blood supplies, and price fixing. So to put limits on class action proceedings can undermine the public interest in very, very significant ways. It also means that Ontarians are going to have fewer legal rights and less access to justice than other Canadians because Ontario's laws will be more stringent than any other province.

The other provisions of the bill that are most concerning from our perspective are schedules 15 and 16, around the Legal Aid Services Act. What these schedules do is essentially remove the terms "access to justice" and "low-income" from the legal services act. This is hugely significant. It fundamentally alters the legal aid system that we have in this province.

One of the concerns that has been expressed is that shifting the focus from ensuring that low-income people have access to justice, and, instead, talking about efficient delivery of services means that cost-effectiveness could now become the driving motivation behind legal aid service provision rather than supporting the most marginalized and vulnerable people in the province.

Pamela Cross, a lawyer who has done amazing work on domestic violence, talked about this shift in the expectations for Legal Aid Ontario and what it could mean for women who are fleeing abuse. She points out that the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee in Ontario has found that victims of intimate-partner abuse are at the highest risk of lethal violence during the separation process; it is during that time when a woman is making the decision to leave an abusive relationship that she is at greatest risk of abuse or of being murdered by her intimate partner.

That is also the time when women are most likely to engage with the criminal justice system, so to change the way that legal aid service is provided in Ontario could limit the ability of women to access legal supports when they are in that vulnerable, dangerous situation. They need to ensure that they have full access to legal representation,

that they understand their legal rights and that they are protected by our legal system.

Speaker, I wanted to talk a little bit more about some of the other most troubling provisions of sections 15 and 16. One of them is the change from the use of the words “shall provide” to “may provide.” Whereas the current legislation says that legal services “shall” be provided “in the areas of criminal law, family law, clinic law and mental health law,” the new legislation that we have before us says that legal services “may” be provided “in the following areas...” Pamela Cross points out that this new permissive rather than mandatory language opens the door to the possibility that Legal Aid Ontario could reduce the provision of legal services in favour of providing less expensive services that fall short of legal representation.

I wanted to reference concerns that were expressed by Osgoode law professor Amar Bhatia. He says that it’s “‘disturbing how the role of communities has been erased from the proposed legislation. Low-income communities served by poverty law clinics and specialized clinics ... do not seem to have a protected place in the new legislation’.... [T]his shift in Bill 161 further entrenches the instructions tied to last year’s budget cuts that clinics” must “focus on individual legal services and public legal education, rather than law reform and community organizing efforts.”

Certainly, many of these advocacy clinics feel that they have been targeted for their advocacy, for speaking out against the changes that this government has made that will impact the most marginalized and vulnerable people in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I listened intently to the member from London West. There seems to be a lot of discussion about Legal Aid Ontario and it seems like they’re referring to everyone under the sun, except for representatives from Legal Aid Ontario. So I’d like to ask the member from London West to please tell us why they aren’t referring to Legal Aid Ontario representatives, especially Charles Harnick, the current chair of Legal Aid Ontario and former Attorney General, as well as David Field, who is the current CEO of Legal Aid Ontario—who, may I remind the member, stood next to the Attorney General in support during the first reading of Bill 161.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the member raising that question about Charles Harnick from Legal Aid Ontario, a former Conservative member of this Legislature. One of the big concerns that we have around schedules 15 and 16 of this bill is that the minister is now able to appoint the board of directors for Legal Aid Ontario. We have seen, time and again, this government use its power of appointment to put people in positions—like Charles Harnick, and like Mr. Annibale at the alcohol and gaming commission—who align with their partisan ideology, rather than the best interests of Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon to the member from London West. I listened intently as well. You spoke

about Community Legal Services in London and the major financial impact these cuts and this bill will have on them. For example, you talked about them not offering students help with their legal issues anymore. For every action, there’s a reaction; there’s a consequence. What does Doug Ferguson say will be the impact of the cuts on other government services in the London area because of these cuts to his legal clinic?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the question from my colleague the member for Windsor–Tecumseh. I do want to clarify that Community Legal Services at Western is still providing some services to students, but the reduction in funding has caused them to eliminate some of the services that they had been providing in the past. But we know that students who may be on their own and do not have family or other supports around, who are dealing with legal issues, for their mental health, for their ability to continue their studies and remain focused on their academic work, it’s important that they have access to legal representation when they run into legal difficulties.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I listened quite intently to the member opposite speaking significantly about legal aid and legal aid clinics. The proposed changes now allow access to more places where people can go. The proposed changes allow people to have a mix of service providers: private practice lawyers, law firms, community legal organizations. So this will now allow people to have a lot more range of places that they can go to access these services. But I didn’t hear her mention that in any of her remarks. I’d like to hear from the member how she feels about that. Or does she want to keep it specifically only to community legal aid clinics?

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Ms. Peggy Sattler: We believe that in Ontario, justice should belong to everyone, not just people who can afford a lawyer in private practice.

We know that people who are low-income, people who are the most marginalized, have the least access to justice, and community legal clinics perform a vital service in supporting those people. For goodness’ sake, \$17,000 is the cut-off. That’s the threshold for access to legal representation through community legal aid clinics.

The people who use those services are often Indigenous; they’re racialized; they have disabilities. They are among the most marginalized. That’s why ensuring that these services continue to be provided is so important.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: There’s an old saying: If you represent yourself in court, you have a fool for a client.

I heard the member from London West speak earlier about more people, because of these cuts, having to represent themselves in court these days, which is having an impact on the judicial system in her area. I would like the member from London West to expand on that a little bit more, if she could, please.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Certainly. When someone goes to court to represent themselves, they don't have the legal training. They don't have the legal background. They don't have access to precedent or any of the other legal documents that could help them advocate most effectively on their own behalf. They may not even be able to navigate the processes. Courts are very intimidating places, whether you have a lawyer beside you or not. Imagine how intimidating it would be if you were representing yourself.

What is happening is, the judges have to spend a lot more time walking people through the process, as they attempt to represent themselves without that legal background and preparation.

So there are two concerns, really. It's the time delays that this causes in getting a resolution to the proceeding in the court, but it's also that it may not be true access to justice if they're not representing themselves as effectively as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mrs. Robin Martin: The members opposite, the opposition, stand in this House and often speak about access to justice, as has the member from London West, and yet they voted against the first reading of this bill, which will allow Ontario to pave the way for online verification of documents, among other things.

Lena Koke, CEO of Axxess Law, said, "This bill is a breakthrough needed to modernize Ontario's legal system. Permitting online verification of an individual's identity and legal documents will level the legal services playing field for all Ontarians.... No matter where a person lives, when they work, or what mobility or ability challenges they may face, they will soon be able to access the same high-quality legal services that are easily accessible in urban centres across Ontario."

This will not only make Ontario a leader in Canada in this field but, more importantly, it will improve access to justice for Ontarians by saving them the time and expense of a trip to the lawyer's office.

Why won't the caucus of the opposition support this important measure, which improves access to justice?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm not sure that the member listened as carefully to my speech as she said she did, because I pointed out that it's not the official opposition that has raised these concerns. It is the Law Commission of Ontario, who did a very detailed letter to the Attorney General outlining all of their concerns with the changes to the class action proceedings act, and the barriers that this will create for Ontarians who want to initiate class actions against their provincial government or government agencies, corporations or institutions. By making these changes to class action proceedings, this bill is putting in barriers to access to justice.

I also talked about the Society of United Professionals, about many other organizations that have—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Further questions? The member from Windsor—Tecumseh—we have time for a quick one.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Many of our lawyers in Ontario study at Osgoode Hall. How worried should we be when the professors at Osgoode Hall are warning and alerting people to the impact we're going to see from the changes in this legislation?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I think we should be very worried. I think that people who have been at the front lines of advocating for the most marginalized and disadvantaged people in this province to get access to the legal services they need—these are the people who are going to feel these changes the most, the cuts to legal aid. Legal professionals, and those involved as professors or lawyers, understand this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to speak on Bill 161, an act to enact changes to the Legal Aid Services Act and other justice matters. What I find so frustrating about this bill, and so many bills put forward by this government, is that it does a few good things, and then it wraps those good things around some deeply problematic proposals. I have serious concerns about the changes in this bill, especially schedules dealing with the Class Proceedings Act and the Legal Aid Services Act.

There seems to be an obvious theme running through the changes to these particular acts: a restriction on access to justice. As former chief of the Supreme Court of Canada, Beverley McLachlin, said, "Access to justice ... is a fundamental right, not an accessory." Yet this government brings forward a bill that impedes the people of Ontario's fundamental right to access to justice.

For example, the government's changes to the certification process of class action lawsuits in schedule 4: This government is shielding itself from negligent actions by raising the bar for the certification of class action lawsuits by adding the predominance test. Speaker, I'm no legal expert—I'll be the first to admit that—but I can tell that this is a bad idea. The government is making it easier to shield itself and large corporations from their legal liabilities. This continues a repeated pattern we've seen, with this government passing legislation that shields itself from legal liability and accountability.

Changes to the Class Proceedings Act will bring Ontario's class action lawsuit landscape more in line with that of the United States, where litigants increasingly find it difficult to find legal remedy through class actions. Some of the biggest class actions over mass harms in Canadian history, such as the tainted blood scandal, the contaminated water supply in Walkerton, Ontario, and residential schools for Indigenous children, might never have made it past the preliminary stage if the new rules proposed in Bill 161 were in place at the time that those actions came forward. I ask the members of this House to think about this for a second: Some of the most notable mass harms in Canadian history—harms in which people deserved justice and remedy for the harms they experienced—may not have gone forward, according to legal scholars, if the changes proposed in this bill had been in place at the time.

These changes need to be understood in the context of previous legislation, particularly changes made just months ago in the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act, an act that already makes it more difficult to sue the Ontario government and its agencies for negligence and wrongdoing. That law is already facing a court challenge. So I want to ask the government: What decisions do they expect to make in the future that they want to shield themselves from legal liability?

1520

No other Canadian province has these rules in place. As a matter of fact, the chair of the Law Commission of Ontario urged the Premier to reject these changes to the certification standard. I want to quote what the LCO said: “Bill 161 will effectively restrict class actions and access to justice in a broad range of important cases.”

I also want to raise alarm bells about another way in which this bill restricts access to justice through changes to the legal aid system and how it works in this province. On top of the devastating \$133 million in cuts that this government has made to legal aid, the Ford government is now attempting to alter the structure and mandate of Legal Aid Ontario. Legal aid lawyers and organizations that serve the most vulnerable in our society have raised concerns about the change to the purpose of legal aid outlined in this bill. To remove the purpose—to promote access to justice throughout Ontario for low-income individuals—is wrong.

Previously, Legal Aid Ontario was established to provide a cost-effective and efficient system providing high-quality legal services to low-income Ontarians. I believe it’s wrong to take “high-quality” and “low-income” out of the purpose of Legal Aid Ontario, as Bill 161 does.

This may sound like a semantic change, but Bill 161 goes from saying that the government “shall provide” services for low-income Ontarians to “may provide” services. Speaker, this may sound like two simple little words, but they have dramatic changes in the purpose of what legal aid in Ontario is designed to do.

My hope is that the members of this House—particularly the members opposite—listen to legal experts and remove these schedules from the bill at committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses?

Hon. Bill Walker: It’s a pleasure to speak to this bill, Bill 161, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act. The leader of the Green Party is getting pretty good at sound-bite politics, but I want to ask him—he asked about legal experts and who was consulted. I’m going to suggest to you that the ministry has actually advised the Superior Court of Justice and Ontario Court of Appeal of the proposed amendments, and there were no concerns about the proposed changes.

In regard to the challenge of marginalized people and the fee structure, the change of wording has actually been endorsed by the Supreme Court of Canada. Charles Harnick, a former Attorney General, said, “The proposed legislation will enable Legal Aid Ontario to better serve

clients and work more efficiently with the service providers.”

This is good news for all Ontarians.

David Field, CEO of Legal Aid Ontario, said, “The new Legal Aid Services Act is an important step towards improving access to justice in Ontario. It offers opportunities for innovation, and allows us to address gaps in the justice system. This legislation, if passed, would allow Legal Aid Ontario and its valued service providers—including staff, clinics and the private bar—to better serve clients.”

I would just ask him: Are those not experts that actually are endorsing this, why he can’t actually agree with the purported experts and why he has not referenced any of them and how they’re so supportive of the changes to this bill?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response? The member from Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It’s an excellent opportunity to answer a question from the associate minister, so thank you for that.

I would ask the associate minister to listen to the front-line lawyers who are on the ground providing services to legal aid clients in this province. That’s exactly why listening to the Society of United Professionals—the actual lawyers providing the service—is so important. I want to quote from their website: “Combined with the Ford government’s severe and cruel Legal Aid Ontario cut, this bill amounts to passing the buck to Legal Aid Ontario to implement cuts without the agency being constrained by a legal mandate that protects the vulnerable people who need legal aid.”

I can tell you, Speaker, that the people who come to my office whom I refer to legal aid are some of the most low-income and most vulnerable people in our society, and they deserve access to justice.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I heard the member from Guelph say that this Conservative government has a record of passing legislation to shield itself from legal activity and legal liability. I just wonder if he would take this opportunity to expand on those comments.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member’s question. I think if the member remembers, it was probably about the first bill that the new government passed to cancel renewable energy contracts, I think over 750 of them. The bright and shiny light in that legislation was removing the ability of those people who had been harmed to sue the government. We’ve seen this repeatedly.

The climate change bill to get rid of the cap-and-trade system, which would have negatively affected numerous companies that had bought carbon credits—again, the legislation shields the government from those litigants.

So here we are in a serious situation where the government is proposing legislation that will make it extremely difficult for citizens to engage in class action lawsuits against the government when they’re harmed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I was listening intently to the member from Guelph's speech. My question to him, through you, Madam Speaker, is, why is he not supporting Bill 161 with respect to the class action fees? What we're doing is making the payment of lawyers' fees reasonable. We're making settlements fairer and in the interest of class members. We're ensuring proper notice when people are part of a class action. We're ensuring more protections for vulnerable class members. Why is the member from Guelph so opposed to creating a class action framework that finally puts the people of Ontario first and not interest groups or high-paid lawyers?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. If you'll remember, I believe my opening statement said something like one of my frustrations with this government is they do a few positive things and they wrap those positive things around some serious concerns that you have in a bill. When you restrict people's access to justice, whether it's through their ability to do class action lawsuits or their ability to obtain legal aid services, that's a bill I can't support. There may be some other things in this bill that are positive, but if you're going to restrict people's access to justice, I can't support the bill, and I would suggest and encourage the members to not support the bill.

If you think about it, the Law Commission of Ontario wrote a very detailed letter to the Premier and the minister. It outlined a number of things they supported about the bill. In their final analysis, they said they could not support this bill because of the problems with the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the remarks from the member for Guelph and I certainly share his concerns about the changes to the class action proceedings and what that will mean for access to justice. I wondered if the member wanted to comment on those changes to class action proceedings in the context of the earlier changes we saw in this Legislature around the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act, which makes it impossible for Ontarians now to launch class action lawsuits against the province. That legislation is being challenged in court right now as a violation of the Constitution. I wondered what his thoughts on that are.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. Maybe I'll actually quote the Law Commission of Ontario on this. One of the other members asked me to look at some legal experts, so let's listen to some legal experts.

The Law Commission of Ontario: "Finally, Bill 161 and the new Crown Liability and Proceedings Act create significant barriers for Ontarians wishing to initiate class actions against their provincial government, government agencies, corporations and other institutions." This restricts people's access to justice.

As a matter of fact, the Law Commission went on to say, "In light of this analysis, the LCO is unable to support Bill 161 as currently drafted." The two combined—and I'm happy the member mentioned that the previous

legislation is being challenged in court—create serious restrictions to access—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further questions?

1530

Mrs. Robin Martin: To the member opposite: I know you've talked about access to justice. In my earlier question, I pointed out how the law would improve access to justice. I think that another way that it does that is by allowing greater flexibility to Legal Aid Ontario in a number of ways. One is to provide a continuum of legal aid services, from legal information and summary advice, to alternative dispute resolution, to unbundled legal services and full representation. It allows Legal Aid Ontario to enter into agreements with paralegals and allows them to enter into agreements regarding public legal education. It really opens up a whole bunch of services that could be very useful. As we've already quoted, David Field, the CEO of Legal Aid Ontario, is in support of this.

So I think that there are a lot of good things here, and I'd like to hear what the member has to say about those things improving access—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Response?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. I was actually just looking at an article here, written by a law professor who, in talking about this bill, describes it as "one step forward and two steps back." That's exactly what this bill is. There are a couple steps forward, and then there are a lot of steps back.

Whenever the members opposite talk about some of the positive things in this bill, those do not make up for the fact that this bill restricts access to justice, both through class actions and through legal aid.

I believe that everyone in this province deserves access to justice, especially our most vulnerable and our most low-income citizens, and that's exactly what legal aid was designed for. The fact that the government has taken that out of the purpose of Legal Aid Ontario is wrong.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Glover: It's an honour to rise in the House to take part in this debate on Bill 161. Like every piece of legislation that this government has passed, its name is the opposite of what it actually does. It's named the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, but its purpose is actually to strip low-income and most Ontarians' access to justice.

I want to start with an example of where this government is coming from, and where this fits into the context and the direction of this government.

When I was elected as a school board trustee in 2010, I started getting invited to the funerals of young men who had been killed in gun violence. I didn't understand what was happening, so I formed a group of people. There are parents who have lost children to gun violence; there are former gang members who try to prevent others from following in their footsteps; there are academics; there are just concerned community members.

In August 2018, I invited them to Queen's Park, and we held a press conference. After the press conference, they sat in the members' gallery for question period. After question period, one of the members of the group, who had grown up in a low-income community in Toronto, looked at the Conservative members and she said she couldn't identify. She said, "They seem like privileged people who are protecting their privilege."

I think almost every piece of legislation this government has passed fits that bill. Almost every piece of legislation that this government has passed has increased the gap between rich and poor. It has taken services and income supports from low-income Ontarians in order to fund tax cuts for corporations and for the wealthiest Ontarians.

We've got so many examples. There's a fight right now in our public education system. This government is increasing class sizes. They're mandating online learning. They're essentially undermining our publicly funded schools in order to create a market for private schools.

But what they don't care about, or don't seem to care about, is that most Ontarians can't afford private school and don't want their children to go to private school. They understand that publicly funded schools are actually the foundation of our democracy and the foundation of our social cohesion.

This bill also fits that pattern of taking things away from low-income and average-income Ontarians in order to fund tax cuts for others. It actually strips people of the right to access to justice, both in class action lawsuits and in legal aid.

I'll start with schedules 15 and 16 in this bill concerning the Legal Aid Services Act. In 1998, Legal Aid Ontario was created to replace the Ontario legal aid plan. This organization was mandated with a commitment to assist vulnerable Ontarians and provide them with more access to justice. This was done by funding legal representation for those who can't afford a lawyer themselves. The legislation was not amended for more than 20 years, but the changes being proposed in this bill threaten the access to justice provided by Legal Aid Ontario, which is already severely underfunded.

Funding for legal aid across all provinces in Canada is shockingly low, especially shutting out all but the absolute poorest Canadians. Ontario's legal aid threshold currently sits at \$17,731 for a single person. That means if you make over \$17,731 as an individual in Ontario, or more than \$31,917 for a family of two, you are not eligible for legal aid. So already the thresholds were too low. More people needed access to justice than what legal aid was providing.

But what this bill does is change the mandate of Legal Aid Ontario. The wording in the current legislation is that Legal Aid Ontario is to "promote access to justice throughout Ontario for low-income individuals...." The new language that this government is proposing is, "to facilitate the establishment of a flexible and sustainable legal aid system that provides effective and high-quality legal aid services throughout Ontario in a client-focused and accountable manner while ensuring value for money."

If you can make any sense out of that mush pile of words, then you're doing better than most people will. The reason that they are replacing clear, succinct language with mushy words is because they don't want this government to be responsible for providing access to justice for low-income individuals. That's why they've taken out the words "access to justice" and "low-income individuals" from the legislation.

Legal aid and the clinic system have been a success story in Ontario. Specialized legal aid clinics assist individuals who are often from equity-seeking groups. For example, Toronto's Taibu clinic provides assistance to racialized families to push back against severe disciplinary measures levied against their children at school. Thanks to the legal aid system, these families have legal recourse which is warranted and needed, considering their children are more likely to experience a bias in the education system.

I'll speak specifically to the experience of the Toronto District School Board. In 2005, some trustees in the TDSB got the sense that racialized and particularly Black male students were being disproportionately penalized for breaches of conduct. What they found was that the suspension rates when a Black male student breached the rules of the school—they were more likely to be suspended or expelled. The legal recourse for those families was provided through Legal Aid Ontario, which would provide a lawyer so that they could appeal the decision of the school or of the school board.

From injured workers to refugees to family contract law or landlord-tenant issues and social housing, Ontario's clinic system has been truly groundbreaking in the breadth and depth of expertise it has been able to offer Ontarians.

In addition to removing the terms "low-income individuals" and "access to justice" from the purpose of the Legal Aid Services Act, this bill would also radically alter Legal Aid Ontario's mandates. Schedules 15 and 16 in this bill change the Legal Aid Services Act by providing a large increase in discretion regarding what services are offered by Legal Aid Ontario and to whom. The previous act mandated services in the areas of criminal law, family law, clinic law and mental health law; the new act enumerates more areas but makes their provision discretionary, subject to the regulations.

I'll quote Dana Fisher, a Legal Aid Ontario lawyer and vice-president of the Society of United Professionals' legal aid local. Dana Fisher says, "Existing legislation says Legal Aid Ontario 'shall' provide representation to low-income people in four areas of law: criminal, family, clinic and mental health. Under the Ford government's new bill, Legal Aid Ontario only 'may' provide representation for those and other types of law.

"This change in law might sound like semantics but for thousands of poor Ontarians turning "shall" into "may" is the difference between being guaranteed a lawyer and losing their right to legal representation."

1540

It's also not just low-income Ontarians. We need to look at this from a race, gender and equity issue. This

change disproportionately affects vulnerable groups. For example, Ontario's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee has found that victims of intimate partner abuse are at the highest risk of lethal violence during the separation process by males from their former female partners.

What they're talking about here is that, when a couple is separating and the abusive male often—the most common form of murder in this country and in this province is males murdering their former partners or murdering their female partners. This often starts with abuse. When many women are being abused, they often approach the family criminal legal system. But with these new changes, it is not certain they will receive legal representation.

Legal Aid Ontario made a commitment to increasing services for victims of intimate partner violence through its domestic violence strategy. But the government changes mean the possibility that Legal Aid Ontario will have to reduce its legal services in favour of providing less expensive services that fall short of legal representation. In other words, abused women will not be able to get the legal representation they need in order to protect themselves.

I was speaking recently with a friend who works in the Family Court system in this province. What she said is, this government has cut 30% of the funding from Legal Aid Ontario. That cut has created chaos in the Family Court system, because when two parents are coming to court, they're often disputing over custody or they're disputing over child support payments. Most times, the parents are not familiar with the legal process. They don't understand that our court system runs on paperwork.

This person says that many parents show up at court and they expect to be able to just speak to the judge, explain the situation and for the judge to render a fair judgment. But that's not the way it works. In order to stand before the judge, in order to go to trial, they have to do all of the paperwork. They have to serve their partner with paperwork, and they can't just serve it themselves. They can't mail it; it has to be personally delivered by somebody, in person.

Often, people coming to court looking for legal recourse don't understand that process. Because they don't understand that process, they come to court, they have a hearing, there's no duty counsel, or they use up the one hour of duty counsel that they have, and they don't have their paperwork. So then they have to come back to court again. The judge, because of the mandate he has as a judge, can't provide legal counsel to these parents. So these parents are stuck, and they keep going back and forth.

She says the other thing about having duty counsel is that often the duty counsel can provide guidance and legal advice to a parent that will lead to a resolution, or there will be two duty counsels, and in an anteroom, the two duty counsels will sit down with the parents and they'll come up with a resolution.

But because of the cuts, oftentimes, many of the parents don't have duty counsel and don't have access to duty counsel. So then, this issue comes to a full trial, and the

trial ends up costing all of us, as taxpayers, a great deal more money. It ends up costing the parents a great deal of inconvenience and frustration, and it ends up costing taxpayers more money because this government's cuts to legal aid have deprived people of access to justice.

Justice should be blind. We have a duty to ensure that our legal system is accessible for all. Governments have an obligation to ensure all individuals are represented and supported in the legal system—not just the people who can afford it.

This bill is not more efficient or cost-effective; it is creating chaos in our courts while denying people of their right to be treated fairly by our legal system. This bill really gives you an idea of what this government thinks of justice and democracy and what it values: clearly, money over justice.

The focus cannot be on a balance sheet of how many cases a legal aid worker can handle in a day or how many corners can be cut to save costs. The focus needs to be on fighting for justice to maintain our democratic system that, theoretically, should allow everyone access to justice, including those who cannot afford it. I say "theoretically" because unfortunately we know that's not the reality today. The reality is that most people who are vulnerable and low-income often feel pressured to accept unfair situations and aren't able to afford legal counsel or even be aware of when their rights are being restricted.

I want to talk about the community impact of this legislation and of the cuts to legal aid made by this government. Kensington Bellwoods legal aid clinic informed my office that because of the cuts, staff are overworked and there's significant difficulty allocating resources. They say they can't make any real plans or long-term decisions because their funding is so precarious. Reduced staff hours makes it so much harder to get people the help they need. They support people dealing with illegal renovations. That's just one case.

I'll read you part of a letter from another legal group, Pro Bono Ontario, which is a group of lawyers, many of whom are volunteering their time to support vulnerable people in the community. These are some of the people who are currently supported who will not have the legal right to access to justice because of this government's legislation and because of their cuts to legal aid:

"Vulnerable consumers: senior citizens on old age pensions with language barriers who have been defrauded through misrepresentation practices of companies that have been charged and convicted under the Consumer Protection Act (which have cost consumers millions). Pro Bono Ontario is currently overloaded with these types of litigants, who are in dire need of assistance to recover unlawfully incurred damages."

This one speaks to me. Where I grew up in Oshawa, there was a neighbour who lived well into her nineties. When she was in her early nineties, this gentleman came in and sold her a vacuum system for her house that she really didn't need, and ended up charging her a couple of thousand dollars which she could not afford. She was one of many, many vulnerable citizens—senior citizens—in

this province who get scammed. What she needed and what the senior citizens in our province need is access to justice, which this bill and the legal aid cuts are depriving people of.

Other people served by Pro Bono Ontario include “low-income tenants: people with disabilities receiving ODSP facing ‘renoviction’ notices from their landlords. These impoverished tenants and their families are already struggling to find affordable rental housing. They are unable to adequately represent themselves in Landlord and Tenant Board hearings.”

The third category of vulnerable people served by Pro Bono Ontario who are at risk of losing access to justice are “people who have disabilities, illiteracy or have an inability to use technology and navigate complex legal issues without assistance. Without help, this causes further delays to the adjudication system as self-represented litigants. These are individuals who cannot attend motions, settlement conferences, examinations, arbitrations and trials without help.”

This bill and the cuts to legal aid are depriving the most vulnerable Ontarians of access to justice.

I want to talk about the mandate of Legal Aid Ontario. Here are the new principles for legal aid:

“(2) The corporation shall carry out its objects in accordance with the following principles.” This is what the government is proposing:

“1. That legal aid services should,

“i. be efficient, effective and high-quality,

“ii. be provided in a client-focused, innovative, transparent and accountable manner,

“iii. promote early resolution, where appropriate, and

“iv. be co-ordinated with other aspects of the justice system and with community services.

“2. That continual efforts should be made by the corporation”—legal aid—“to maintain and improve the effectiveness and quality of legal aid services while ensuring value for money.”

1550

Nowhere is there a mention of access to justice. Nowhere is there a mention of the original mandate of Legal Aid Ontario to protect vulnerable low-income individuals. This does not sound like smarter and stronger justice for the low-income individuals in our province, the ones who are vulnerable and marginalized, the ones who are falling through the cracks in the system, the ones who need our help the most.

Next, I want to talk about the Class Proceedings Act and class action lawsuits, because that’s another section of this bill.

Class actions are an incredibly important tool for access to justice in a democratic society. Former Supreme Court of Canada Justice Frank Iacobucci has written, “Class proceedings can level the playing field for plaintiffs by spreading the ever-increasing costs of litigation across a larger group and resolving multiple claims by way of single procedure. Further, class actions can provide defendants with a fair and efficient dispute resolution tool because of the certainty associated with collective claims

resolution and the opt-out process. Although class actions may save defendants out-of-pocket legal fees, they may also result in liability for claims that, rightly or wrongly, would never have been pursued by individuals.”

In other words, class action lawsuits are a tool to help individuals come together to file a lawsuit against large organizations such as the government or corporations or a defendant who often has strong financial backing. Class action lawsuits allow one member of a group to represent a number of different individuals and take action.

While this seems like a great tool for individuals with less power to come together for justice, this government is paving the way to make class action lawsuits even more difficult to certify or move forward. They are narrowing the situations where the common issues between plaintiffs are sufficient to proceed. They are making it more difficult for individuals to come together to file class action lawsuits against institutions such as this very government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I was listening with intent to the member’s speech. It’s interesting that he was looking at some of the income levels for people who can access legal aid. What a lot of people don’t realize is that when minimum wage was increased by the previous government, that effectively knocked out thousands of people who were previously able to get legal aid. So that bump, although it was seen as a good thing at the time, aside from all the other drastic impacts it had, also prevented a lot of people from getting access to legal aid.

What we have done to counter that problem is we’ve actually not included the words “low-income Ontarians” in the legislation. The reason is because, that way, it recognizes that many LAO-funded services may also benefit middle-income Ontarians who can’t afford a lawyer.

My question to the member is, what does he have against that?

Mr. Chris Glover: I thank the member from Carlton for the question, but I don’t quite understand the logic of it. Minimum wage was increased; that increased people’s income. The logical solution, then, would be to increase the low-income thresholds for access to legal aid. It wouldn’t be to just cut off a whole bunch of people who have suddenly gone from destitution to only poverty.

In fact, the thresholds were way too low to begin with. There are so many people who make more than \$17,000 a year who also need access to justice and access to lawyers. The solution, obviously, would be to increase the threshold so that more people have access to legal aid.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I listened to the member’s debate speech. He talked about pro bono and talked about seniors specifically. An example that he gave was about a woman who was scammed by a sales rep coming to her door and selling her a vacuum system.

If the member could expand on this: When those things occur to consumers, and if this bill is going to eliminate or

minimize the access that vulnerable people have in order to get justice, how does that impact the person once the scam has happened? How does that affect them financially, with that outcome, because they can't access justice?

Mr. Chris Glover: There are so many tragedies that happen like that where a senior citizen is scammed by an unscrupulous salesperson or company. There are people being illegally renovicted from their homes, and what ends up happening is that those people live in even greater poverty. Some of the people who are being renovicted from their homes end up on the street or they end up in shelters. That adds to our homelessness crisis that we're experiencing across this province. The answer is, if they have access to legal aid, access to lawyers, then they can fight for their rights. They can receive some of their money back, or they may be able to stay in their homes. That's the purpose of legal aid.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: My friend opposite and the members of the NDP voted against the first reading of this bill and seem to be speaking against the class proceedings changes. But the Attorney General made some powerful comments about how this legislation hasn't changed in 25 years and how, frankly, sometimes it leads to absolutely no benefit for members of the class. Some of those people, yes, are vulnerable people who are swept along or don't even know that they're in a class that is going to a class action.

What some of the changes do is help people actually get a remedy which does something for them, which is what the Attorney General disclosed as his objective. But why won't the NDP support the making of payment of lawyers' fees more reasonable, which is what the class action changes do; or making settlements more fair and in the interest of all of those class members, including those who are swept along; or ensuring proper notice when people are part of a class action so that they know; or, frankly, ensuring more protection for vulnerable class members?

Mr. Chris Glover: In response, this legislation makes it more difficult for individuals to file class action lawsuits. The Law Commission of Ontario says that it will "effectively restrict class actions and access to justice in a broad range of important cases, including consumer matters, product and medical liability cases, and any potential class actions where there may be a combination of common and individual issues. Applied retroactively"—which is what this legislation intends—"these provisions would likely have prevented important and successful class actions regarding Indian residential schools, environmental tragedies (such as Walkerton), tainted blood supplies (such as hepatitis C), and/or price-fixing. The provincial government should not restrict Ontarians' access to class actions in such broad and important areas."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: In the legislation, you talked about the significant change of the definition, that "low-income" is being removed and the language of "access to justice" is being removed—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Through the Chair, please.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:—and people in disadvantaged situations. Can you describe what the intent would be to remove this definition by this government, when it comes to access to justice?

Mr. Chris Glover: What it seems that the government is trying to do is remove its responsibility to provide access to justice for low-income individuals. That's why they've removed those very words from the legislation, from the current legal aid—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Sorry to interrupt the member. Point of order, Eglinton-Lawrence?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Under rule 25, a person speaking in the House cannot impute a false or unavowed motive of another member, under (i) of that rule 25. The member opposite from Spadina-Fort York is suggesting or imputing a motive—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I did not hear the member's comment specific to that, but I will remind all members of standing order 25, and it is further—I believe the member was finished? Was the member finished?

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I listened to the member for Spadina-Fort York's presentation about the impact of this bill on the legal aid system very carefully, and it did raise a lot of concerns to me, especially the changes to the class action eligibility, essentially making it harder for ordinary people to get together and use the courts to fight for something better.

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Member, can you speak a little bit more about the value of class action lawsuits in terms of making Ontario better?

Mr. Chris Glover: Actually, as I said, the Law Commission of Ontario said, "Applied retroactively these provisions would likely have prevented important and successful class actions," like the Walkerton class action lawsuit.

As many of us remember, Walkerton happened after the previous Conservative government privatized water treatment in Ontario and then did not properly regulate it. What ended up happening was that E.coli got into the water system, seven people died and 2,500 were poisoned.

I spoke with Kayla, who is a long-term resident of Walkerton, and she told me that it caused a complete loss of trust in the community of the government, before and after the inquiry. Kayla told me she has a friend who was 24 years old, now has kidney damage, and 20 years later her friend is getting a kidney transplant.

Class action lawsuits are absolutely essential for remedying bad actions by previous governments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: On the class action point again: I, myself, am a lawyer, and I was involved in some of the class actions many, many years ago on these certification motions. The issue that we're struggling with is that they often do not provide real remedies for the people who are in the class. That is what the Attorney General is trying to get at with his changes: to make the test slightly tighter.

The law reform commission themselves asked that the test be made more rigorous, and that is what the Attorney General has tried to do in his changes to the legislation on a sub-criteria for that. It doesn't mean class actions will be unavailable.

I'm asking the member opposite: Don't you think that it's time to improve class actions so that vulnerable people will not just be swept along, and will actually have some remedy when they are involved in these class actions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I thank the member from Eglinton-Lawrence for the question.

Absolutely, people need access to justice through class action lawsuits. Walkerton was one example of that, and there were a number of different complainants. There were people who lost loved ones; there were people who had temporary health issues; people who had permanent health issues, such as Kayla's friend; and there were also businesses that lost months' and months' worth of business income, and suffered because of that.

There are different categories of people, and what the law commission seems to be indicating here is that this current legislation would make it more difficult for those different applicants to file a class action—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to open debate from our side on a bill that would, if passed, make it easier, faster and more affordable for people in Ontario to access justice and to engage with the justice system. This is a laudable objective and, I must say, I'm excited about the improvements that the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act would bring to our justice system if it is passed.

The Attorney General has consulted and worked with many partners in the justice sector, including the Law Society of Ontario, Legal Aid Ontario and the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario to develop this bill, which proposes long-overdue, common-sense change to the justice system.

In order to build safer communities where people and job creators aren't tied up in complex and outdated processes to resolve their legal and business issues, the bill proposes 20 sensible legislative improvements. As the Attorney General said, we are committed to making it easier, faster and more affordable for justice to be done in the province of Ontario.

As I see it, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, if passed, will bring improvements to our justice system in two main areas: It will (1) modernize the system and (2) cut the red tape and reduce the administrative burden on people using the system.

Modernizing and innovating are key priorities for the government. Nowadays, almost everything is done online,

or it can be, and often through an app on a mobile device—banking is the most obvious example. But not in the justice system. I actually cannot think of a single justice app. Maybe somebody is working on one, but I haven't seen it. People want the same level of convenience that they have in other areas when they interact with our legal system. If we can make it more convenient for Ontarians to access justice, it seems obvious to me that we should.

Some might say that our legal system is notoriously slow to change and maybe even resistant to change, which is perhaps understandable, because it does provide an important foundation for interactions between citizens. But it is becoming increasingly remote for most citizens, and inaccessible, and it is long past time for some common-sense changes to move the system into the modern era.

By making common-sense reforms, we can make life easier for Ontarians. We can put citizens at the centre of the justice system by updating old laws and by simplifying complex processes so that it works for them. The Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, if passed, whether through the legislation itself or the regulations that would follow, will enable Ontarians to go online to do a whole variety of things that they could not do online before.

For example, the legislation, if passed, would pave the way to allow documents to be commissioned online, bringing notarization of documents into the digital era. Enabling Ontarians to verify and commission documents online, bringing our notary and document-commissioning procedures into this digital era while still ensuring the security and integrity of an individual's data, would be particularly helpful for people living in rural or remote or northern communities, where getting around, I understand, often involves long distances and sometimes challenging travel and/or weather.

On a side note, the bill also proposes changes that would allow paralegals to become appointed as notaries, like lawyers. This will also make justice more accessible and affordable by increasing the number of notaries in the province and making it easier for people to find and access affordable notarial services wherever they live—a simple change, a common-sense improvement.

Cutting red tape and reducing the administrative burden on individuals, organizations and businesses is also a key priority for our government. One such change involves the Marriage Act, which governs who may officiate at weddings in Ontario. In this bill, we are seeking to modernize the act to address long-standing concerns and provide more choice to consumers about who can perform marriages. If the amendments are passed, Indigenous communities and organizations in Ontario would have the authority to designate individuals to be registered to perform marriages. This is a change that the Chiefs of Ontario have actually asked for, and our Attorney General and his team have responded in this proposed act. It would also authorize out-of-province Canadian judges and Ontario case management masters to perform civil marriages. This proposed amendment will update our Marriage Act to align with several other Canadian jurisdictions, including Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Another way that the Attorney General and his team have cut red tape and reduced the administrative burden in this bill is by looking at how small estates are dealt with in our justice system.

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Many of us may have had some personal experience in dealing with estates left by loved ones or friends who have passed. I certainly have. Unfortunately, they have been small estates, which is what I think most people are dealing with in those circumstances. Still, it might be your responsibility, as an estate trustee, to move whatever assets there are through the estate and into the beneficiaries' hands.

Currently, an estate trustee, to administer an estate, has to go to a lawyer, swear the documents, make a list of all the assets and apply to the court for probate. About 50% of the estates in Ontario go through this process. They go through probate. They go through a court process where a judge signs off. It's cumbersome, costly, complicated and confusing for everybody.

This is particularly burdensome, as many people are dealing with this kind of a thing when they're already stressed by the death of a family member or loved one or a close friend. Then they still have to go through this red-tape-heavy process and, frankly, deal with a court system which is unfamiliar to most people, and even kind of daunting for people who are familiar with it, frankly.

Currently, estate trustees, who are required to apply for probate to administer the estate of a loved one, have to follow the same process no matter what the value of the estate is. Whether it's a \$50,000 estate or a \$50-million estate, it's the same process. Often, people just don't do it, and those asses—assets. Excuse me.

Laughter.

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's okay—a slip of the tongue.

And those assets don't get transferred.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's Thursday afternoon.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I know.

And that is just not right. Many small estates, as a result, are not even distributed every year, and this is just wrong.

This bill would provide a simpler way to settle a small estate, easing the administrative burden while still keeping safeguards in place to protect vulnerable people or minors who have an interest in that estate.

When it comes to protecting vulnerable people, this legislation takes important steps to improve Ontario's property forfeiture system. This is critically important, because this is a system that helps tackle things like the heinous crimes of human trafficking.

We just had Human Trafficking Awareness Day on February 22, and with it came a reminder of some very concerning statistics: About two thirds of police-reported human trafficking violations in Canada occur in Ontario; over 70% of the human trafficking victims identified by police are under the age of 25; and the average age of recruitment into sex trafficking is just 13 years old.

It is a crime that disproportionately affects the most vulnerable members in our community: our young people. So our government is determined to address this crisis, and

we are doing all that we can to support the police as they work to combat this crime.

We're doing a number of things in this bill to make changes, to make sure people don't benefit from crime, and that the resources are directed to the victims of crime.

I see that I am losing my time here. I wanted to say, and I should have said at the beginning, Madam Speaker, that I am sharing my time with the Associate Minister of Small Business, and so I will cede the floor to him.

I think that this legislation goes a long way to bringing our legal system into the 21st century, and makes it more accessible to Ontario residents. I'm happy to support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'm very pleased to rise to speak in support of this bill, which, if passed, would make improvements to the way justice is administered and accessed in Ontario.

I think I want to start off also by commending both the Attorney General, who is a seasoned lawyer and very well respected across the province, as well as the parliamentary assistant, the member from Durham, for all the work that they have put into this piece of legislation. They have toured the province. They have spoken to many lawyers, law associations across the province. I know we held a consultation in the region of Peel, one of the busiest courthouses in all of Canada and Ontario, so I want to thank them for doing that. This is a piece of legislation that is very close to me, as well, because I also, in my previous role, before joining and being elected as a member of this House, was a lawyer and went through the process of going to law school, articling, and then also practising. So I really do understand a lot of the details that have been put forward by both the Attorney General and the PA to the Attorney General, and a lot of what we are trying to reform.

But being a member of the bar association gives you a unique perspective on what this piece of legislation is trying to fix. The system that needed to be overhauled to really deliver justice, to be able to administer the way of justice and how we access justice in a different way, in a way that is more compliant to today's world—which is a more digital world, and a world in which, I believe, in this sector, through my role as the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, we can make many changes and improvements to the system through ways of modernization. So I want to focus my remarks in this piece of legislation on both online verification, as well as small estates, which we'll be discussing through my remarks.

A lot of what we're trying to do in our government, through many of the pieces of legislation, and especially in this, is how Ontarians interact with not just government but the system itself. That's very important for us to have that within the justice system.

It's about innovative changes that would clear the path for individuals to identify or verify their documents online. This move has received support from a broad range of

stakeholders in the sector, because, as the Attorney General correctly noted, “Banking transactions don’t always require a trip to the bank, and every legal transaction shouldn’t require a trip to a law office.” With my focus in my ministry on reducing the regulatory burdens on businesses on everyday Ontarians, I couldn’t agree more with the Attorney General.

As our government works to modernize processes across the board, this initiative falls in line with advancing Ontario into a province of the future. The CEO of Axess Law noted, “This bill is a breakthrough needed to modernize Ontario’s legal system. Permitting online verification of an individual’s identity and legal documents will level ... legal services ... for all Ontarians. No matter where a person lives, when they work, or what mobility or ability challenges they may face, they will soon be able to access the same high-quality legal services that are easily accessible in urban centres across Ontario.”

Empowering Ontarians to exercise greater control in this way will make our system work better, smarter and more efficiently. As the CEO of Axess Law stated, it will help close the access gap that exists between rural and urban communities by allowing people to access services, wherever they are.

We want people to spend less time in courtrooms and legal offices, while making sure they receive access to legal services and supports when and where they need them. In this way, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act would make it easier to process real estate agreements, gift a used vehicle to your daughter or son, or prepare a claim for Small Claims Court. Modernizing access to justice in this way will provide greater choice, more options and convenience for Ontarians.

The secondary, as I spoke about briefly during my introduction, is my focus now on estates. Many Ontarians have been at some point called upon to administer estates of a friend or a loved one. The process, as it stands today, can be cumbersome, costly and confusing.

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As the Attorney General remarked, the current system makes no distinction between an estate valued at \$50,000 or \$5 million. In either case, estate trustees, who are required to apply for probate to administer an estate, are mandated to follow the exact same process. This process can end up costing people more than the value of the estate itself. This cost and process burden can also result in many small estates not being administered each year.

Under the leadership of the Attorney General, we’re working to change that. If passed, this bill would provide a simplified method for settling small estates and would draw a common-sense value distinction where one should exist. While making these distinctions, it would maintain existing safeguards to protect minors and vulnerable people who hold an interest in that estate.

Madam Speaker, the Attorney General is focused on making common-sense changes and much-needed improvements in how Ontarians access justice. My focus, as the minister responsible for red tape reduction, is to find ways to make Ontario work better for people and smarter

for business through regulatory reform. By moving verification processes online, much in the same way as we allow drivers’ licences, hunting and fishing licences, and other government of Ontario renewals to be completed, we are making the province operate in a smarter, more modern way to better serve the people of this province. This is why I support this piece of legislation.

Easing burdens on Ontarians, with a focus on rural and Indigenous communities, will help us close the regional gap when it comes to accessing legal services. Protecting the financial viability of those tasked with administering small estates and making estate value distinctions while maintaining protection for minors and vulnerable Ontarians will make the process more affordable and easier to navigate.

While these measures also coincide with my project to fix Ontario’s broken regulatory framework, the entirety of what’s imposed in this bill will improve Ontario’s justice system in key ways, from changes in civil forfeiture to improved law enforcement, to tackling gangs and human trafficking, to proposals to modernize the justice system, to legal aid reforms. The Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, if passed, would simplify and improve a justice system in need of common-sense change. It would provide smarter, better and more affordable justice for all Ontarians, and it would allow our justice system to take a bold and necessary step into the 21st century, so that all can have access to the justice they deserve.

I’d like to once again close by thanking the Attorney General and the PA to the Attorney General for all the great work that they have put into putting this piece of legislation together, the consultation across the province and all of the meetings with associations, including the Peel Law Association. I look forward to supporting this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. In her comments, she mentioned justice for rural, remote and northern communities, and I would like to make a description of what actually happens in rural, remote and northern communities. When someone, particularly a young First Nations person, gets charged on the coast, the court is in Cochrane or Timmins. They get flown there, and if their case is remanded, they are released on their own recognizance.

Homeless, young Indigenous people are perfect targets for human trafficking. The government knows this. You let these people out of court and they’re just there, because they don’t have a ticket to fly north again. They’re homeless. Do you think that they have equal access to justice in this province?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I thank the member opposite for the question. Obviously that’s a very difficult circumstance, and that is exactly what this bill is trying to get at. It is trying to make sure that we do make justice more accessible for all—that is the objective the Attorney General has—and we’ve got lots of reforms in this bill that do just that.

One of the things that I was referring to was making it easier for people to have access to notaries. This is also a service that many people have to use. I've certainly had people come into my MPP's office to get documents notarized. It's very inconvenient for people. So that is one of the other things that we're trying to do, to make justice more accessible but also make paralegals be able to be notaries. That was what I was referring to, to make justice more accessible in that way as well.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: My question is for the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. Something that we've seen too much of, and that Bill 161 touches on—it's because we've been listening to people. There are such heinous crimes taking place sometimes, where someone takes intimate photographs of someone, and then they use those photographs and post them on social media. We have not been coming down on that enough. This is something that we heard time and time again that we really needed to address.

I'd like the member from Eglinton–Lawrence to just update us on what this bill does to make sure that we deal with those people who commit these heinous crimes.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. Honestly, I agree with her: These are terrible, heinous kinds of crimes, and we need to do as much as we can to address them.

There's a lot in this bill that goes a long way to doing that. We've sent a clear message that we're taking an all-of-government approach to fighting back against sexual violence and bullying in all of its forms, especially that target girls and women in human trafficking. I spoke a bit about that in my comments earlier.

The amendment to regulation 456/96 under the Victims' Bill of Rights will update the list of prescribed crimes in the regulation, to make it clear that a person convicted of a crime of non-consensual distribution of an intimate image is civilly liable in damages to a victim for emotional distress, and bodily harm resulting from that distress. That's one thing that we're doing, but we're making a lot of changes in this bill.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the government side for the comments. My question is for the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

I grew up in Oshawa. Everybody in my family worked at General Motors. My brother is one of the last 300 employees there; my great-grandfather was one of the first employees. My grandmother, grandfather, father, uncles and cousins—everybody worked at General Motors.

One of the things that my father always said to me is, "Anybody who is working blue collar should not vote for the Conservative Party, because they are the party of the rich."

When I look at this legislation, one of the pieces that you've taken out of the legal aid act is "to promote access to justice throughout Ontario for low-income individuals." You've taken out every instance of this statement of

supporting low-income individuals and providing them with access to legal aid.

Is my father right? Is this the party of the rich, and is the purpose of this bill to strip low-income Ontarians of the right to access to justice?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Now I understand a little bit more of where you're coming from sometimes, because unfortunately, your father said something to you which confused you entirely. We are definitely not the party of the rich, nor are we trying to do things just to help the rich. We actually want to help all of the people.

One of the ways we can help them is to make better access to justice for everybody, and that's what we are working on. We're putting people at the centre of everything that we do, and there are lots of things in this legal aid act which show that.

I was reading along at schedule 15, for example—39.1—where it lists out that in addition to the other legal aid services that Legal Aid Ontario may provide to applicants—I'm sort of ad-libbing a bit here—it includes representation for a Canadian Charter of Rights case, representation in a legal matter where an individual needs that for the Charter of Rights; representation of a young person under the Youth Criminal Justice Act; representation under the Young Offenders Act; and cross-examination of a witness pursuant to section 486.3 of the Criminal Code. There are all kinds of things in here.

Nowhere is innovation and modernization needed more in our legal system than in the legal aid system, and that is so we can ensure that there is access to justice for everybody.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the members from Eglinton–Lawrence and Brampton South for their remarks.

We have again and again heard from people from Brampton and across Ontario that the justice system has grown too complex and outdated and needs to better support the growth of safer communities while standing up for victims and law-abiding citizens.

My question is to the member for Brampton South: How will his community of Brampton South and all of Brampton benefit from this bill?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to thank you for that question, to the member from Brampton West.

The member from Brampton West absolutely knows the importance of this piece of legislation in a city like Brampton—one of the cities that is growing—and the region of Peel, which is growing faster than probably almost of all of Ontario. We need to modernize our legal system. I spoke about ensuring that modernized processes go digital so we can take people away from the courtroom when they don't need to be there.

In our city of Brampton we have one of the busiest courthouses in all of Canada, I'm pretty sure, if not in all of Ontario. We recognize that when we can make changes

and build a system into the 21st century we can help alleviate some of the stress on that system so our justice sector can focus on the areas where—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for your response. You didn’t answer the question, though, which was, why are you taking out the term “low-income individuals” from the legal aid act?

My next question is for the member from Brampton South. He quoted the minister as saying that the changes in this bill shall make vulnerable Ontarians in rural communities be able to access justice in the same way that people in urban centres do.

One of the other things that my father said to me was, “Don’t just say it; put it in writing. If it’s not in writing, it’s not there.” But your government, in this bill, is taking out the word “shall” and replacing it with “may.” So people “may” be able to access justice, but there is no commitment from the government that they “shall” be able to access justice.

The minister may say the word “shall,” but unless he puts it back into this bill it has no bearing. My question to the member is: Will you put the word “shall” back into this bill?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to thank the member for his question. When we were looking at how justice is administered across this province, especially in rural areas, in areas where it is a bit more challenging, this is exactly what we are trying to fix with this piece of legislation. We’re trying to digitize and make sure that government and individuals have the ability, as I said earlier, to ensure that you don’t always need to go to a courtroom—you don’t always need to go to a courthouse; my apologies.

Where we can streamline some of these services, we need to, because we understand the challenges of those in remote areas and remote communities. We will continue to work toward ensuring that access for this sector—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It’s a pleasure, on this Thursday afternoon, to have the ability to speak to Bill 161. I only have 10 minutes to speak. There’s a lot in this bill—a lot of great reforms. It has been many, many years in the making, so I’m pleased to be able to speak to it.

Before I begin, I would strongly like to thank Attorney General Doug Downey for the outstanding reforms he is bringing to the justice system with Bill 161. If passed, the bill makes it easier, faster and more affordable for the people of Ontario to access the justice system. The Smarter and Stronger Justice Act includes over 20 amendments that would reform and improve how legal aid services are delivered, lawyers are governed, class actions are handled and core processes are administered.

These improvements reflect our government’s determination to work with our justice partners to build safer communities where people and job creators aren’t tied up in outdated processes to resolve their legal and business issues.

Minister Doug Downey, parliamentary assistant Lindsey Park and their team—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. Sorry to interrupt the member. A reminder to all members that we may only refer to members and ministers by their titles, their parliamentary roles and not their actual names. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: To get back, Madam Speaker: Ontarians have spoken and we have listened. We are committed to making it easier, faster and more affordable for justice to be done in the province of Ontario. By making a common sense reform, updating old laws and simplifying complex court processes, the government is ensuring Ontario is building safe, strong communities while remaining a competitive jurisdiction.

Evidently, there are three main themes that surround this bill. The first theme is ensuring that victims are the centre of our justice system. The second theme is to modernize the legal system, fixing outdated practices and increasing efficiencies. The third theme is bringing accountability to the system as a whole.

The proposed bill would help government stand up for victims and law-abiding citizens, provide better and more affordable justice for families and consumers and would simplify a complex and outdated justice system to serve the people of Ontario better by:

- ensuring criminals do not profit from crimes;
- holding lawyers and paralegals to the highest ethical standards;
- giving families closure in the tragic death of a loved one;
- protecting juror privacy and security;
- increasing efficiency when reappointing case management masters;
- making it easier for cyberbullying victims to sue their offender;
- updating Ontario’s outdated class action legislation;
- simplifying how a small estate is handled;
- expanding who can perform marriage ceremonies;
- building a flexible, sustainable and accountable legal aid system;
- modernizing notary and commissioner services; and
- increasing efficiency when reappointing case management masters.

These are just a few of the themes that are in this bill.

After 15 years of neglect under successive Liberal governments, the justice system grew outdated and unnecessarily complex. We are the first government to take on the vitally important task of making common sense reforms to ensure the system is working better every day so that people accessing it are doing so faster, easier and more affordably.

Our proposed changes to Legal Aid Ontario in this legislation is one of the most significant to the justice system and it cannot be understated. The Attorney General’s office directly consulted with many legal professionals who are working every day in our legal system and

from community legal clinics, who play a vital role in providing these services to Ontarians.

Nowhere is innovation and modernization more important than in our legal aid system. It has not been updated since 1998. Most agree that the legal aid system is difficult for clients to navigate. Clients encounter roadblocks based on the types of services they need, where they live and the service providers in the neighbourhood or region.

Madam Speaker, Bill 161 puts clients at the centre of the legal aid system by allowing legal aid services to be offered by a mix of service providers, like private practice lawyers, law firms and community legal organizations, which include Ontario's vital legal clinics who currently provide and will continue to provide essential poverty law services.

While the proposed legislation would give Legal Aid Ontario the responsibility for designing new rules around how it provides its services, our bill has several checks and safeguards that will ensure Legal Aid Ontario carries out this role in a transparent and accountable way with a robust consultation framework.

Trudy McCormick, co-chair of the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario, agrees with the work done by the Attorney General. Ms. McCormick states, "We are very pleased Attorney General Downey continues to recognize the foundational role community legal clinics play in creating a strong Ontario justice system that protects vulnerable members of our community and provides them with the legal services they need."

Legal Aid Ontario will continue to work very closely with clinics, criminal and family law counsel, the law society and other legal aid service providers to ensure a smooth transition for legal aid clients and service providers.

Modernization and innovation are key priorities for this government across the board. It's important in the context to note that Ontario's current system of verifying documents through notaries and commissioners is stuck in a pre-technology Stone Age. That is why we are proposing to pave the way to allow Ontarians to verify and commission documents online. Notarizing documents is an excellent example of where we can modernize an out-of-date process while still ensuring the security and integrity of an individual's data. By adopting these best practices from other jurisdictions, we see immense opportunity for this bill to help Ontario emerge as a technology leader in Canada in the legal sector.

1640

With respect to small estates, Madam Speaker, this is another area of our justice system that has been ignored for far too long, and one that, unfortunately, affects all of us here at some point. The current process can be confusing, complicated and costly in what is already a stressful situation.

Currently, estate trustees who are required to apply for probate to administer the estate of a loved one have to follow the same process whether the estate is \$20,000 or \$5 million. Madam Speaker, this entire process, which can

require posting a bond, can actually end up costing people more money than the estate's total value. For this reason, many estate values are not distributed each year. That's not right and that's not fair.

If passed, this bill will provide a simpler way to settle a small estate, easing the 15 administrative burdens on those who are grieving for passed loved ones while still keeping safeguards in place to protect minors and vulnerable people who have an interest in that estate.

With respect to property forfeiture, Madam Speaker, Ontarians are united in their desire for the government to take action against criminals who use their money for illicit activities to fund more crime, and to take action to support victims and vulnerable members of our communities. That is why we are taking steps in the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act to stand up for victims and support police and prosecutors in their work on the front lines, to protect the people and communities, by proposing a modernized forfeiture system. Our proposed changes would allow personal property, like cash or cars, that are used by criminals for illegal activities, to be forfeited administratively and without a court order in uncontested cases. We would continue to use these seized funds to directly compensate victims of crime and also provide grants to projects with a mandate of combatting crimes like human trafficking.

With respect to cyberbullying, our government stands with victims, and we are committed to bringing those offenders to justice. That includes the victims of online harassment. The adoption of new communications technology has enabled the migration of bullying behaviour to the Internet, a phenomenon characterized as cyberbullying. It's a form of bullying that includes acts intended to intimidate, embarrass, threaten or harass targeted victims.

It should not be very difficult for people to understand that lives can be and have been destroyed by serious crimes like sharing intimate images online without consent. As the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act was in development, our government saw an opportunity to provide a way for victims to sue offenders convicted of distributing an online intimate image of them without their consent.

Regulation 456/96 under the Victims' Bill of Rights has been amended to make it clear that a person convicted of the crime of non-consensual distribution of an intimate image is civilly liable for damages to a victim for emotional distress and bodily harm resulting from that distress. We know that victims of cyberbullying suffer unimaginable emotional, mental and physical pain and often feel powerless. In this Legislature, it's always a good day when we can advance initiatives that support victims of crime.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, we're working to simplify a complex and outdated justice system. We want to make it easier, faster and more affordable in Ontario to resolve these legal issues. That's why we're making changes and reforms that improve the judicial system and the legal system by improving legal aid services and how they're delivered, how lawyers are regulated, how class

actions are handled and how court processes are administered. We want people to spend less time in the courtroom while making sure people have access to legal services and supports where and when they need them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to the member from Oakville for your comments. You just finished by saying that you want people to spend less time in the courtroom. But the person that I was speaking with at Family Court said that because there are not enough duty counsel or enough access to duty counsel, people end up going to trial rather than having their issues resolved through duty counsel, and so it ends up taking more time in court at greater cost to taxpayers. Will you support an amendment to this bill that will actually reverse the cuts to legal aid that are making it more difficult for people to access duty counsel?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: To your question, it's not really referring specifically to this bill, what you're talking about, but you are correct: Our government does want access to justice quicker and more efficiently. That's why, quite frankly, we took the Auditor General's recommendations. This legislation was put together with a lot of the support of the Auditor General in terms of her recommendations.

To give an example of a few of the changes that she is suggesting, she would like Legal Aid Ontario to have the ability to enter into agreements with different service organizations. That includes lawyers, paralegals, clinics. It's going to open up access so that more people can access legal aid in a more efficient manner.

So yes, we agree: We want cheaper, quicker access to justice.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I've met many people in my riding over many months who reflect in their statements that they're concerned about how legal aid services are being delivered in this province, want to know how they can access those services and what this government is going to be doing to help them. I'm just wondering if you can talk to us a little bit about how this reform to legal aid will improve access to justice for Ontarians.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. As you know, one of the key themes of our government across all of our mandates is to make life more affordable and give better access to things such as justice to everybody. Again, that's all part of the Auditor General's recommendations: having easier access. With the online aspect to this bill, allowing more online access, that is certainly one area. But also, requiring Legal Aid Ontario to maintain a mix of service providers will offer much greater flexibility, and better community access for people throughout the province of Ontario. I think we'll have much better access online as well as in person.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is, the member from Oakville mentioned that the Auditor General actually recommended some of the changes in this bill. Did the Auditor General recommend that the government strip away from the current legal aid legislation that the purpose of legal aid is "to promote access to justice throughout Ontario for low-income individuals"? Was that a recommendation from the Auditor General?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I can tell you that this particular bill, Bill 161, was put together after a lot of consultation. The Attorney General and his parliamentary assistant travelled the province throughout the summer of 2019. I believe they had dozens of meetings, hundreds of submissions—legal aid clinics, lawyers, individuals, victims, families. They have put together a bill which is allowing and affording much better access and affordability to justice for all.

I'm quite proud of what the Attorney General has put together with this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you for your conversations today. It's very interesting to talk about the justice system. One question I get time and time again in my office is about legal aid. I've met with many legal aid clinics in my riding over the last couple of months. They've talked about our proposed changes to modernize the legal aid system. Can you talk a little bit more about what this legislation will do for the legal aid system in Ontario?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. We have been hearing loud and clear since we've been in government for approximately 18 months that people do want better, easier access to justice. For 15 years, the Liberal government sat on this file and did nothing. The bill that we are putting forward—most of the legislation in here has sat for 20, 25 years. There have been no changes. The previous government made no changes to this legislation that we're putting forward. If you go back that far, that was pre-9/11. That was when Seinfeld was popular on TV, and ER. This is how far this legislation is going back.

1650

We are very, very focused on modernizing, simplifying and making it easier for access. In fact, Gary Newhouse, the co-chair of the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario, was quoted: "This new legislation will improve the delivery of legal aid services in Ontario"—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further questions? The member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: One of the beauties of a democracy is that you can actually criticize the government—you have the freedom to do that—and many legal aid clinics criticized this government's actions on a number of issues. The response from this government has generally been to hit any critics over the head with a sledgehammer.

Schedules 15 and 16 in this legislation appear to unilaterally cancel all funding arrangements, without recourse

for clinics, six months after the new act takes place. This opens the door for the government to control which legal aid clinics will get funding and which ones will not, so the suspicion is that anybody who dares criticize this government will lose their funding. Is that the case?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response? The member from Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite for his question. Like I've mentioned before, we did extensive consultations throughout the summer, had over 18 round tables. We met with people throughout the legal aid system.

I don't know if you saw some of the quotes that some of the members did. I'll give you another one here. This is from Gary Newhouse, who is the co-chair of the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario, so these are people who are involved right in the weeds of this particular area: "This new legislation will improve the delivery of legal aid services in Ontario while ensuring that independent community legal clinics continue to work closely with the communities they serve in identifying their needs and in providing poverty law services to their clients."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions? I recognize the member from Mississauga Centre.

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: On a parlé beaucoup au sujet de la traite humaine dans cette Chambre. On a eu le jour ontarien de sensibilisation au sujet de la traite humaine le 22 février. Ce projet de loi va aider les victimes de traite humaine à accéder aux services judiciaires.

My question is, how is this legislation going to empower our judicial system to better respond to the unique needs of human trafficking victims?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response? The member from Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you very much to the member from Mississauga Centre. I know you're very active on this file. That's a very important question. I speak as a father of four daughters, but with respect to criminals, our government is very focused on trying to eliminate, as much as we possibly can, human trafficking and cyberbullying. We are the first government to actually bring in strong legislation against sharing intimate images online, which is done frequently. Unfortunately, a lot of these victims are 15, 16, 17 years old. But what's also important is that we are taking some of the money from criminals and putting it back to victims, victims of human trafficking.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There is not enough time for another round of questions and comments.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: I rise to speak to Bill 161, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act. I think it's important to first point out the title itself, because when I look at it, it may be "smarter" in the sense that it is smarter for the people who are already affluent, or "smarter" for this government in terms of reaching justice. A stronger justice

act for this province? Not so much. In my 20 minutes, I will try to explain why I believe that.

I want to focus on a few things, and I'll go through some of the schedules and talk about them. Just in general, I think what essentially happens is that—and we heard the former speakers from the other side talk about how it reduces red tape; actually, quite the contrary. I think this piece of legislation will add a lot of red tape, and take away access to people who are most vulnerable in this province; take that access from those people to justice, to the legal system.

I want to focus on schedules 15 and 16, which talk about legal aid, and just question why this is really what modernizing the justice act would be, as part of this government.

When I look at this bill, I think schedule 1 is probably the one part where I think maybe they're trying to do something good, which is change the language about current financial means and conditions for a fee waiver, to a person who lacks the financial means to pay court or enforcement fees. Now that is replaced by a condition that that person cannot, without hardship, pay, which is basically allowing for a little bit of flexibility in the language.

There are a lot of technical changes as well as some semantics, so I'll move straight to the sections that I want to talk about, which are focusing on what my colleagues have focused, which are sections 15 and 16, and that's the legal aid section of it.

There are a few things that happen in schedule 16. It changes legal aid from the 1998 act to "modernize" it. It's really unfortunate, because we had a previous government—I think both sides of the House will agree that we had a government that may have fallen asleep in the past and did not change things as we needed for this province. There were a lot of changes that were necessary to help the most vulnerable people of this province.

But when I look at some of the changes that take place in schedule 16—and I want to outline some of them first.

It says, "The purpose of this act is to facilitate the establishment of a flexible and sustainable legal aid system that provides effective and high-quality legal aid services throughout Ontario in a client-focused and accountable manner while ensuring value for money."

It's really important that we focus on this, because we are talking about client focus and we're talking about value for money.

"Sections 3 and 5 set out the legal aid services that may be provided and the manner in which they may be provided, including by the authorization of persons and entities who would provide the legal aid services as service providers.... Section 7 sets out the eligibility requirements for receiving legal aid services which, under section 8, are to be provided without cost to an individual. Section 9 sets out an exception to this, as it authorizes the corporation to require an individual or person responsible for the individual to contribute to the cost of providing legal aid services to the individual." It goes on to address "circumstances in which the corporation is obligated to provide specific legal aid services."

Then we have sections 34 to 44, which “set out various provisions respecting the exercise and performance of powers, duties and functions under the act and the provision of legal aid services,” including personal immunity for corporation employees and others.

I just wanted to outline this, because I think there are a few things here where, in the face of it, in the language that’s used—this is very common for all of the legislation that we have seen put forward by this government, which really focuses on some great language about how we’re going to move Ontario forward, how we’re really helping people, how this is client-focused, how there is real value for money. But when you actually start looking at what happens, to me, what it looks like is we have a smaller pot now for legal aid, but people are given larger chunks.

I say this because one of the things that is worth noting is that legal aid funding, per individual, has been increased by 6%. But instead of focusing on how that will impact all individuals, it has decreased the actual pot of money that legal aid service providers will get. So in that sense, actually, it infringes upon the ability of the legal aid providers to do their jobs because now, instead of 10 people, they may not even be able to serve two or three people.

1700

We knew that these service providers were already overwhelmed by the amount of clients that were coming in. I think everyone in this House will agree, because there were a lot of people, whether it was injured workers, whether it was refugees, whether it was people who were vulnerable, or whether it was people dealing with rent eviction. There are a lot of issues that we’re facing. There are also other problems that this government needs to address, and that is the failures of the previous government in terms of where we have ended up, whether it’s the housing crisis, whether it’s the job market, whether it’s the type of labour force that we have or what kind of security people have in their workplaces.

Legal aid is so essential when it comes to all of that, because that place was the one place that everyone could go to—people who don’t have the ability to hire a lawyer—and ask for help. That was the one place where they could say, “Someone will stand up for me, someone will stand up for my right, and someone will help me get justice.” That’s why I think it’s so essential for us to really focus on this part of this bill, because it really does a few things that will infringe upon the abilities of these organizations, these providers, to do just that.

I want to give some examples of people, of organizations, that have spoken against this bill. You don’t have to take my word for it; listen to some of the experts as well as people who are working on the ground and what they had to say.

A partner at an Ottawa criminal law firm says that this bill will essentially cut access to justice for those who are impoverished because this government has walked back \$30 million in cuts toward legal aid. Going back to what I was saying, if you’re making cuts to the service providers, you’re really taking away the arms and legs for them to do

their job. He also says that “downloading millions of dollars in additional costs ... onto the backs of these very organizations tasked with assisting Ontario’s poor and marginalized populations”—it will be very difficult for these organizations to do their job.

Parkdale Community Legal Services also stated their opposition to this bill. They talked about how this bill eliminates the legislative protections and government obligations to provide legal aid services, particularly for low-income Ontarians. We know how overwhelmed they have been in terms of the clients that come in. Legal Aid Ontario had to respond to the government’s bill by cuts that are brought forward by this government in legal aid, and talked about the ability of the organizations and how it will be so difficult for the clinics to engage and actually help some of these clients. They also mentioned that these cuts will hurt Ontarians and that legal aid—in the case of Parkdale Community Legal Services, they had a cut of about 45%. That’s almost half, Speaker.

Injured workers have also stated their opposition to this bill, stating that this bill puts them and other marginalized communities at risk, although recognizing that the legislation contains some language in which it does deem legal aid and community clinics crucial in providing services to those in need. That’s why I started my statement by saying that it recognizes how important some of these services are and says that individuals need this help, but then it shrinks the pot and says, “Here’s what you have to deal with and help everybody.”

I also want to point out that the lawyers’ union—the Society of United Professionals—also opposed it and called it “an attack.” The society called it “an attack on legal representation for the poorest Ontarians. Beyond removing ‘access to justice’ and ‘low income individuals’ from the purpose of the Legal Aid Services Act, the legislation would radically alter Legal Aid Ontario’s mandate.”

Under this new act, legal aid only “may”—and this is something that my good friend from Spadina–Fort York also talked about. Some of the language actually makes it harder for people to access. Because now, instead of that obligation, it says “may.” So under the new law, legal aid only “may” provide representation in criminal, family, clinic and mental health law, instead of “shall,” as it had previously stated, which is a big difference. I think my colleagues on the government side will appreciate why that’s important, because there’s a big difference in terms of whether you “may” do this job or you “shall” do this job.

I would ask that the members opposite go back and really assess the wording of this, because it will actually have some big impacts in the sense of how much access some of these people will have when they go into legal aid clinics.

I also want to point out, as the member from Scarborough Southwest, some of the legal aid clinics that I have in my riding and the type of people that we have in that riding, and why it’s so essential, because we live in one of the best countries in the world. We live in one of the best

provinces in the world, and I truly believe Scarborough Southwest is one of the best places in the world, but I'm biased.

It's so essential for me to point out that we have a very diverse riding, from race, gender and ethnicity, to income level, to class—every way possible. That means we're looking at people who are living in social housing and looking for support when they are getting evicted. We're talking about people who are injured from their jobs and now don't have the ability to go. I have had a lot of people come to my office who have been fighting this battle for a very long time, and it was legal aid that has shown them the support through and through.

I really want to recognize some of the legal aid services that I have in my riding, particularly West Scarborough Community Legal Services and Scarborough Community Legal Services. Both of them do amazing, amazing work in helping the local community. Sometimes, I walk into their office and I can tell how overwhelmed they are with the number of clients they have. And yet, they do their best. We had to have our meetings sometimes in one of these clinics in their kitchen—because that's the only space they have—which they turned into their meeting room and their kitchen/lunch room, and pretty much everything, because the other spaces are for each of the legal aid lawyers to take in clients.

That's what they're making do with. That's how difficult it is for them already, and cutting the millions of dollars from these service providers is going to hurt them so badly. I just cannot emphasize enough how difficult it will be for some of these providers.

I also want to commend the work that the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario does, because they help some of the most vulnerable women in our city and have been doing tremendous work and a great level of advocacy, standing up for the most vulnerable in our province.

It's really, really disappointing to see that we have the ability in this province to do some great things and we have to be proactive about how we want the legal system to be, how we want this province to be and what we're really building for our next generation. One of the biggest pillars is our justice system. We have to make sure that we have the ability to stand up for our rights, that we have a justice system that really helps each and every single person, no matter how much they earn. One of the best ways to do that is to make sure that we empower the legal aid system to be able to do that.

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I looked at some of the numbers that the Society of United Professionals showed us. The reason they put this forward was because on April 12, 2019, in a letter to Legal Aid Ontario, the Attorney General then claimed that the justification for the steep funding cuts was that despite a funding increase of \$86 million since 2013-14, the number of people served each year has decreased. Actually, the society found that that is not correct, so what they did was that they actually showed, using the real numbers, the actual service amount that was provided, which is basically outlining from 2013 to 2018 how many certificates were issued.

I just want to point out that in 2013, there were 83,000; in 2017-18, it was 102,873. Duty counsel services went from 630,759 to 643,975. Then they talk about the clinic files, which is also the reason why the Attorney General made that case, which was that the way that they were filed has been changed. I think it's really important to point that out, that the number of people who were actually getting the service had increased and the people who needed that service had increased. What we really had to do was to help more people by providing better funding and making sure that these organizations are better equipped to help people.

Speaker, it's really also heartbreaking for me to point this out, because it's not only the people who are already suffering and will already be pushed back or are going to be stuck on the wait-list. It's really important to point out that some of the people who receive legal aid services are different groups of people who are already marginalized. We're talking about different racial groups such as Indigenous groups and visible minorities, who are some of the people who ask for legal aid and need that service.

Because I'm running out of time, I just want to end by saying that I really hope that the government will go back and look at this bill carefully, and really make sure that we need to understand what the needs of the people in this province are and help people accordingly. We also have to make sure that when we're looking at anything to do with justice—if we're going to call this bill the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, then let's make sure that the justice system is strong to help people who really need it. You don't get anywhere in this province by pushing those who are marginalized, those who are already in need of help, even further away from the justice system.

What this bill will actually do, which Legal Aid Ontario as well as a lot of the advocates who have shown opposition to this bill, have pointed out, is that this will actually cost the province more money, because now there is a backlog in the court system, and you'll have more judges sitting there with less representation for these people. What will end up happening is that we'll have more backlogs and people who frankly just won't have the support that they need, the representation that they need.

I want to end my note here, Speaker, and say that I really hope that the government will go back and look at some of these schedules and amend some of the necessary changes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I just really want to ask a question to the member from Scarborough Southwest, because I asked a similar question to the member from Oakville. Time and time again, the NDP stand up in this House talking about proposed changes to legal aid, but Charles Harnick, our former Attorney General back in the 1990s and 2000s, and also the chair of Legal Aid Ontario, and David Field, who is the CEO of Legal Aid Ontario, stood up with the Attorney General, Mr. Downey, for the first reading of Bill 161 to support the government's changes.

We've had consultations with front-line workers and with Legal Aid Ontario, and they all seem to be supportive of this bill. So when you have the front-line workers who have been consulted supporting our legislation, I'm wondering why the opposition would be opposed to what the front-line workers have worked so hard to support.

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her question. It's a very important question, and I think the question itself actually has the answer within it, because the first person who supported it was the CEO, and I think the people we need to go to are the people who are getting the service. The local people of this province, the most vulnerable people of this province, who benefit from legal aid providers are the people we should consult with, the people we have to make sure are happy with these changes.

I have yet to meet one person who works at Legal Aid Ontario who tells me that they are happy with these changes. I have had a lot of people coming to my office; I've had a lot of constituents coming to my office, and I have a lot of people who came in tears because they're really worried about the changes. I haven't met anyone who is working on the front line who said that this good.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: The member from Scarborough Southwest articulated that these changes put legal aid services at risk, and that is not smarter or stronger justice. Despite the name of this bill, it does not appear to do anything that will help my constituents. In fact, I'm worried that it will only make matters worse. These amendments will make it harder for low-income people to use the justice system. I would like to know if this minister consulted people with lived experience before drafting this bill.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you to my friend from York South–Weston. I know you're concerned because some of the people in your constituency are benefiting from the services that Legal Aid Ontario provides, specifically some of the people in terms of the injured workers clinic. It has done some of the work to understand how, across the city, a lot of people will be punished because they don't have the level of income necessary to hire representation.

So I think it's really important, what you have raised, and I agree with you in the sense that the name of this bill doesn't really reflect what's in it, and it's unfortunate. I would like to see the minister point out who are the local people, who are the grassroots organizations as well as the service providers, and who were the actual people of Ontario were that were consulted.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I really would like to stand to support this piece of legislation, and I would like to thank the Attorney General, Mr. Doug Downey, for bringing this piece of legislation. We are looking into modernizing the legislation. We are looking into the Class Proceedings Act, how we can modernize that, how we can make processes easier.

I don't know how they can refuse some of those options we are putting into this piece of legislation. How can they refuse the first reading of a piece of legislation which will make the payment of lawyers' fees reasonable or make settlements fair, ensuring proper notice when people are part of a class action, ensuring more protection for vulnerable class members and online document verification?

Ms. Doly Begum: My friend from Mississauga–Streetsville pointed out something very important which I think goes back to the core of this bill, and that's why I want to point out something that's very important: One of the things that shocked me the most—actually, a lot of things in this bill shocked, but one of the things that shocked me was the removal of the words “low income” as well as “access to justice” from the purpose section of this bill. I don't understand why that was removed, because people who are low income are the ones who access legal aid or need to access legal aid, and people who are going through a tough time—make sure that they have access to it.

If this bill is about access to justice, why were the words “access to justice” removed from the actual purpose of this bill?

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: The amendments to the Civil Remedies Act are deeply concerning to me, expanding civil forfeiture, which will give consequences for racialized Ontarians. People of colour already experience higher rates of police interactions, and we know that these are often negative experiences. I'm worried these expanded powers may be used by law enforcement as a tool to further harass and intimidate racialized people, young people and anyone facing systemic barriers. As written, this provision will allow law enforcement to bypass courts entirely when enacting civil forfeiture.

I will ask the member from Scarborough Southwest: Where is this accountability, and transparency—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Response? The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you to my colleague for your question. I think it comes down to the idea of where we want this province to move forward to. Where are we going with the legislation that we pass in this House, and how are we serving the people of this province? That means people who are racialized, young people, women, children, families who are vulnerable, immigrant families.

Every single Ontarian needs to be served by every piece of legislation that we're making in this House. They have to be equally accessible and equally fair to each and every one of them. Like my colleague pointed out, this bill, I think, infringes upon that ability for a lot of people to have access to justice.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question to the member of the opposition is whether or not she believes crime should

pay, if she could answer that with a yes or no; and, subsequent to that, when it comes to human trafficking and that crime shouldn't pay, whether or not she can talk about the fact that right now under the law, the property that does get forfeited doesn't go to victim services. If you are in favour of victim services, shouldn't you be in favour of this part of the bill?

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the member from Barrie–Innisfil for her question. I actually used to volunteer for victim services, and it was one of the best experiences I have had there. I salute them for the work they do, because they do some of the toughest, toughest jobs when it comes to helping someone in the worst situations. I had counselling for almost a year just to become a volunteer, crisis counselling.

I truly believe that you have to make sure that you help people in whatever situation they are in to get justice, so that the justice system can decide whether they're guilty or not. I think victim services does great work, so I absolutely agree with you in the sense of what they're doing, and I have to address my case in the sense of what I said about this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There is not enough time for another round of questions and responses. Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm happy to rise and speak today about the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act. I do not believe the act will make access to justice stronger, nor will it give us a smarter way of running our extremely important legal aid system. In fact, this bill will hurt our legal aid system and it will reduce access to justice for Ontarians. It is an omnibus bill, and the implications of it are certainly far-reaching.

Members opposite have spoken about some of the more tame, or administrative changes to the bill. I'm going to speak about parts of the bill that are most concerned with the legal aid system in Ontario, a system that is under attack by this government. Last year, Legal Aid Ontario, through its clinics, provided over 100,000 legal aid certificates and helped 650,000 people through its duty counsel services.

I have legal clinics in my riding of University–Rosedale. Those clinics include Downtown Legal Services, which primarily supports the University of Toronto community. They have, unfortunately, had a double whammy when it comes to issues around funding because they were partially funded through the Ontario government and the community legal clinic system and also funded by the student union. So when the Ontario Ford government chose to unfairly, and unconstitutionally, take away student unions' ability to choose how they were going to fund their own student programs and impose, from above, a new system, it meant that important services like Downtown Legal Services, which was funded through student union dues, had an additional financial hit.

I also have Kensington–Bellwoods, which is a community legal clinic on College Street, that also does its best to serve people who are most in need of legal support to help them navigate the legal system. I have worked with

them, with numerous residents who were facing very difficult circumstances.

Some examples that come to mind include a man called Kwame, whose new landlord illegally evicted him and his four roommates from a Kensington apartment. The police came and charged the landlord with assault, because the landlord did choose to use force, and Kwame ended up in a downtown shelter, because even though the police had charged the landlord, he still couldn't get access to his apartment or his belongings.

That's when Kensington–Bellwoods stepped in and a formidable community lawyer, Melissa Jean-Baptiste, started working with Kwame through the Landlord and Tenant Board to help Kwame get access to his apartment—he was illegally evicted, again—and to fight for recourse. Kwame wouldn't have been helped if Kensington–Bellwoods community legal services wasn't there.

I often think of that individual and the work that Kensington–Bellwoods legal clinic did for him when I think about the value of our community legal system. Quite frankly, there are many people in University–Rosedale and across Toronto who really do need help accessing our legal system. It's not just people who are fighting illegal evictions or landlords who have challenges, too. It's also people who have been rejected from WSIB. We have met with numerous people in our office who have been unfairly rejected from WSIB, people who, when you meet them, you clearly can tell are facing a lot of difficulties in their lives and are facing considerable injuries. Some of them are hidden and some of them are not—serious physical injuries. The benefit of having legal clinics is that these people, who are often very poor, can be helped so that they can appeal and use due process to challenge WSIB and fight for a basic wage so they can survive in the city.

We also have people who need help appealing for ODSP and OW applications. Last night, I did a presentation with people who access the JCC in my riding of University–Rosedale, and many of them have developmental challenges, from being on the spectrum to people who have Down syndrome. Numerous people in the room—one of the questions they asked me was about ODSP and the potential changes to ODSP and eligibility. When I mentioned to them that the definition could be changed, some of them were shocked. Many of them hadn't heard about it, and two of them put up their hands up and said, "I've been kicked off ODSP and I needed help to get back on it." These people clearly needed help, and it's the community legal system that can step in and help these people when they need it, so that they can get on with their lives. So it's important that our legal aid system continues to provide the access to justice it needs to provide. I can't imagine reducing legal support for these individuals because I can't imagine people who need it more than them.

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One of the biggest issues that we faced in 2019 was this government's very significant cut to legal aid. What we

experienced was that these cuts didn't just affect the community legal clinics, like Kensington-Bellwoods and Downtown Legal Services, but they also impacted the specialty clinics that worked on the test cases, did some of the advocacy on some of the biggest systemic issues that we face in Ontario today. Examples include CELA, which works on environmental protections; ACTO, which specializes in housing law; and ACE, the clinic that specializes in the elderly. Arch Disability Law Centre, the Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, the Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic and the Income Security Advocacy Centre: All of these specialty clinics faced varying degrees of cuts, some small and some very significant, and that was also very worrying for me.

I don't think that Toronto and people in my riding—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member. I recognize the member from Eglinton–Lawrence on a point of order.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I hesitated to interrupt, but the member is going on and on about something that was in the budget as opposed to talking about the legislation which is on the floor, and that's in contravention of rule 25(b)—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. I will remind all members to make it clear how their remarks pertain to the bill.

I return to the member.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much to the member opposite. I will finish this story and then I'll move into specific sections of the bill. Thank you for reminding me.

One thing that really concerned me about ACE was the work that they did with our community when 150 seniors at a retirement home on the corner of Yonge and Bloor experienced a mass eviction when the retirement home decided to suddenly close and the land underneath it was bought for an undisclosed sum, which we eventually learned was about \$30 million. ACE stepped in to provide these seniors in their 80s and 90s—people who needed a lot of help—as well as their caregivers advice about what their rights were under the law, such as their right to compensation if they were evicted. That education wouldn't have happened if we didn't have ACE around, and it's important for us to remember that when we're thinking about funding and also this government's cuts.

I do want to move to the legislation that is here. One of the most concerning things about this legislation is the decision to remove the words “low income” and “access to justice” from the purpose of the act. The reason why it's so concerning to see these words being removed is because what other reason is there for legal aid to exist than to help the most vulnerable access justice—people who are struggling to get by, as explained in some of the examples I gave from people in my riding?

I do believe we need an explanation from this government opposite about why this change is needed. I've got to say, it seems like a foreshadowing of a change in Legal Aid Ontario's mandate. I believe, as many of my

colleagues believe, that we need these words added back into the purpose of the bill. We need to—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. I'm sorry to interrupt the member.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

Government House leader?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think we'll just have the debate continue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, House leader.

We need to be explicit about how we need to provide greater access to justice for Ontarians, and we shouldn't stop there. The reason why we shouldn't stop there is because access to justice should truly be the goal of our legal aid system. That means being more generous, and by being more generous what I mean is that I believe that we should raise the income threshold so that more people can access the legal services they need, because right now the threshold for legal aid is very low. It basically excludes all but the poorest Ontarians.

Currently, Ontario's legal aid threshold sits at about \$17,000 in annual income for an individual and about \$30,000 for a family of two—any more than that, they turn you away. I cannot imagine how a family of two who live in Toronto can afford to get by and then hire a lawyer to deal with, maybe, a Family Court issue. I don't understand how that math adds up, because the cost of living in Toronto—and many parts of Ontario now—is prohibitively expensive.

Daycare costs for two kids range upwards of \$20,000 a year or more. Rent in our city is now, on average for a one-bedroom apartment, going for upwards of \$2,000 a month. When you take \$30,000 and then you take away \$20,000 for rent, leaving you just \$10,000 for everything else in your life, you are not in a situation where you can easily find a lawyer who can have the time to represent you in court. It's very concerning. What happens to so many people is that if they can't turn to legal aid and they can't afford a lawyer, then they simply go without, which means that they are unable to defend themselves when necessary and they're not able to pursue legal action when faced with acts of injustice.

Ontario is one of the wealthiest provinces in the world. There is a lot of “have” in our province, and when there's a lot of “have” it means that we can do more to help those who don't have much, but right now we don't seem to be doing that. It is truly shocking how little this government is caring about this issue of increasing access to justice.

The next issue with this bill that I would like to address is the decision to cancel all funding agreements between Legal Aid Ontario and the community clinics it funds six months after it receives royal assent. The reason why I have concerns with this is because you have to ask

yourselves why you're doing it, because one of the first things it will do is that it will introduce instability and uncertainty into our legal aid system. I've also got to ask the question: Is the government doing this so that Legal Aid Ontario can renegotiate funding agreements which will be lower than the funding agreements that we currently have now—funding agreements which, as I mentioned, in my opinion are fairly low?

What's also concerning with the bill is that the recipients of Legal Aid Ontario funding can't appeal funding decisions anymore. That is certainly a concern because in the past legal aid clinics have been able to appeal funding decisions, using the argument that they're not able to provide access to justice to all the people who need to use the clinic. That's a concern, that due process is being eliminated from the bill, and I believe it's also setting the stage for even more cuts.

An additional concern that I have with the bill is how it changes how Legal Aid Ontario is governed. This legislation essentially fails to ensure that legal aid stays independent. In fact, I could argue that the government is essentially trying to politicize legal aid. Let me explain this a little bit.

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This bill no longer gives Legal Aid Ontario the ability to be equally represented on the board, which means that the Attorney General's office can fill the board with its own appointments. These board members have an important say over how funding agreements, policies and rules are set up that affect legal clinics. This is important. It's an important board.

It does feel like the government is coming to take over legal aid administration in the province and potentially direct it as it sees fit. That's a concern, because I'm not so sure—actually, I don't want the government to have unprecedented control over individual funding agreements for community clinics. It should be a balanced approach where the legal community has a say over that as well.

I'd like to address another troubling piece of the legislation that some of my colleagues have mentioned earlier, which is around the proposed changes to the Class Proceedings Act.

The proposed changes will affect how class actions are essentially certified in Ontario. These changes are very troubling, because it will certainly reduce access to justice when it comes to class actions. This bill essentially introduces new, much stricter standards for a class to be certified and moved forward with a class action lawsuit.

The Law Commission of Ontario has also expressed worry about these changes. This is what it says: "These provisions fundamentally restructure class action law and policy in Ontario by shifting the CPA's long-standing certification test strongly in favour of defendants." And they continue.

It's important to remember that class actions are a legal remedy for regular people. The reason why class action lawsuits are so important is because they provide an avenue for people who have experienced a common injustice to organize and use the courts to fight for themselves and for the better good of Ontarians as a whole.

I would like to remind this House about some important class actions that have been successful in Ontario, so that we can remind ourselves about the benefits of having this right. That includes residential schools. The class action lawsuit on residential schools eventually led to a settlement that impacted, for their benefit, 80,000 people. There is the Sixties Scoop class action against the Ontario government, which was eventually settled as well. These are very important cases that led to an improvement in First Nations rights and also a move that we still need to continue towards reconciliation.

Class action lawsuits have also benefited the people of Walkerton. Because of the privatization of water supply, there were some deaths, because water quality was not properly maintained. The people of Walkerton took to the courts and used the class action process to get redress. That's fair. I wouldn't want that important process to be altered, which this bill is aiming to do.

There are other elements of this bill which I will not have time to address this afternoon, but I do want to make clear that we are voting to oppose this bill. We have a lot of concerns with it, one of the most important being that access to justice is a cornerstone of our democracy, because justice ensures that people have access to the courts and can get the help they need and the due process that they need. This bill, quite frankly, threatens that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I want to come back to the legal aid part of this bill. Time and time again, it comes up. I've met with many, many people that we've sent to our Mississauga community legal aid centre, and I've met with the providers. We have an excellent rapport, and we've had a lot of feedback from them, which is why we have this bill coming into place: We want to make sure that it works for everybody. We're giving more access. We're giving more opportunities for people to be able to access the legal services they need. I just would like the member to comment on why she's so against us wanting to give more access to more people.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville for your question. I'm guessing that you're referring to the expansion of who would be eligible for legal aid.

One of my concerns with that is there could potentially be an expansion of who is actually eligible for legal aid, but the bigger issue is that the amount of funding that legal clinics are receiving and the amount of funding that specialty clinics are receiving is on the whole reduced. When that funding is reduced, it means that staff are laid off. In my riding's case of the Kensington Bellwoods legal clinic, they had to reduce staff hours as a result of that. That meant that with some of the important work that they were doing to help tenants with renovations and to help people with appealing ODSP, they had to turn more people away. That is one of my issues with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: This afternoon during the debate on this bill put forward by the Conservative government, we

heard them refer to the former Conservative Attorney General and some Conservative appointees to different government agencies as being in support of this bill, but legal aid clinics and lawyers—lawyers from Pro Bono Ontario, the Society of United Professionals and other agencies, and front-line lawyers who work in legal aid—have all said that they are opposed to this because it strips low-income people of their fundamental right to access to justice.

Do you think that by quoting other Conservatives, this government is trying to manufacture the sense that there is some support for this bill?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Spadina–Fort York. What is clear with your question is that I know you think that, and I tend to agree with you as well. I do think that a large percentage of other community legal clinics and lawyers who represent people who are low-income are understandably very concerned about these changes, and we are hearing from them. There is a statement from Parkdale Community Legal Services, which is very concerned about this bill.

So yes, we might be hearing from some former Conservative pillars of the legal community that they are okay with it, but there are thousands and thousands of individuals and progressive lawyers, low-income lawyers, who have some genuine concerns that are based on their day-to-day reality, serving clients and being in difficult situations.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: The member opposite talked about the NDP not supporting this legislation. We speak a lot about cyberbullying. We all, at one time, unanimously approved legislation from my friend from Mississauga East–Cooksville on cyberbullying. But today, you're saying you're not going to support this bill, and by not supporting this bill, you're not supporting making it easier for cyberbullying victims to sue their offenders.

How can you do one thing and say another, and how can you not support victims of cyberbullying? Is this true?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much for your question, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I want to start off by saying that cyberbullying is a huge problem. I have a seven-year-old daughter. I'm very concerned about what her future is going to be like as a preteen and as a teenager. I certainly don't want her to be targeted; there's no question about that.

It's important also to remember that this is an omnibus bill. At the end of the day, it's an omnibus bill. I've spent my time talking about some of the issues in this legislation that I am most concerned about, and that was focused on the changes to the legal aid community. But I can assure you, I am very concerned about cyberbullying as an issue, for my family and for the community at large.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to ask a question of the member from University–Rosedale. She has, actually, articulated very effectively the changes to the Class Proceedings Act and the effect it has.

This bill will substantially reform class actions in the province. These reforms will mean serious rollbacks to access to justice in Ontario. This should be concerning, if not alarming, for all members in this chamber. These changes will place undue hardship on Ontarians seeking justice. How is it reasonable to only allow a class action after all other avenues have been exhausted? If multiple parties have been wronged, it should be their right to come together and seek redress. Why is this government putting unnecessary rollbacks in the way?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much for that question. Like you, I am also very concerned about the changes to the ability for ordinary people, who have collectively been wronged, to use the court system to fight for redress. It is a cornerstone of our democracy that we can use the courts to bring about change.

As I mentioned in my speech, there are numerous instances of class actions being pursued that have benefited people in our province. From the people in Walkerton who got redress because their water system was poisoned, to people who had to endure the horror of residential schools and being pulled away from their family, the culture and the life that they grew up with: They have used the class action lawsuit system for their benefit. Like you, I am very concerned about any attempts to limit that power.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite. The Auditor General wrote a report in 2018 on legal aid and suggested making a number of changes. Her report showed that over the last five years, more and more money has been spent without achieving the results that legal aid clients and taxpayers, frankly, should expect. She did a value-for-money audit and found legal aid wasn't delivering value for money.

The proposed legislation responds to the Auditor General's recommendations by establishing a more flexible framework to make a sustainable and accountable legal aid system. Some of the changes responding to recommendations include enhancing legal aid's ability to manage and oversee service providers, and giving it the flexibility we talked about earlier so that it can use different service providers: paralegals, lawyers, clinics, law firms, and public legal education. This flexibility would allow a better continuum of legal aid services to be provided. Why would you oppose that?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence for your thoughtful question. I have a lot of respect for the Auditor General's work on a whole range of issues, and I will make a point of reading in more detail that report, so I can learn more about it.

What I did spend my time talking about today is, yes, maybe more flexibility in some cases could be a good thing; I don't know. But what I do know is that when you cut funding to legal clinics and to specialty clinics, overall, less people are going to benefit: people who are struggling,

people who are dealing with Family Court, people who have just been denied their WSIB claim, people who need help. When you cut the funding, it does mean that less people will be helped. That's one of my biggest concerns about what this government has been doing to the legal system.

The additional piece, also, is no longer allowing—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):
Thank you.

Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, March 2, 2020.

The House adjourned at 1754.

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Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud- Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
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 (LIB)	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**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Lorne Coe, Wayne Gates
Randy Hillier, Andrea Khanjin
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Kaleed Rasheed, Peter Tabuns
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
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

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari
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

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Rudy Cuzzetto, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Billy Pang
Marit Stiles, Vijay Thanigasalam
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

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

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

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

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

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

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

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

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

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